



Book
— **By** —
Book
—



WELCOME

OUR GOAL

To encourage you to read at least one book of the Bible each month, so that you may better understand who God is and where you fit into His story.

BIBLE STUDY METHOD

- **OBSERVATION:**
What does the text say?
- **INTERPRETATION:**
What does it mean?
- **APPLICATION:**
What did I learn that should affect my life?

YOU ARE HERE – OLD TESTAMENT

Five major sections:

- Law (Genesis – Deuteronomy)
- ▶ History (Joshua – Esther)
- Poetry (Job – Song of Solomon)
- Major Prophets (Isaiah – Daniel)
- Minor Prophets (Hosea – Malachi)

ZOOMING OUT

Pentateuch	From Adam to arrival at Canaan	2,600 years
Joshua-Ruth	Conquest of Canaan/Judges	350 years
1&2 Samuel	[United Kingdom Divided Kingdom Captivity	120 years
1&2 Kings		350 years
1&2 Chronicles		70 years
Ezra-Esther	Return to Land of Israel	100 years



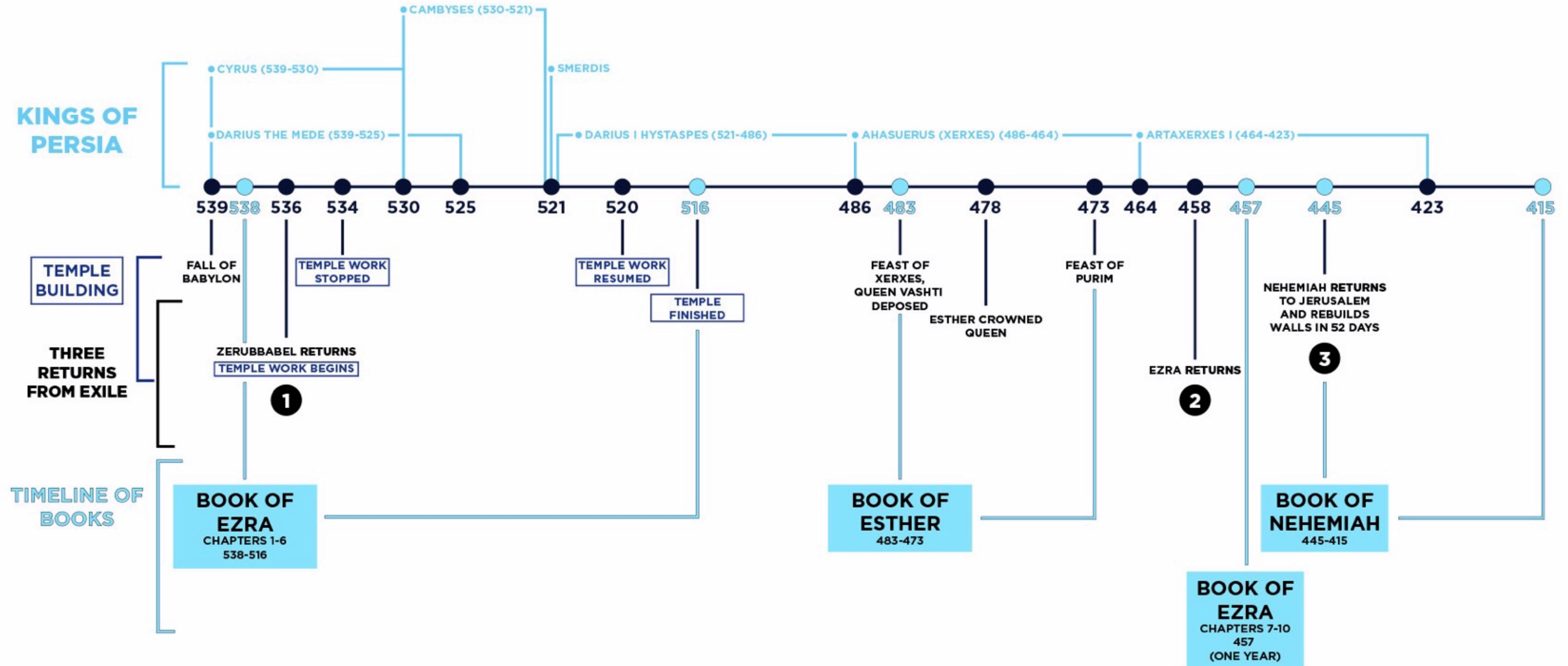
REVIEW



NEHEMIAH

BUILDERS AND OCCUPIERS

TIMELINE OF EZRA, NEHEMIAH, & ESTHER



THE THIRD RETURN

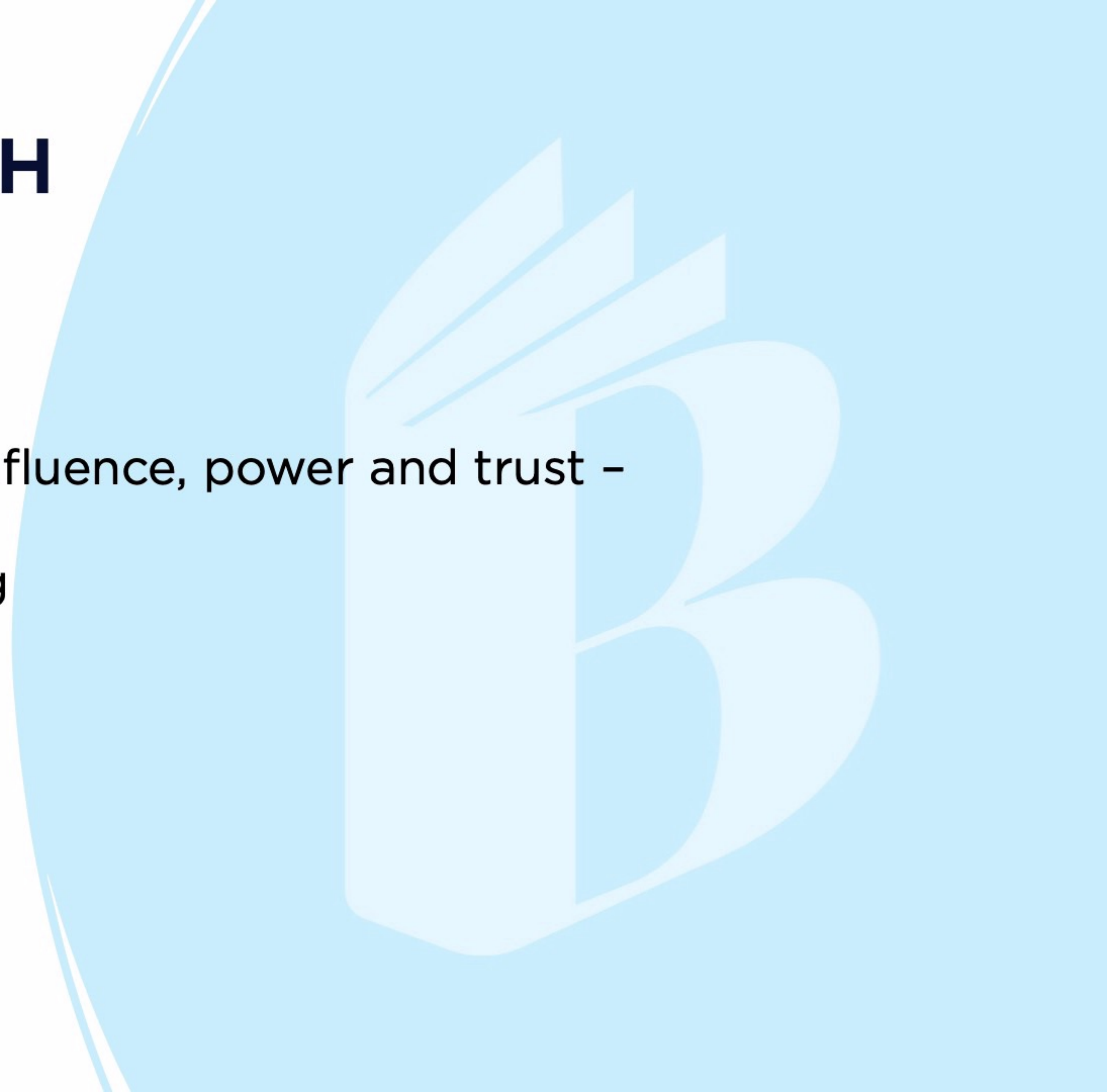
Approximately 91 years after Zerubbabel first returned with just under 50,000 Jews, and about 13 years after Ezra returned with about 1,754 families, we meet Nehemiah.

