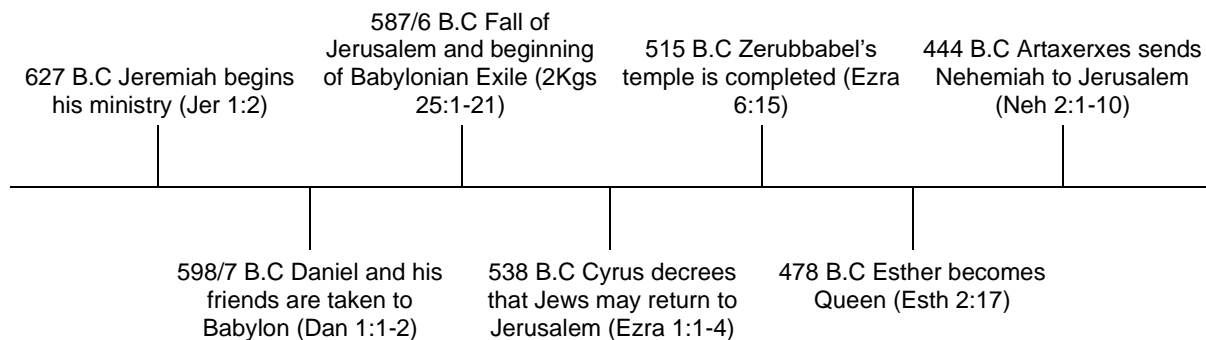


## Nehemiah Sermon Series #1

### Rebuilding The Wall

### Nehemiah 1



*All dates are approximate.*

1. Why would the returnees (remnant) in Judah be “in great trouble and shame” because “the wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire” (Neh 1:4)?
2. Nehemiah fasted and prayed after hearing the reports from the group of Jews (Neh 1:4). What is the purpose and effect of fasting? Is God more attentive to the prayers of people who fast? Why or why not? (Matt 6:16-18)
3. [Personal question, share as you are comfortable] Share a personal experience of fasting and prayer. If you have never fasted before, share why.
4. Read Nehemiah’s prayer in Neh 1:4-11 and take turns to paraphrase the prayer in your own words. How does Nehemiah pray? (see Deut 4:25-31; 7:6-11; Dan 9:1-19) List down what you can learn about how to pray from Nehemiah.
5. In Neh 1:10, Nehemiah prays that God redeemed His people by great power and strong hands. In Exodus, God redeems His people by delivering them from slavery in Egypt and in Ezra-Nehemiah, God redeems His people by delivering them from exile in Babylon. How is Jesus the continuation of God’s work of redemption for His people today? (Gal 3:10-14, Eph 1:3-14)
6. [Personal question, share as you are comfortable] From the reports of some Jews, Nehemiah received a burden to return to Jerusalem to rebuild its walls, leaving a promising and rewarding career as cup-bearer to the king (Neh 1:11b). What burden has God placed upon your heart today? What are you going to do about it?

**For further reading - Introducing Nehemiah<sup>1</sup>**

Nehemiah was in leadership during an extraordinary time in Israel's history. He faced opposition from all sides—both from his own people and from outside forces.

From antiquity, Ezra and Nehemiah have been considered almost as one book. The two books cover a period of about one hundred years. In 587 BC. Judah was removed from the land of Israel and deported to Babylon with only a few left in the land. In 538 B.C. Cyrus sent some of the people back to rebuild the temple. Nehemiah's second return would be around 430 B.C. Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah are all wrapped up in this history. Zerubbabel built the temple, Ezra brought the Law back into Israel's life and Nehemiah rebuilt the wall that made Jerusalem secure.

The amazing thing is that Israel had more autonomy and distinctiveness than at any time of their existence as a sovereign state. The Persian Empire allowed the people to practice their religious convictions with seriousness, and this probably accounts for why Israel had such a pristine religious life at this time.

