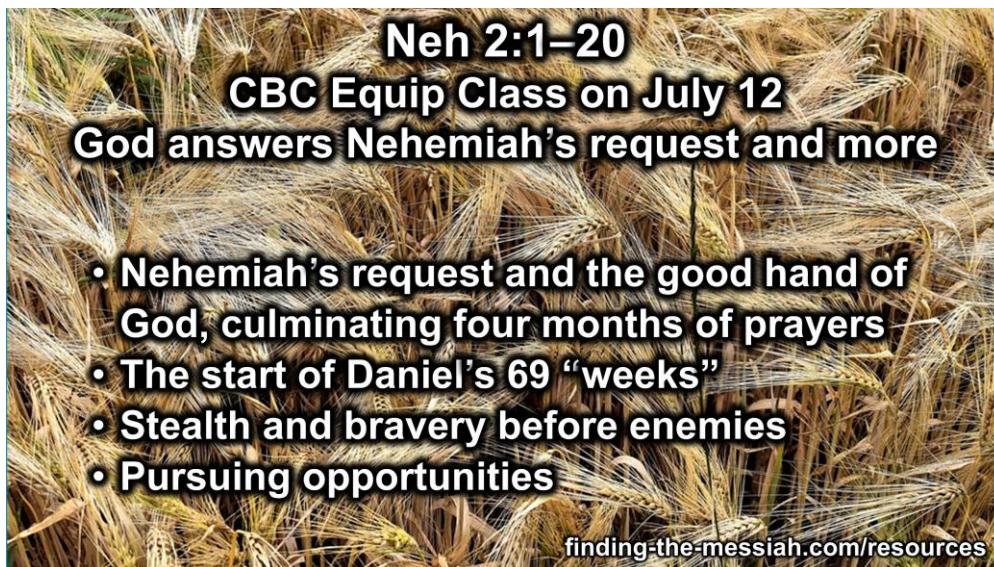




Slide 1: Nehemiah left a VIP, secure job for high-risk, adversity-laden, self-and prayer-initiated service and was the catalyst for spiritual revival. Four months of fervent prayer and planning preceded this. The good hand of God was with him. And the decree he requested and received started the clock, as prophesied by Daniel, which ended with Jesus' Palm Sunday arrival, as prophesied by Zechariah.

What about us? Has God given us opportunities to pursue with similar zeal, prayer, and blessings?

Neh 1:11–2:1 (Saturday, March 7, Nisan 4–5, 444 BC)

1:11 "O Lord, I beseech You, may Your ear be attentive to **the prayer of Your servant and the prayer of Your servants who delight to revere Your name**, and make Your servant successful **today** and grant him compassion before this man." Now I was the **cupbearer to the king**. **2:1** And it came about in the **month Nisan**, in the **twentieth year of King Artaxerxes**, that wine *was* before him, and I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. (NASB-95 for all Scriptures)

Slide 2:

1. This day, Neh 1:11ff was preceded by four months of prayers, fasting, and mourning, from Chislev (month 9, moon cycle 9 counting from spring) to Nisan (month 1 or 13 if counting from the preceding Nisan) by Nehemiah and others who revered the Lord.
2. Prayer that counts comes from those who revere (love) God. John 13:34; 14:15, 21; 15:9-10, 12, 17 (slides 6–8)
3. And God will answer the prayers of those who revere (love) Him. John 14:13, 14; 15:7, 16; 16:23-24, 26-27 (slides 9–10)

4. Team prayer counts
5. Nehemiah will leave a comfortable, secure job for an outpost where he will be hated, even targeted for assassination, and risk his trusted relationship with the king. He will risk his life and fortune for Yahweh. And as he prays later, "Remember me, O my God, for good" (5:19; 13:31)!
6. Nehemiah used the Hebrew civil calendar reckoning for Artaxerxes' reign (1:1 compared to 2:1 in the same year of Artaxerxes, which can only happen in the Hebrew civil calendar that starts in the seventh month, counting from spring, Tishri), pinning the decree in vs. 6 to 444 BC. And based upon (a) the warm climate of Susa that advances the spring barley harvest compared to Israel, (b) the probable Sabbath rest days (Saturdays) of Tishri 2 and 23 that Nehemiah recorded (8:13, 18; 9:1; Tishri = 7th month), and (c) the position of the sun and moon, the month (lunar cycle) of Nisan in chapter 2 began at sunset on Tuesday, March 3, 444 BC, and ended at sunset on Wednesday, April 1, 444 BC. Applying this 444 BC Nisan moon-cycle to Nehemiah's writings, (a) the wall construction started on Thursday, July 2, Av 4, (2:18b; 4th day of the 5th month from spring; 116 or 117 days after the decree); (b) the wall was completed on Saturday, August 22, Elul 25, (6:15; 52nd day of wall construction; 25th day of the 6th month); (c) the leaders gathered to Ezra to gain insight into the Law on Saturday, August 29, Tishri 2 (Neh 8:13–14; 7 days after completing the wall; the 2nd day of the 7th month); and (d) all the people rested on Saturday, September 19, Tishri 23 (the day between Nehemiah 8:18 b and 9:1–10:39; 28 days after completing the wall; the 23rd day of the 7th month). This skeleton helps establish several other dates in the book of Nehemiah as shown in slide 16.
7. **Is it wrong to conceal our feelings or plans?** (Nehemiah concealed his feelings and thoughts about Jerusalem's situation from the king for four months: "I had not been sad in his presence.")
8. **Did Jesus conceal things? Did Esther?**

