

Discover your Destiny: Finding your Place in God's Wall... _____

The Background and Historical Setting:

1. **Ezra and Nehemiah were originally a single book** (per the Hebrew Bible, the Talmud, the Jewish historian Josephus, and the oldest manuscripts of the Septuagint with Origen, A.D. 185-253, being the first to separate this book into 2 separate books) of historical narrative that was compiled from a variety of historical sources, including **the personal memoirs of Ezra the scribe (458 BC) and Nehemiah the cupbearer to the king (445 BC)**, which, according to Jewish tradition, Ezra compiled into its current form. The **purpose of these narratives** was to encourage the Jews who had returned from exile by reminding them that their **sovereign God was keeping His covenant and continuing His redemptive work in and through them for His glory**. The compilation date was likely around 425-400 BC.
2. **Lists play a significant role in the creation of this narrative:** temple artifacts, those who initially returned from exile, leaders who returned with the exiles, those involved in mixed (non-believers) marriages, those who rebuilt the wall, those who sealed the covenant, new residents of Jerusalem and the villages, the priests and Levites who returned with Zerubbabel. **Official correspondence** also provides role in the thematic structure of these books: decree of Cyrus, letter of Rehum to Artaxerxes, reply of Artaxerxes, and the letter of Artaxerxes on behalf of Ezra, etc.
3. **Three themes of Ezra and Nehemiah** are found in the decree of Cyrus (Ezra 1:2-4): (1) **Rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem** is God's objective at this point in the story of redemption; (2) **the people of God as a whole**, not just the leaders, are vital for accomplishing this purpose; (3) **the written word** is a powerful tool and guide used by God His objective.
4. The larger historical context includes **Cyrus the Great (559-530 BC)**, King of Persia who in 539 BC Cyrus turned against Nabonidus and captured Babylon. Cyrus would issue his decree in 538 BC (the Cyrus Cylinder was discovered in March 1879 in Babylon/Mesopotamia) allowing those conquered peoples living in exile to return to their own homeland with their sacred objects. **Darius the Great (522-486 BC)** would bring the empire to its greatest extent. **Xerxes I (485-465 BC)** launched a failed invasion of Greece but did choose a new queen, Esther (the time of the book with her name). **Artaxerxes I (465-424 BC)** is the time period of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Malachi.
5. While the Persians should never be considered "democratic," many of the kings did take a more lenient approach to ruling conquered peoples, giving much more freedom than most preceding empires.

Discovering your Destiny and finding your Place in God's Wall requires _____ the _____!
Nehemiah 3:1-32

Discovering your Destiny only becomes _____ through a _____ commitment to living the _____!

1. Living the priority begins with a _____ for _____..._____!"

- 1) _____ parties are named as participants in the reconstruction of _____ sections and _____ gates are listed in counter-clockwise fashion.
- 2) Some people will never _____! (N. 5: "put shoulder" refers to oxen refusing the yoke!). **Do you understand** the power of the division and delegation of responsibility? ___ Yes ___ No

Which organizational style do you follow?

- (1) _____ - First things first.
- (2) _____ - Loud things first.
- (3) _____ - Hard things first.
- (4) _____ - Last things first.
- (5) _____ - Dull things first.

2. Living the priority materializes with a _____ for _____..._____!

- 1) It appears that the rebuilding focused on the gates since the attacks would mostly happen there.
- 2) The circuit of walls was about _____ miles enclosing _____ acres so that each of the 42 sections averaged about _____ feet.

3. Living the priority flourishes with a _____ for _____..._____!

- 1) NOTE: There were no _____ builders listed in this whole chapter.
- 2) The only necessity was _____ saints!

"Discovering your destiny is not a destination, but rather a determination to do God's will NOW!"

Martin T. Akins