While Zerubbabel and Ezra worked more in the religious realm, Nehemiah was really sent to Judah to be governor of the land, and that gave him considerably more ability to make some lasting changes in the life of the people. The people needed Nehemiah's strong leadership to handle the opposition to their work.

Derek Kidner describes the importance of this period of Israel's history:

The two centuries of the Persian empire were among the most formative periods of Jewish history. Out of the ruins of the little kingdom of Judah there had emerged the small community whose concern to be the people of God by pedigree and practice shaped it into the nation which meets us in the New Testament. Already the future prominence of the Temple and its priests of the law and its scribes, as well as the enmity between Jew and Samaritans, could be seen developing. Throughout this time the Persian regime was given a substantial part to play, both in sending and subsidizing the three expeditions of Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah, and in backing their authority with its own. It was not the first empire, nor the last, to be allotted some such role.<sup>2</sup>

The Israelites living in the land were fairly passive at this point in history. They had to adapt to the culture around them because they were such a small remnant. Their intermarrying and political ties made this considerably worse.

Nehemiah's gifts in administration and perseverance enabled him to mold this people back into the "people of God" so they could obey God's commands and have a distinction from the people around them. This is where Nehemiah shines through. It was not enough to build just the wall—he had to build a people that would once again stand on their own as God led them. Putting some "backbone" back into the people was a large part of what Nehemiah had to accomplish— even if it required him to be harsh with them at times.

God has called each of us to important tasks, both as leaders and as followers. Reading Nehemiah will help us to have the courage we need to follow through even in the face of difficulty and persecution.

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpted from Don A. Fields, *Lifeguide Bible Studies: Nehemiah* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 5-6.

<sup>2</sup> Derek Kidner, *Ezra & Nehemiah* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 17.