Neh 2:2-5 (likely evening of the same Julian day: Nisan 5)

² So the king said to me, "Why is your face sad though you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of heart." Then I was **very much afraid**. ³ I said to the king, "Let the king live forever. Why should my face not be sad when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies desolate and its gates have been consumed by fire?" ⁴ Then the king said to me, "What would you request?" **So I prayed to the God of heaven.** ⁵ I said to the king, "If it please the king, and if your servant has found favor before you, send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it."

Neh 2:6 (same evening, start of Daniel's 69 sevens)

⁶ Then the king said to me, **the queen sitting beside him**, "How long will your journey be, and when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me, and **I gave him a definite time.**

Slide 3:

1. Was it okay for Nehemiah to be afraid? Was his fear sinful? Is fear sinful?
2. Four months of prayer preceded this, yet Nehemiah prayed again. Why?

Slide 4:

1. What do you think about the note saying "the queen sitting beside him"? Why such detail?
2. Notice that Nehemiah gave a definite timeline, as the king expected.

3. In my opinion, the queen sitting beside Artaxerxes probably was Esther.

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahasuerus#cite_note-9: "While today the king of Esther is usually identified as Xerxes I, the ancient traditions identify him with his son, Artaxerxes I. The Septuagint, the Vulgate, the Midrash of *Esther Rabbah*, 1:3, and the *Josippon* identify him as Artaxerxes. Many historians and exegetes from ancient times and the Middle Ages also identified Ahasuerus with Artaxerxes I, including, most notably, Josephus (Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 11, chapter 6, section 1), who relates that "Artaxerxes" was the name by which he was known to the Greeks. The Ethiopic text calls him *Arfeksis*, usually the Ethiopic equivalent of *Artaxerxes*.) If this was Esther, that could explain the notation about the queen. She would have been in favor of Nehemiah's request, and would have been queen of Persia for 13 years, likely with substantial influence over Artaxerxes. Also, this provides ancillary support that the day, or more likely the evening, either was a Sabbath (Friday sunset to Saturday sunset) or the evening after the Sabbath, a likely social day/evening when the queen would be present, and court business would be minimal; hence wine would be present.

Neh 2:7-8 (same day)

⁷ And I said to the king, "If it please the king, let letters be given me for the governors of the provinces beyond the River, that they may allow me to pass through until I come to Judah, ⁸ and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress which is by the temple, for the wall of the city and for the house to which I will go." And the king granted them to me **because the good hand of my God was on me.**

Slide 5:

1. Nehemiah fully understood why his request succeeded: **"the good hand of my God on me."**
2. Nehemiah had a well-thought-out plan, including letters that allowed him to pass through and gather timber for the gates and wall. He didn't just pray for those four months; he developed a detailed plan, anticipating that his and others' prayers would be answered.
3. God used these trying circumstances to start the clock

for the coming of Christ. Can you think of other examples of difficult circumstances combined with prayer in the timing and pronouncement of Christ's coming? Are trying circumstances necessarily bad? How should that affect our response or our prayers?