MEET NEHEMIAH

Born in captivity

Rose to a high position of influence, power and trust -

Cupbearer to the King



OTHER PEOPLE IN THE STORY

King Artaxerxes

stepson of Queen Esther

Hanani, Nehemiah's brother

appointed Governor of Jerusalem

Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite, Geshem the Arab

regional governors under the king of Persia

BAD NEWS

When Nehemiah's brother returned from Jerusalem, he reported that the people there were in great trouble and distress as the walls and gates were still torn down.

Nehemiah wept, mourned, fasted and prayed

He prayed a prayer of repentance

He asked for God to make the king favorable to him

FOUR MONTHS LATER....

The king noticed Nehemiah's sadness

He offered to help



WHAT NEHEMIAH ASKED FOR:

- send me to Judah to rebuild the city where my ancestors are buried.”
- let me have letters addressed to the governors of the province west of the Euphrates River, instructing them to let me travel safely through their territories on my way to Judah.
- give me a letter addressed to Asaph, the manager of the king’s forest, instructing him to give me timber.
- The King also sent along army officers and horsemen to protect Nehemiah.

THE ACHAEMENID PERSIAN EMPIRE, c. 500 BCE



Q & A (SANABALLAT, TOBIAH & GESHEM)

Q: “What are you doing? Are you rebelling against the king?”

A: “The God of heaven will help us succeed. We, his servants, will start rebuilding this wall. But you have no share, legal right, or historic claim in Jerusalem.”

Q: “What does this bunch of poor, feeble Jews think they’re doing? Do they think they can build the wall in a single day by just offering a few sacrifices? Do they actually think they can make something of stones from a rubbish heap—and charred ones at that?”

A: “Hear us, our God, for we are being mocked. May their scoffing fall back on their own heads, and may they themselves become captives in a foreign land! ⁵ Do not ignore their guilt. Do not blot out their sins, for they have provoked you to anger here in front of the builders.”

Q & A (SANABALLAT, TOBIAH & GESHEM)

Q: “There is a rumor among the surrounding nations, and Geshem tells me it is true, that you and the Jews are planning to rebel and that is why you are building the wall. According to his reports, you plan to be their king. ⁷ He also reports that you have appointed prophets in Jerusalem to proclaim about you, ‘Look! There is a king in Judah!’

“You can be very sure that this report will get back to the king, so I suggest that you come and talk it over with me.”

A: “There is no truth in any part of your story. You are making up the whole thing.”

Q: “Let us meet together inside the Temple of God and bolt the doors shut. Your enemies are coming to kill you tonight.”

A: “Should someone in my position run from danger? Should someone in my position enter the Temple to save his life? No, I won’t do it!”

Notables Among the Builders

People from Tekoa:

their leaders refused to work with the construction supervisors.

Note: They repaired an additional section (3:27)

Shallum son of Hallohesh

his daughters repaired the next section.

What's skills were represented among those who built the wall?