## Nehemiah Sermon Series #2

### Rebuilding The Wall

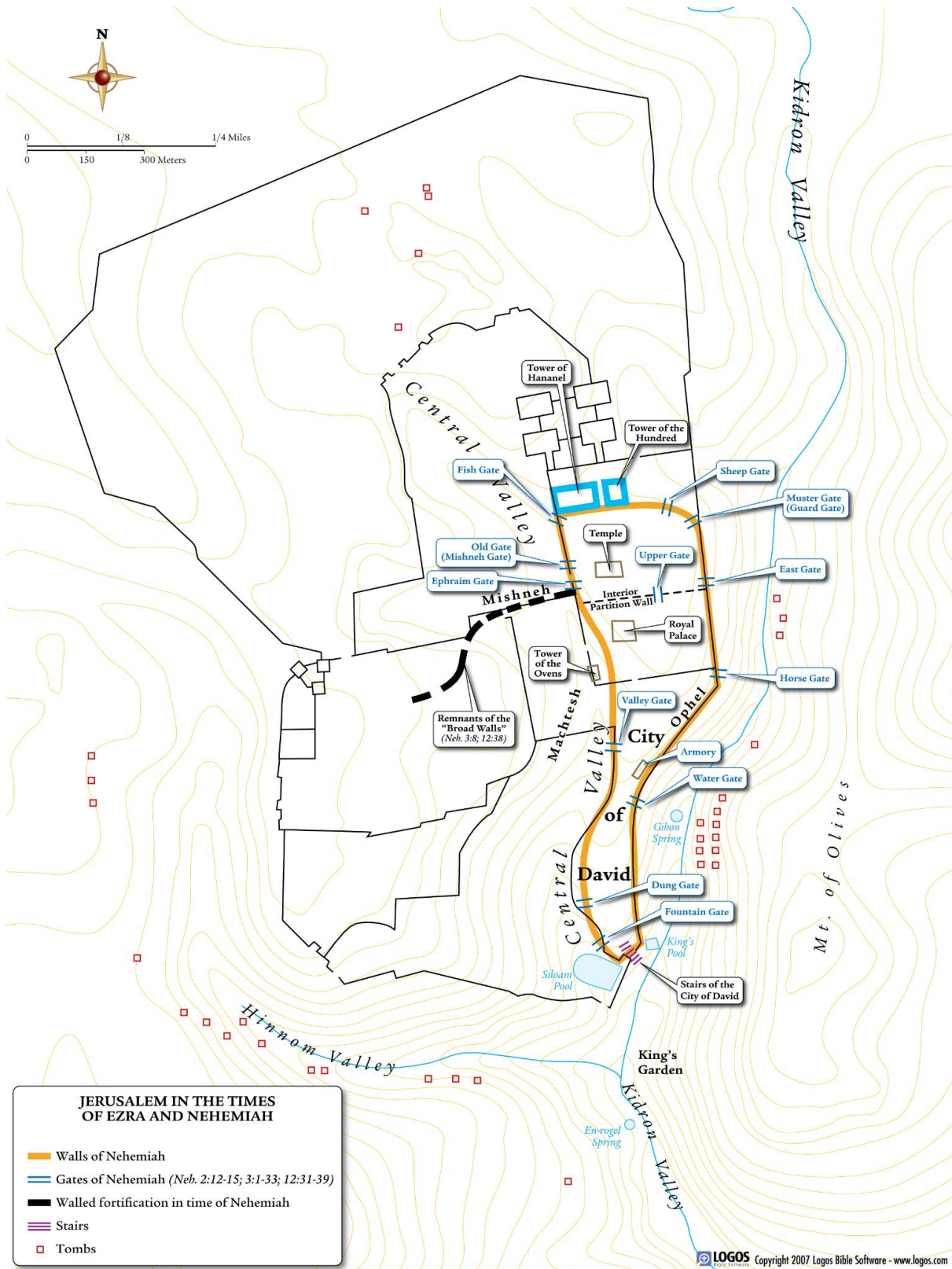
#### Nehemiah 2

1. After four months of prayer, Nehemiah went before the king with his request. How was Nehemiah's plan well-thought through? Write down what he requested from the king. (Neh 2:1-9)
2. Contrast the two verses below. If the good hand of God was upon Nehemiah, why did he still have to take the personal risk to go before the king? What does this mean for human partnership with God in the work of His kingdom? How does this encourage you?

"I said to the king, 'If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favour in your sight...'" (Neh 2:5a)	"The king granted me what I asked, for the good hand of my God was upon me" (Neh 2:8b)
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3. [Personal question, share as you are comfortable] Share a personal experience of taking a big personal risk in obedience to God.
4. Why was there opposition from Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem to Nehemiah's plan to rebuild the wall? (Neh 2:10, 19) How did Nehemiah respond to the challenges? (Neh 2:11-18)
5. Nehemiah faced opposition from other people. As God's people today, while we face opposition of all kinds, we do not battle against other people. What is the nature of our battle and how are we to resist the opposition? (1 Cor 10:3-6, Eph 6:10-20)
6. [Personal question, share as you are comfortable] God calls his people to "rise up and build" that which "were broken down and ... destroyed by fire" (Neh 2:13, 17-18). What have you observed in your family, society & church that is broken down and destroyed? What keeps you from rising up to rebuild or if you've started rebuilding, how are you doing so?

**Nehemiah Sermon Series #3**  
**Rebuilding The Wall**  
**Nehemiah 3**

1. Print out the map (page 3) and locate the different gates where the people were working. Go around the city wall and write verse numbers or the names of the people or leaders as they are listed. The list starts in the upper right hand corner and goes counter clockwise around the city. What observations can you make? What do you think was the point of recording all this information in this chapter?
2. How did Nehemiah organise the groups? Why? What lessons can we learn?
3. What do you see as the significance of the words, “opposite his own house” or “beside his own house?” How do you think this helped with the overall strategy especially when opposition arose? (Neh 3:10, 21-23; 28-30).
4. What kind of attitude was there among some of the rich from Tekoa (southern Judah) (Neh 3:5)? Do we see such an attitude in ourselves and in the church today? How can we address it?
5. Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-31. God’s people of all status, vocations and wealth came together in unity to rebuild the wall. How does this challenge us to think about (or rethink) the unity of God’s people in the church today?
6. The completion of any project requires a willingness to work and a spirit of unity. Share with one another some projects to build God’s kingdom you might want to be a part of. What might be required of you? What might be required of those around you (your Life Group, Ministry Group, friends, etc.)?



