

**Park Street Church Christian Formation – Fall 2017**  
**Jerusalem in Dire Straits: Lessons on Leadership during Crisis**  
**Nehemiah 1-7**

**Review Chronology**

- **Edict of Cyrus the Great** (exiles return; beginning of “diaspora”) 539 BC
- **Second Temple Completed** (Darius I) 516 BC
- **(Haggai and Zechariah)**
- **Esther in a Foreign Court** (Xerxes I – 486-465) 483-470’s BC
- **Ministries of Ezra/Nehemiah/Malachi** (Artaxerxes I – 465-424) 457-445 BC  
[just note: there are differences of opinion in terms of how to position Ezra and Nehemiah in the chronological picture]

**Reminders**

- **Ezra 4** – summary of ongoing opposition from reign of Cyrus until Artaxerxes I (time of Ezra and Nehemiah)—narrative shift from initial attempts to rebuild the **Temple** to later work on the **Wall and defenses of Jerusalem**
- **Judah was small and surrounded by antagonistic neighbors**
- **Jews in empire-wide geo-political context** – echoes from Esther and longer influence of Mordecai’s position

**This Corner of the Persian Empire at This Time** (Ezra 4:7-23; Thucydides; Diodorus Siculus)

- **Artaxerxes had to address rebellion in Egypt for first decade of his reign** – complicated politics between Athenians, Egyptians, and Megabyzus of Syria
- **Revolt of Megabyzus** (449-446) – may have contributed to suspicion of activities in the province “Beyond the River”
- **Rehum and Shimshai in Samaria – in the province “Beyond the River” (Ezra 4:7-23)** early in the reign of Artaxerxes, he may have been suspicious of wall-building attempts; by his 20<sup>th</sup> year, he was favorable

**Nehemiah – from Cupbearer to Governor (ca. 445 BC)**

- **What was the crisis (ch 1)? What were the implications?**
- **How did Nehemiah respond?**
  - **What were the purposes of fasting?**
  - **How should we characterize Nehemiah’s prayer?**
- **As cupbearer**
  - **Required to be convivial**
  - **Waited for king’s initiative – who noted his sadness**
- **Prayer and diplomacy – en route to becoming Governor**

**Inspection and Initial Repairs**

- **Inspection Tour** – dismal state of disrepair
- **Repairs begin (ch 3) – who were the people involved? Why is this so interesting?**

## **Dealing with First Wave of Opposition – Sanballat (Hauranite), Tobiah (Ammonite), Geshem (Arab), men of Ashdod (2:10, 19; 4:1-11)**

- **What was the first enemy tactic?**
- **Nehemiah’s response—prayer and continued effort**
- **Second tactic: plot to infiltrate with terrorist activities**
- **Everyone had each others’ backs**
- **Holy War - “Our God will fight for us” (4:20)**

## **Compounding the Problem: Economic Crisis (ch 5) – inner-Jewish injustice**

- **What evidence do we see of social stratification?**
  
- **What injustices were occurring?**
  
  
- **Note Proverbs 14:31**
  
- **Nehemiah’s responses – founded on his fear of the Lord**
  - **What exemplary actions did Nehemiah take (for the 12 years of his governorship)?**
  
  - **Put people under oath – fits in covenant context**

## **Opposition Efforts Become More Potentially Lethal (ch 6)**

- **Attempted to entice Nehemiah to meet “off-site”**
- **Up the ante –blackmail around false accusations**
- **Confronting a hired “intimidator”**
- **Some nobles of Judah had dual allegiances (6:17-19)**

**“Remember them” for Ill (6:14)**

## **Defenses Secured**

- **Completion of the Wall (52 days)**
- **Establishing Guards**

## **Repopulation of the City (ch 7)**

**What Lessons Should We Take Away?**