Priests, Levites, Leaders, Goldsmiths, Manufacturer of Perfumes,
Merchants, Gatekeeper

A Successful Start & Heated Opposition

- The wall was completed to half its height around the entire city (4:6)

The Enemy Reacts

⁷ But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs, Ammonites, and Ashdodites heard that the work was going ahead and that the gaps in the wall of Jerusalem were being repaired, they were furious. ⁸ They all made plans to come and fight against Jerusalem and throw us into confusion. ⁹ But we prayed to our God and guarded the city day and night to protect ourselves.

Exhaustion & Discouragement Sets In

10 Then the people of Judah began to complain, “The workers are getting tired, and there is so much rubble to be moved. We will never be able to build the wall by ourselves.”

Nehemiah's Response: I called together the nobles and the rest of the people and said to them, “Don't be afraid of the enemy! Remember the Lord, who is great and glorious, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes!” (4:14)

New Instructions

²¹ We worked early and late, from sunrise to sunset. And half the men were always on guard. ²² I also told everyone living outside the walls to stay in Jerusalem. That way they and their servants could help with guard duty at night and work during the day. ²³ During this time, none of us—not I, nor my relatives, nor my servants, nor the guards who were with me—ever took off our clothes. We carried our weapons with us at all times, even when we went for water.

Nehemiah 4:21-23

Who's My Enemy?

⁵ About this time some of the men and their wives raised a cry of protest against their fellow Jews. ² They were saying, "We have such large families. We need more food to survive."

³ Others said, "We have mortgaged our fields, vineyards, and homes to get food during the famine."

⁴ And others said, "We have had to borrow money on our fields and vineyards to pay our taxes. ⁵ We belong to the same family as those who are wealthy, and our children are just like theirs. Yet we must sell our children into slavery just to get enough money to live. We have already sold some of our daughters, and we are helpless to do anything about it, for our fields and vineyards are already mortgaged to others."

Give it Back!

⁸ At the meeting I said to them [nobles & officials], “We are doing all we can to redeem our Jewish relatives who have had to sell themselves to pagan foreigners, but you are selling them back into slavery again. How often must we redeem them?” And they had nothing to say in their defense.

⁹ Then I pressed further, “What you are doing is not right! Should you not walk in the fear of our God in order to avoid being mocked by enemy nations? ¹⁰ I myself, as well as my brothers and my workers, have been lending the people money and grain, but now let us stop this business of charging interest. ¹¹ You must restore their fields, vineyards, olive groves, and homes to them this very day. And repay the interest you charged when you lent them money, grain, new wine, and olive oil.”

Give it Back!

¹² They replied, “We will give back everything and demand nothing more from the people. We will do as you say.” Then I called the priests and made the nobles and officials swear to do what they had promised.

¹³ I shook out the folds of my robe and said, “If you fail to keep your promise, may God shake you like this from your homes and from your property!”

Nehemiah 5:8-13

New Strategy – Let's Get Together and Talk

² So Sanballat and Geshem sent a message asking me to meet them at one of the villages in the plain of Ono.

But I realized they were plotting to harm me, ³ so I replied by sending this message to them: “I am engaged in a great work, so I can't come. Why should I stop working to come and meet with you?”

⁴ Four times they sent the same message, and each time I gave the same reply.

Nehemiah 6:2-4

New Strategy – Let's Get Together and Talk

He [Shemaiah] said, “Let us meet together inside the Temple of God and bolt the doors shut. Your enemies are coming to kill you tonight.”

¹² I realized that God had not spoken to him, but that he had uttered this prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. ¹³ They were hoping to intimidate me and make me sin. Then they would be able to accuse and discredit me.

Nehemiah 6:10-13

The Wall is Finished!

¹⁵ So on October 2 the wall was finished—just fifty-two days after we had begun. ¹⁶ When our enemies and the surrounding nations heard about it, they were frightened and humiliated. They realized this work had been done with the help of our God.