**Nehemiah Sermon Series #4**  
**Rebuilding The Wall: Overcoming Opposition**  
**Nehemiah 4**

1. What was the response to building the wall of Jerusalem (Neh 4:1-3)? What should we expect whenever we want to do the work of God (Lk 4:14-30; Mk 5:1-17)?
2. Identify the enemies within and without in Neh 4:10-12. What strategy did Nehemiah employ to deal with these 2 enemies (Neh 4:13-14)?
3. What are some “enemies” (within and without the church) to discourage God’s people today? What can we learn from Nehemiah 4 in dealing with these enemies?
4. [Personal question, share as you are comfortable] What are the enemies of faith that you encounter in your journey as a Christian? What can you learn from Nehemiah 4 in dealing with these enemies?
5. How does Satan seek to weaken us (Heb 2:15; Rom 8:15)? How can we overcome fear and the schemes of the evil one (Eph 6:10-17)?
6. What can you learn about prayer and ministry in Neh 4:16-23? How would these principles apply to us today?

## Nehemiah Sermon Series #5

### Rebuilding The Wall

#### Nehemiah 5

1. What was the issue described in Nehemiah 5:1-5?
2. Remembering that slavery was a common practice in Nehemiah's day, why was Nehemiah so angry (See Deut 15:12-15 & 24:10-15)? How do you think this is linked to God's redemption of the Jewish people by returning them to the land from exile?
3. Who were the people responsible for this inequity? Why would they act so unjustly in the midst of the unity of rebuilding the wall?
4. What are the various ways in which Nehemiah responded to the issue? (Neh 5:6-19) What do they tell us about Nehemiah's character and leadership?
5. Nehemiah did not lay heavy burdens on the people like his predecessors "because of the fear of God" (Neh 5:15c). How does the fear of God relate to our treatment of those around us? (See Lev 25:39-43)
6. How is Nehemiah's actions of setting the slaves free and breaking the yoke of oppression over the people a foreshadow<sup>3</sup> of how Jesus redeemed us? (Phil 2:6-8 & 1 John 3:16-18)

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<sup>3</sup> In Christian theology, a foreshadow is a person (or a thing) in the Old Testament that is a *type* of a person (or a thing) in the New Testament. When Nehemiah is described as a foreshadow of Jesus, we are saying that he behaves in a way that corresponds to Jesus' character or actions in the New Testament.

## For Further Reading<sup>4</sup>

### SERVANTHOOD THAT CLAIMS NOTHING AND GIVES GENEROUSLY.

We see in Nehemiah one who as governor could have “lorded it over the people” (Neh. 5:15) but who instead served them generously—gathering people from the nations at his table (vv. 17–18). Nehemiah did not claim the benefits of the allowance technically due him (vv. 14–18). We might think of the apostle Paul, who made no use of his God-given rights to payment for his gospel work (1 Cor. 9:14–15). For the sake of the Lord Jesus, he made himself “a servant to all” (1 Cor. 9:19). This kind of servanthood ultimately reflects a gospel-shaped pattern, shown most fully in Christ Jesus, who, “though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant” (Phil. 2:6–7). Through this heavenly servant, we receive by grace a salvation we do not deserve.