4. Daniel 9:25 (slide 11) is the only date-specific prophecy in the Bible that tells us exactly when Christ would arrive, and it specifies the date from which the count begins, matching Artaxerxes' decree. Jesus' Palm Sunday entry occurred the morning after the 69 sevens ended. His crucifixion occurred five days later. These events were precisely planned.
5. According to Dan 9:25, from the "decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be **seven weeks and sixty-two weeks**; it will be built again, with **plaza and moat, even in times of distress.**" Nehemiah chapter 2 contains the only decree that initiates Jerusalem's rebuilding "with **plaza and moat, even in times of distress.**" Jesus arrived in Jerusalem as "Messiah the Prince" on Palm Sunday, March 29, Nisan 10, as Christ and many others counted the days that month, AD 33. Jesus' Palm Sunday arrival occurred in the first morning 173,880 [(7 + 62) × (7 × 24 × 15)] days after the first Sabbath in Nisan, 444 BC (Saturday, March 7). (7 + 62) is stated in Dan 9:25, as is the *seven* in (7 × 24 × 15). 24 × 15 (360) is the only whole increment that back-calculates to 444 BC (Saturday, March 7) but is not mentioned in Dan 9:24-27. The next closest whole-number increments of 69 × 7 days before Palm Sunday are not viable for this decree: (69 × 7 × 359) and (69 × 7 × 361) days before Palm Sunday are 6/30/443 BC and

11/7/446 BC, respectively, which cannot fit Nisan in Artaxerxes' 20th year. In my opinion, the "weeks" of Daniel, actually *sevens* in Hebrew, are composed of 15 cycles of the 24 divisions of priests (1 Chron 24), each serving 7 days each from Sabbath to Sabbath. This makes sense since (1) temple service was a shadow of things in the presence of God (Heb 8:5; 9:23), (2) Gabriel probably provided the time until the Messiah would arrive in time increments in the presence of God, and (3) the *sevens* were decreed for Israel and Jerusalem (Dan 9:24) with the priestly units of service (24 divisions each serving one seven-day week) being core to Israel's responsibilities and maybe reflecting time increments in heaven.

Prayer that counts comes from those who revere (love) God: John 13:34; 14:15, 21, 23; 15:9-10, 12, 17

- 13:34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love (agapate) one another, even as I have loved (hgaphsa) you
- 14:15 "If you love (agapate) Me, you will keep My commandments.
- 14:21 "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves (agapwn) Me; and he who loves (agapwn) Me will be loved (agaphqhsetai) by My Father, and I will love (agaphsw) him and will disclose Myself to him."

Slide 6, above: Jesus' final instructions on the night before His crucifixion: the Last Supper, the upper room discourse, and along the way to Gethsemane (John 13-17)

Prayer that counts: Revere (love) God, cont.

- 14:23 "If anyone loves (agapa) Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love (agaphsei) him
- 15:9-10 "Just as the Father has loved (hgaphsen) Me, I have also loved (hgaphsa) you; abide in My love (agaph).¹⁰ "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love (agaph); just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love (agaph).
- 15:12 "This is My commandment, that you love (agapate) one another, just as I have loved (hgaphsa) you.

Slide 7, above: No notes.

Prayer that counts: Revere (love) God, cont.

- 15:17 "This I command you, that you love (agapate) one another.

Slide 8, left: No notes.

God will answer the prayers of those who revere (love) Him: John 14:13, 14; 15:7, 16; 16:23-24, 26-27

- 14:13 "Whatever you ask in My name, **that will I do**
- 14:14 "If you ask Me anything in My name, **I will do it**
- 15:7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, **ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.**
- 15:16 so that **whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.**

Slide 9, above: Of course, if we love God, we will do His will, which includes loving one another.

Answering the prayers of those who revere (love) Him

- 16:23-24 Truly, truly, I say to you, if you **ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you.**²⁴ "Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; **ask and you will receive**, so that your joy may be made full.
- 16:26-27 In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf;²⁷ for the **Father Himself loves (filei) you, because you have loved (pefilhkate) Me**

Slide 10, above: Notice the transition from agape love to friendship love.

Dan 9:25-26a (~540 BC)
²⁵ "So you are to know and discern *that* **from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince** *there will be seven weeks (שבעים, sevens) and sixty-two weeks (וּשְׁבַעִים, and sevens); it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.* ²⁶ "Then after the sixty-two weeks (הַשְּׁבַעִים, the sevens) the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing,

Slide 11, left: See notes 4 and 5 in slide 5.

Jump to slide 20 (and slide 21 if needed) to discuss the bold-font questions below, then continue the sequence starting at slide 12.

Nehemiah left a VIP, secure job for high-risk, adversity-laden, self- and prayer-initiated service and became the catalyst for spiritual revival. Can you think of similar biblical examples of this? What are the commonalities and differences?

Does God always bless these risk takers?

Neh 2:9–10

⁹ Then I came to the governors of the provinces beyond the River and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen. ¹⁰ When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about it, it was very displeasing to them that someone had come to seek the welfare of the sons of Israel.