Nehemiah 6:15

An Inside Job

¹⁷ During those fifty-two days, many letters went back and forth between Tobiah and the nobles of Judah. ¹⁸ For many in Judah had sworn allegiance to him because his father-in-law was Shecaniah son of Arah, and his son Jehohanan was married to the daughter of Meshullam son of Berekiah. ¹⁹ They kept telling me about Tobiah's good deeds, and then they told him everything I said. And Tobiah kept sending threatening letters to intimidate me.

Nehemiah 6:17-19

GROUP TALK

Can you describe a time in your life when you found out those who were working with you were also working against you?

How should Christians deal with this kind of betrayal?

Gates, Guards and Governors

7 After the wall was finished and I had set up the doors in the gates, the gatekeepers, singers, and Levites were appointed. ² I gave the responsibility of governing Jerusalem to my brother Hanani, along with Hananiah, the commander of the fortress, for he was a faithful man who feared God more than most. ³ I said to them, “Do not leave the gates open during the hottest part of the day. And even while the gatekeepers are on duty, have them shut and bar the doors. Appoint the residents of Jerusalem to act as guards, everyone on a regular watch. Some will serve at sentry posts and some in front of their own homes.”

Nehemiah 7:1-3

The Big Revival Meeting

¹ all the people assembled with a unified purpose at the square just inside the Water Gate. They asked Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had given for Israel to obey.

² So on October 8^[a] Ezra the priest brought the Book of the Law before the assembly, which included the men and women and all the children old enough to understand. ³ He faced the square just inside the Water Gate from early morning until noon and read aloud to everyone who could understand. All the people listened closely to the Book of the Law.

Nehemiah 8:1-3

The Big Revival Meeting

¹¹ And the Levites, too, quieted the people, telling them, “Hush! Don’t weep! For this is a sacred day.” ¹² So the people went away to eat and drink at a festive meal, to share gifts of food, and to celebrate with great joy because they had heard God’s words and understood them.

Nehemiah 8:11-12

The Confession

³³ Every time you punished us you were being just. We have sinned greatly, and you gave us only what we deserved. ³⁴ Our kings, leaders, priests, and ancestors did not obey your Law or listen to the warnings in your commands and laws. ³⁵ Even while they had their own kingdom, they did not serve you, though you showered your goodness on them. You gave them a large, fertile land, but they refused to turn from their wickedness.

Nehemiah 9:33-35

The Assessment

³⁶ “So now today we are slaves in the land of plenty that you gave our ancestors for their enjoyment! We are slaves here in this good land. ³⁷ The lush produce of this land piles up in the hands of the kings whom you have set over us because of our sins. They have power over us and our livestock. We serve them at their pleasure, and we are in great misery.”

Nehemiah 9:36-37

Some of the Promises Included

³⁰ “We promise not to let our daughters marry the pagan people of the land, and not to let our sons marry their daughters.

³¹ “We also promise that if the people of the land should bring any merchandise or grain to be sold on the Sabbath or on any other holy day, we will refuse to buy it.

³² “In addition, we promise to obey the command to pay the annual Temple tax of one-eighth of an ounce of silver for the care of the Temple of our God.

Top of the Wall Dedication

- The Levites lead worship with cymbals, harps and lyres. (12:27)
- Singers came from the entire region and Nehemiah organized two choirs to give thanks. (12:31)
- The priests played trumpets in procession, led by Ezra. (12:35-36)
- After marching along the top of the wall, they all proceeded to the Temple. (12:40)
- Many sacrifices were offered. (12:43)
- Their joy was so loud, it was heard far away. (12:43)



**WHILE HE
WAS AWAY**

Eliashib

⁴ Before this had happened, Eliashib the priest, who had been appointed as supervisor of the storerooms of the Temple of our God and who was also a relative of Tobiah, ⁵ had converted a large storage room and placed it at Tobiah's disposal. The room had previously been used for storing the grain offerings, the frankincense, various articles for the Temple, and the tithes of grain, new wine, and olive oil (which were prescribed for the Levites, the singers, and the gatekeepers), as well as the offerings for the priests.