### FEAR OF GOD.

Nehemiah talks often about fear—of enemies (Neh. 4:14; 6:9, 14, 16, 19) and of God (1:11; 5:9, 15). He knows the “great and awesome” Lord (1:5), the only one worthy of fear—and the one who fights for his people and delivers them from fear of their enemies. Nehemiah understands David’s words: “The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?” (Ps. 27:1). But he also understands Proverbs’ words describing the fear of the Lord as the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 9:10). Nehemiah is a great example of Proverbs’ wisdom, applying the fear of God to all of life and showing the kind of prudence and understanding celebrated in the Wisdom Literature. This includes the realm of social responsibility: addressing their injustice toward the needy, Nehemiah calls the people to “walk in the fear of our God” (Neh. 5:9). Jesus comes calling people to fear only the God in heaven, the one “who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28). He offers in himself the authoritative word on fear: “Do not fear, only believe” (Mark 5:36).

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<sup>4</sup> Kathleen Nielson, *Ezra and Nehemiah (Knowing the Bible)* (Crossway, 63).



## Nehemiah Sermon Series #6

### Rebuilding The Wall

#### Nehemiah 6:1 - 7:73

#### Nehemiah 6:1-14

1. Ono is neutral territory between Judah and Samaria. How did Nehemiah know that Sanballat and Geshem were scheming to do him harm and not to make peace when he was invited to meet them in the plain of Ono? (Neh 6:2b)
2. What were the other threats that Nehemiah received? (Neh 6:6-7) How did Nehemiah respond?
3. [Personal question, share as you are comfortable] Fake news, rumours, slander and gossip distract God's people from doing God's work. Share about a time where you had to deal with similar threats in your family, workplace or church (share one). How did you respond?
4. Through his quick prayers (Neh 5:19 & 6:14), Nehemiah longed for God's justice i.e to punish evil and reward good. How do you long for God to "make things right" in our world today? How does Jesus' first coming usher in God's justice (and how do we explain the remaining injustice that we continue to witness in our world today? (Rev 19:11-16 & 21:3-8)

#### Nehemiah 6:15-7:4

5. Why did the enemies of the returnees perceive that the completion of the wall was accomplished with the help of God? (Neh 6:16)
6. What were Nehemiah's challenges and priorities in reestablishing the city of Jerusalem? (Neh 7:1-4)

#### Nehemiah 7:5-73

7. The rest of chapter 7 contains a long list of names and the number of people who had returned from the exile (cf. Ezra 2). Why do you think God would put in Nehemiah's heart for the people to be enrolled by genealogy? (Neh 7:5) Are genealogies important? Why or why not?

## Nehemiah Sermon Series #7

### Rebuilding The Wall

#### Nehemiah 8:1 - 9:38

#### Nehemiah 8

1. Imagine how amazing it would have been for the returnees to gather to hear the reading of the Book of the Law of Moses. What do you think were their attitudes towards the Word of God? Do you feel that Christians today carry similar attitudes? Why or why not?
2. Why did Nehemiah, Ezra and the Levites instruct the people not to mourn or weep on the holy day but celebrate with joy instead? (Neh 8:9-12) Does this teach us anything about the way we worship a holy God?
3. As the people completed rebuilding the wall, they gathered around the Word of God which revealed to them their identity as a people who were rescued by God. As Christians, how does the gospel now shape our identity as a people who are rescued by God?

#### Nehemiah 9

4. How did the people gather in prayer and worship? What preparations did they make before they came together? (Neh 9:1-5) Why are such preparations important? In our prayer and worship today, do we make such preparations? Why or why not?
5. List down some of the attributes of God that are mentioned in the prayer in Nehemiah 9:6-31.
6. Nehemiah 9:6-39 is the longest recorded prayer in the Bible and contains the history of salvation for the Jewish people. As Christians, how can you incorporate your own personal (or communal) salvation history in your prayer life?
7. [Personal question, share as you are comfortable] Take some time to write down a prayer which includes your own personal journey of salvation. If you're comfortable, take turns to pray this prayer out loud in the group.