Slide 12, left: Antisemitism is not new.

Neh 2:11–13 (Sun, June 28, arrival, 112 Hebrew days after the decree, 113 Julian days)

¹¹ So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days. ¹² And I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. **I did not tell anyone what my God was putting into my mind to do for Jerusalem** and there was no animal with me except the animal on which I was riding. ¹³ So I went out at night by the Valley Gate in the direction of the Dragon's Well and on to the Refuse Gate, inspecting the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were consumed by fire.

Slide 13:

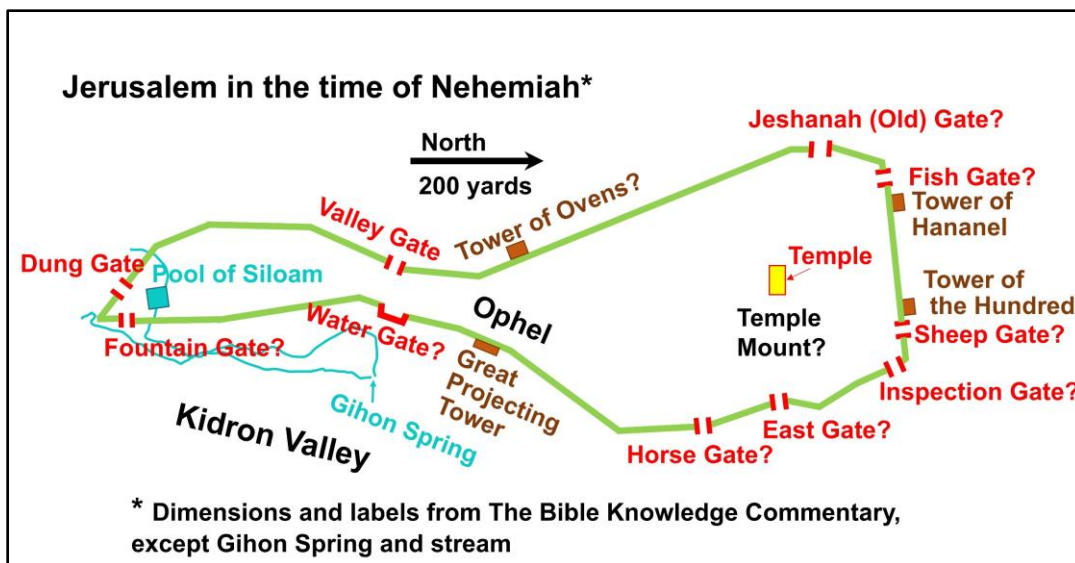
1. Notice that Nehemiah didn't tell anyone his plans (from God). Total secrecy. **When is total secrecy appropriate? Did Jesus do that? Should we? If so, when?**
2. Nehemiah arrived on Sunday, June 28, Tammuz 29 (29th day of the fourth lunar cycle from spring, 112 days after the decree in the Hebrew calendar with days starting at sunset and 113 after the decree in the Julian calendar with days starting at midnight). The next day, Monday, was the new-moon, rest day of Av 1, which he would have honored. Tuesday, Av 2, was a workday, probably when

he planned his strategy. He inspected the walls starting that Tuesday night, June 30, start of Av 3, probably by starlight after the 2.9-day-old moon set 1 hour and 51 minutes after sunset. No one could see him or his men.

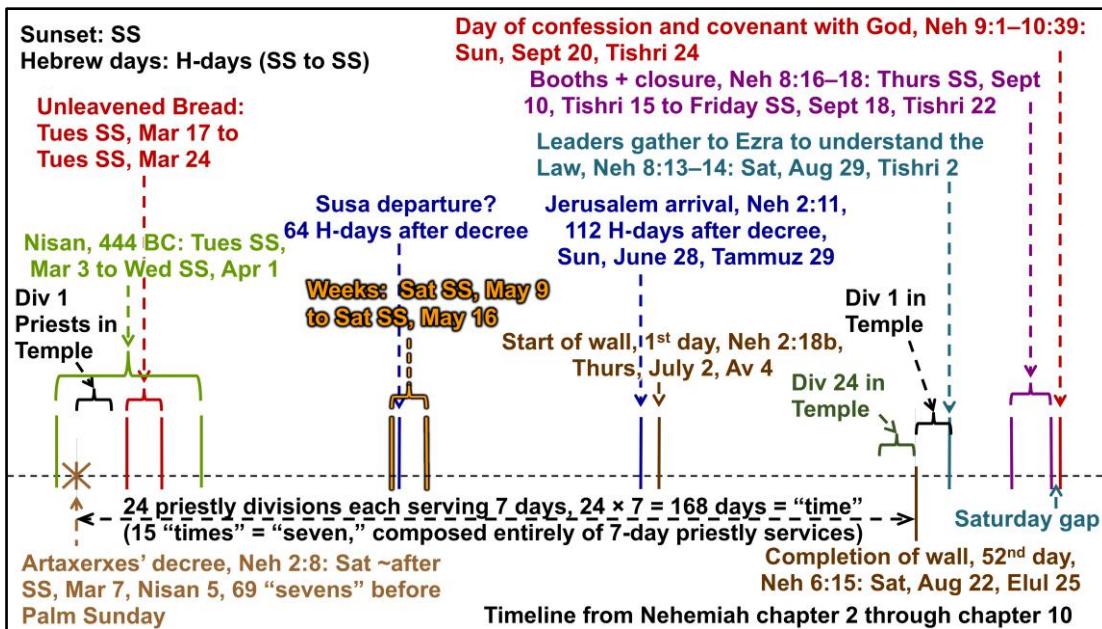
Neh 2:14–15 (Tues eve–Wed predawn, June 30–July 1, inspection of wall, 115 Hebrew days after the decree)