Eliashib

⁶ I was not in Jerusalem at that time, for I had returned to King Artaxerxes of Babylon in the thirty-second year of his reign,^[b] though I later asked his permission to return. ⁷ When I arrived back in Jerusalem, I learned about Eliashib's evil deed in providing Tobiah with a room in the courtyards of the Temple of God. ⁸ I became very upset and threw all of Tobiah's belongings out of the room. ⁹ Then I demanded that the rooms be purified, and I brought back the articles for God's Temple, the grain offerings, and the frankincense.

Nehemiah 13:4-9

The Levites

¹⁰ I also discovered that the Levites had not been given their prescribed portions of food, so they and the singers who were to conduct the worship services had all returned to work their fields. ¹¹ I immediately confronted the leaders and demanded, “Why has the Temple of God been neglected?” Then I called all the Levites back again and restored them to their proper duties. ¹² And once more all the people of Judah began bringing their tithes of grain, new wine, and olive oil to the Temple storerooms.

Nehemiah 13:10-12

The Sabbath

¹⁵ In those days I saw men of Judah treading out their winepresses on the Sabbath. They were also bringing in grain, loading it on donkeys, and bringing their wine, grapes, figs, and all sorts of produce to Jerusalem to sell on the Sabbath. So I rebuked them for selling their produce on that day. ¹⁶ Some men from Tyre, who lived in Jerusalem, were bringing in fish and all kinds of merchandise. They were selling it on the Sabbath to the people of Judah—and in Jerusalem at that!

¹⁷ So I confronted the nobles of Judah. “Why are you profaning the Sabbath in this evil way?” I asked. ¹⁸ “Wasn’t it just this sort of thing that your ancestors did that caused our God to bring all this trouble upon us and our city? Now you are bringing even more wrath upon Israel by permitting the Sabbath to be desecrated in this way!”

The Sabbath

¹⁹ Then I commanded that the gates of Jerusalem should be shut as darkness fell every Friday evening,^[c] not to be opened until the Sabbath ended. I sent some of my own servants to guard the gates so that no merchandise could be brought in on the Sabbath day.

Nehemiah 13:15-19

Pagan Marriages

²³ About the same time I realized that some of the men of Judah had married women from Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. ²⁴ Furthermore, half their children spoke the language of Ashdod or of some other people and could not speak the language of Judah at all. ²⁵ So I confronted them and called down curses on them. I beat some of them and pulled out their hair. I made them swear in the name of God that they would not let their children intermarry with the pagan people of the land.

Pagan Marriages

²⁶ “Wasn’t this exactly what led King Solomon of Israel into sin?” I demanded. “There was no king from any nation who could compare to him, and God loved him and made him king over all Israel. But even he was led into sin by his foreign wives. ²⁷ How could you even think of committing this sinful deed and acting unfaithfully toward God by marrying foreign women?”

²⁸ One of the sons of Joiada son of Eliashib the high priest had married a daughter of Sanballat the Horonite, so I banished him from my presence.

