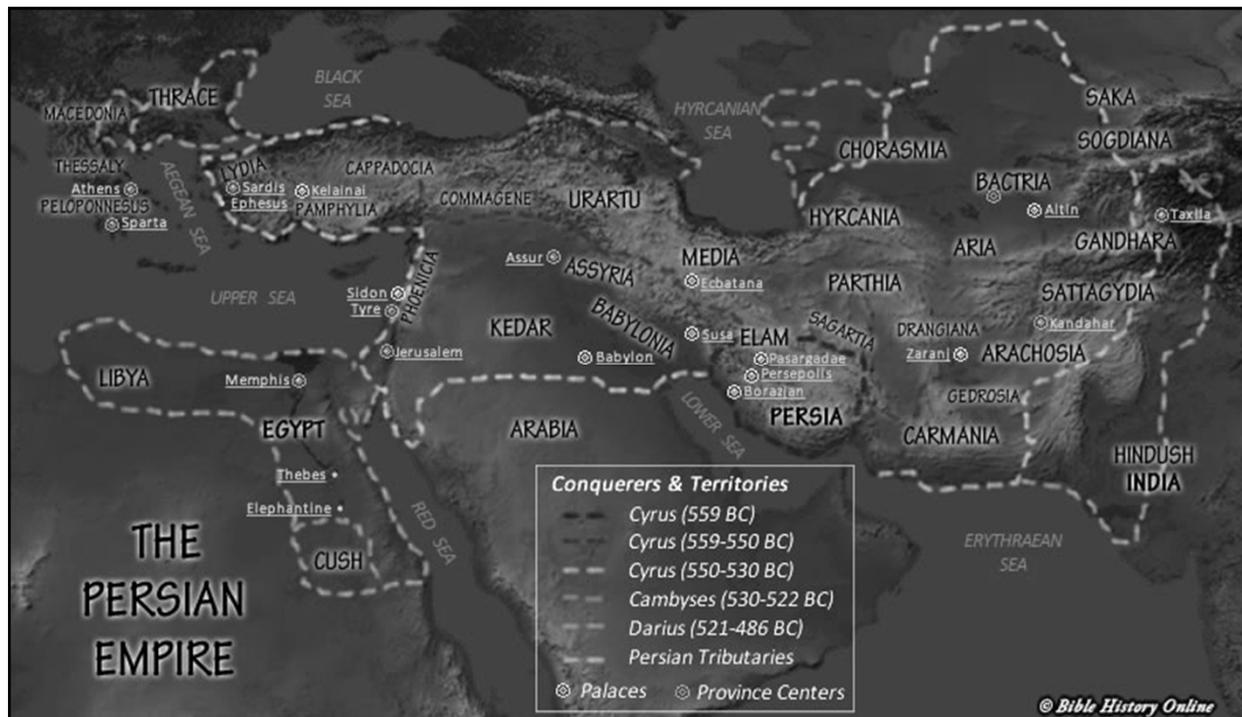


Nehemiah

The Timeline

- Temple finished in sixth year of Darius, 516 B.C.
- Ezra returned in seventh year of Artaxerxes, 458 B.C.
- Letter sent to Artaxerxes resulting in suspension of the rebuilding of Jerusalem, especially the rebuilding of the walls sometimes in the period between the seventh and twentieth year of Artaxerxes. Ezra 4:7-1-23
- Word reached Nehemiah, cup bearer to Artaxerxes, of the state of disrepair and thus the vulnerability of the Jews in Jerusalem in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, 445 B.C.



The condition of Jerusalem and the exiles

- Exiles described as in great trouble and shame
- Jerusalem is described as defenseless.
- This is predictable from the order that had been given by Artaxerxes to stop any repair of the city walls. (see Ezra 4:7-23)
- Note that the decree from Cyrus which was confirmed later by Darius was to rebuild the house of God but nothing was said of rebuilding the city. Also, the letter given to Ezra on his return focused on beautifying the temple but gave no permission to repair the walls or rebuild Jerusalem.

Nehemiah's response

- Intense and lasting grief
- Prolonged fasting and prayer
 - Prayed in the name of the one who met Moses at the burning bush
 - Recognized God's majesty and might
 - Acknowledged God's faithfulness and love to those who keep His commandments.

Nehemiah's response

- Prolonged fasting and prayer
 - Confession of the sin of the people (Consistent with both Ezra and Daniel's prayers)
 - Appeals to God's promise that when he brings judgment on His people and scatters them abroad, He will gather them back to the place where He has chosen to make His name dwell (Jerusalem). Based on the truth that God's judgment is always redemptive.

Nehemiah's response

- Prolonged fasting and prayer
 - Appeals to God's relationship with His people
 - Your servants
 - Your people
 - Those whom you have redeemed
 - The specific prayer was for God to grant Nehemiah mercy in the sight of the king.

A lesson on perseverance in prayer

- Nehemiah received the news and began praying in the month Chislev (November/December).
- His opportunity to address Artaxerxes came in Nisan (March/April).
- Nehemiah faithfully practiced praying and expectantly watching to see God at work regardless of how long it takes.

Nehemiah's discovery of the activity of God.

- Pray
 - He prayed for over three months
 - He prayed in the immediate situation
- Watch
 - For these three months Nehemiah steadfastly endured and watched to see where God was at work.

Nehemiah's discovery of the activity of God.

- Connect
 - Nehemiah recognized the unusual occasion of the king noticing and commenting on his appearance as God's answer to his prayers to "grant him mercy in the sight of this man." He shared what was on his heart and watched to see what would happen next.

Nehemiah's discovery of the activity of God.

- Join
 - The moment we see the invitation to join God in His work will often evoke fear.
 - Remember that this was the king who issued a decree a few years before forbidding the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem.
 - Nehemiah recognized his fear and let it drive him to remember that his strength comes from the LORD as indicated in his brief prayer before answering the king.

Nehemiah's discovery of the activity of God.

- Join
 - We need to always be willing to be a part of the answer to our prayers. This is reflected most succinctly in Isaiah's cry, "Here am I. Send me!"
 - The further questioning by the king reveals that Nehemiah had given careful thought and preparation for this moment. This is a lesson that the times of waiting are not times of inactivity.
 - God's resources are always available where His is at work.