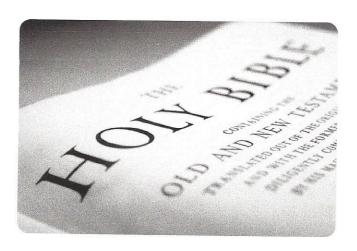
#### # 14 - BIBLE OVERVIEW

### Ezra & Nehemiah

The books of the Bible are divided into sections: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy are called the Law. In Genesis and Exodus we learned about the creation, the call of Abraham and how the twelve tribes of Israel are formed. The people end up in Egypt and Moses led them back to the Promised Land called Canaan, which is known as Israel today. Unfortunately, due to sin they did not return to Canaan right away, but wandered in the desert for forty years. Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy tell us about God's Laws and how the people prepared to enter the land God had given them.

Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, and 1 and 2 Chronicles are called History. They describe the history of this new nation: entering the land, being ruled by judges, and changing to a monarchy (kings) type of government. At the end of these books, due to continued sin, the Israelites are conquered by other nations and the people are scattered throughout the world. This is called the time of exile.



There are three other history books: Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. Unlike the previous history books these accounts are post exile books. It is a time in history when the Israelites start to return to their homeland. We will look at Ezra and Nehemiah this week and Esther next week.

We begin with Ezra. God told the people they would live in exile for seventy years. Keeping His promise, God used the pagan King Cyrus of Persia to begin sending the people back home. He softened Cyrus' heart and the king gave a proclamation that allowed the Jews to return home. He even gave them resources to begin rebuilding the Temple that had been destroyed in the wars. You know for the king to give up money it had to be from God!



Zerubbabel lead the first group back to Jerusalem. First he oversaw the building of an altar to worship God and then led the people to begin rebuilding the Temple. Many celebrated when the foundation was completed, but some of the older people, who remembered the first Temple, were sad. This new building was not as glorious. There was also political pressure from enemies. Due to these problems the work stopped for sixteen years. So God sent Haggai and Zechariah to encourage Zerubbabel and eventually the Temple was completed in 515.BC.

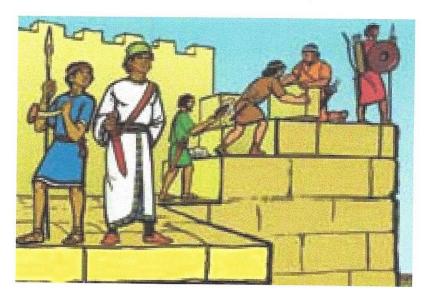
About eighty years later Ezra returned with a second group of exiles. What he found was discouraging. The Temple was rebuilt, but the people had intermarried with nonbelievers and they were not living as God commanded them. Marrying people who did not worship the God of Abraham was a problem throughout all of Israel's history. It always caused the people to fall away from God.

Ezra brought the people to repentance and guided them to be more obedient to God. What Ezra did helped set the stage for Nehemiah's return from exile.

Nehemiah was the cup-bearer for King Artaxerxes of Persia. As we just read, some of the exiled people had returned to Israel under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Ezra. News from these people about the state of Jerusalem distressed Nehemiah. They told him that the walls around Jeruslem were torn down. It was disgraceful for a city to be without a wall for protection, and Nehemiah saw this as disrespectful to God.

Because Nehemiah was a man of great faith he fasted and prayed about this problem. When he returned to his job with the king, he was still sad and the king took notice. It was illegal to be sad around the king, but God honored Nehemiah's faith. Instead of being angry, King Artaxerxes allowed the servant to return to Jerusalem to build the wall.

Throughout the Book of Nehemiah, we witness that he was a man of prayer. In Nehemiah there was at least eight times that he prayed to God spontaneously - a quick prayer for help or guidance. Nehemiah knew that all he accomplished was God's doing and for God's glory.



# DEVOTION

Read Nehemiah 1 and 2: 1-8.
What 5 things did Nehemiah do when he heard things were not going well in Jerusalem?
1. W
Why were walls so important to a city? They offered
from enemies. It was for a city's walls to be nonexistent or even in disrepair.
Why was Nehemiah terrified when the king noticed he looked sad?
PRAYER
Dear God, please help me to be like Nehemiah. Nehemiah's position as cupbearer to the king allowed him to ask permission to lead a group of exiles back to Jerusalem. Like Nehemiah, let me use every opportunity to honor and obey you. Let me also be a person of prayer, and remember to lift up spontaneous prayers when I need help or guidance. Amen.
My name is I am
years old. I am walking through the Bible with
on this date

### FOR A TODDLER

What you need: Nothing extra today

Do you know what city you live in? Jerusalem is a city far away from where you live, but it is an important city to God. A long time ago bad people made a mess in Jerusalem. This made God sad. He asked a man, named Nehemiah, to make the city great again by cleaning it up and building walls around it. This was a big job, but Nehemiah wanted to please God so he obeyed.



Sometimes G od asks us to do things that are hard or that we don't want to do. But we should obey G od.

the pictures showing obedience to God and put an X through the pictures when we are not obeying God.



## PRAYER

Dear God, Please help me obey you, ever want to do. Amen	n when it is hard or something I don't
My name is	I am
years old. I am walking	through the Bible with
	on this date