Nehemiah 13:23-28

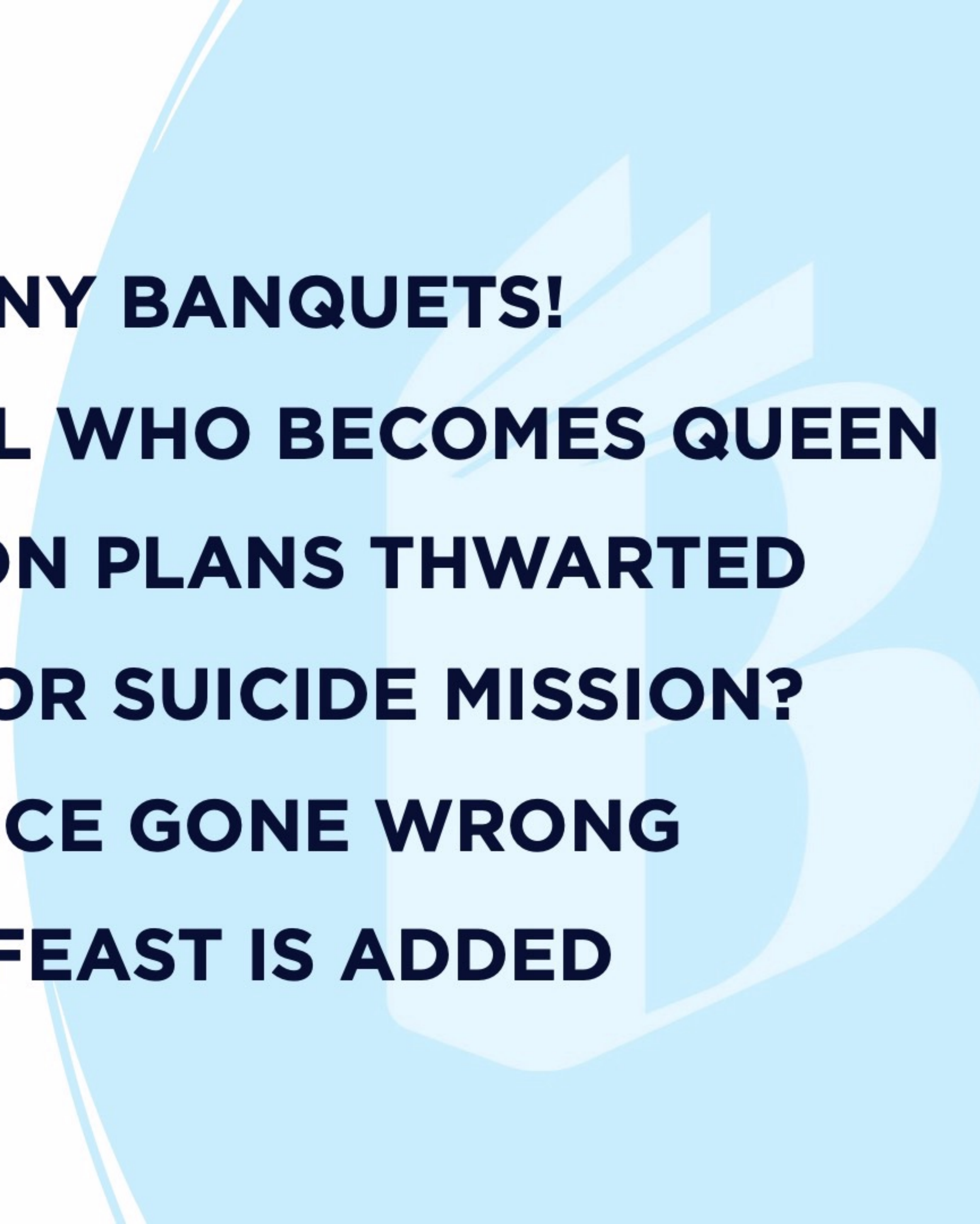


NEXT BOOK



ESTHER

COURAGE & OBEDIENCE

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SO MANY BANQUETS!
AN ORPHAN GIRL WHO BECOMES QUEEN
ASSASINATION PLANS THWARTED
OBEDIENCE OR SUICIDE MISSION?
VENGEANCE GONE WRONG
A NEW FEAST IS ADDED

GOAL FOR THIS MONTH

Read Esther at least once.
(There are only 10 chapters.)

Be sure to make notes of any insights you gain
as you read and study along with
any questions you encounter.

WANT MORE NOTES?

newspring.org/bbb



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The return can also be divided into three phases:

536 B.C. - Zerubbabel returned and began rebuilding the temple

458 B.C. - Ezra returned with offerings and a decree from the king

445 B.C. - Nehemiah returned and rebuilt the wall