**Nehemiah Sermon Series #8**  
**Renewing The Covenant**  
**Nehemiah 10**

1. Share a time you made a promise to someone but didn't keep it.
2. The people had just had a spiritual revival in Nehemiah 9. They repented and confessed their sins to God. How did they seal their promise and what is its significance? (Neh 9:38 - 10:27) (See Numbers 30 for law governing vows and oaths. Jesus warned against using empty oaths; Matt. 5:33-37; 23:16-22)
3. What groups of people were involved in ratifying the promise (10:28-29)? Why do you think it was important for all these groups to ratify it?
4. Why was "separation" (Neh 10:28) so important to God? What practices of the pagan nations and pagan religions would have made this necessary? Would "separation" be applicable today for Christians?
5. What do you think of the vow against marrying foreigners? (See Exodus 34:10-17 - danger of mixed marriages) Do you think such rules apply to Christians today? If so, in what way?
6. In what ways do these vows and commitments help the Israelites to worship God more faithfully and more holistically? How can we apply them meaningfully in our lives today that would deepen our worship of God?

**Nehemiah Sermon Series #9**  
**If Not You, Then Who?**  
**Nehemiah 11**

1. How did you decide to live in your current home? How much did the location factor into your decision?
2. After the Israelites recommitted themselves to God in Nehemiah 9, Nehemiah addressed another concern: who would live inside the Jerusalem walls? Where did the leaders of the people live? Where did the other people live? Why did it have to be rectified?
3. Consider the following quote: For a city to prosper and be great, it must be populated. And for more than seventy years, Jerusalem had been nothing but a ghost town. Now, over the last eighty or so years, it has been repopulated, with a new temple built (under Ezra) and the walls rebuilt (under Nehemiah). But the city still needed more people. Why do you think the people might have been reluctant to move back to Jerusalem?
4. What do you think of Nehemiah's choice to cast lots to make a decision? (Neh 11:1)
5. [Personal question, share as you are comfortable] Are there things that the Lord might be asking you to do which requires you to move outside your comfort zone? Share your struggles and experiences.
6. How has the Lord challenged you from the passage today? What actions will you take?

**Nehemiah Sermon Series #10**  
**Dedicating The Wall**  
**Nehemiah 12**

1. How do you prepare yourself to go to church each week? (e.g. Dress the children, wash the car, pray, etc.)
2. This chapter begins with another list of names. From your study of Nehemiah, what do you think is the significance of this list? Hint: Jeshua was the high priest with Zerubbabel, Joiakim is the son of Jeshua who became high priest before Ezra's return and Eliashib is the son of Joiakim who was the high priest when Nehemiah returned (Neh 3).
3. Read Exodus 19:10-15. Describe what are the requirements for ritual purification (Neh 12:30)? How are we to understand these requirements for ourselves?
4. In this chapter, there are many references to King David (Neh 12:24, 36, 37, 45, 46). How does the concept of kingship jibe with the reality that the people were now subjects of a foreign power despite returning from exile? Contextualising to our time today, how do we as Christians understand Jesus as our King? (Mark 1:15)
5. Read Nehemiah 12:43-47. How was the joy of dedicating the wall to continue (after the dedication) to be expressed by the people?
6. [Personal question, share as you are comfortable] Share with one another how you have been experiencing joy in worship or whether there are obstacles that prevent you from experiencing true joy in your worship life?

**Nehemiah Sermon Series #11**  
**Beware Of Spiritual Decline**  
**Nehemiah 13**

1. Share an occasion when you've either been a victim of a crime or encountered someone who broke the law.
2. What reforms did Nehemiah introduce in this chapter?
3. Think of a time when you made a commitment / promise to God, but failed to keep it. Why?
4. How is your daily time with God like? If this is an evaluation of your spiritual temperature, what does it tell you?
5. Read Nehemiah's short prayers in this chapter (Neh 13:14, 22, 29 & 31). What do you think were his concerns at this point of the story? Why?
6. How has the book of Nehemiah brought new clarity to your understanding of the Gospel?
7. Go one round in your group and share with one another what you have learnt from the book of Nehemiah.

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