¹⁴ Then I passed on to the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but there was no place for my mount to pass. ¹⁵ So I went up at night by the ravine and inspected the wall. Then I entered the Valley Gate again and returned.

Slide 14: See the map on the next slide.



Slide 15: This map shows the 11 gates and four towers mentioned in Nehemiah chapter 3. Of the 11 gates, 6 were repaired (vv. 1, 3, 6, 13–15). Gene A. Getz, in The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 678.



Slide 16: Note this sequence demonstrates the order of the priestly divisions as set by David, Zadok, and Ahimelech (1 Chron 24:1-3). Jesus' Palm Sunday entrance on the first day of the week (Sunday, March 29, AD 33) was exactly 69 "sevens" after Artaxerxes' decree (~Saturday evening, March 7, 444 BC, on the first Hebrew day of the week). 69 "sevens" are 69 sets of 15 cycles of the 24 divisions of priests each serving 7 days (69 ×

15 × 24 × 7 days). This means that division 1 of the priests was in charge during Holy Week, from Palm Sunday through Christ's crucifixion. Daniel's 69 "sevens" (9:25) had finished the preceding day, possibly at noon. Also, 35.3 years prior, division 8 of the priests was in charge starting at about noon on the first day of the Feast of Dedication when Zacharias was selected by lot to represent the people at the time of the evening prayers (~3 pm, Saturday, December 15, Kislev 25, 4 BC). This explains why the whole multitude of the people were in prayer (Luke 1:8-22).

Notice that there were no Sabbath breaks during the construction of the wall. Even the last workday, Elul 25, was a Sabbath. "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath," Mark 2:27. The first Sabbath after completion was seven days later, Tishri 2, which explains why the leaders gathered to Ezra to understand the law on that day (Neh 8:13-14).

Neh 2:16-18a (decision to start, next daytime, Wed, July 1, 115 Hebrew days after the decree)

¹⁶ The officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; nor had I as yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials or the rest who did the work ¹⁷ Then I said to them, "You see **the bad situation we are in**, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned by fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a reproach." ¹⁸ **I told them how the hand of my God had been favorable to me** and also about the king's words which he had spoken to me. **Then they said, "Let us arise and build."**

Neh 2:18b-20 (18b; Thurs, July 2, start of construction)

^{18b} So they put their hands to the good work. ¹⁹ But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard it, they mocked us and despised us and said, "What is this thing you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?" ²⁰ So I answered them and said to them, **"The God of heaven will give us success; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no portion, right or memorial in Jerusalem."**

Slide 17:

1. Notice the great response by the leaders to follow the hand of God.
2. **What initiated such a great response? Did it happen before (consider Moses and the Exodus generation)? Will it happen again? Can we have a role in that?**
3. The response that started at Pentecost after Christ's Crucifixion has some similarities, but more on an individual basis: "Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?'" (Acts 2:37)

Slide 18:

1. Nehemiah knew the good hand of God was with him and those doing the work!
2. He would share none of the blessings with those who hated, mocked, and opposed the work, basically the haters of the God of Israel. Compare with Jesus' parable about not throwing pearls to swine (Matt 7:6) or with the wedding feast with those who reject the invitation or try to sneak in being cast out into darkness (Matt 22:1-14).
3. **Why does God send those who reject Him into the**

Lake of Fire? Look at Matt 7:22-23: "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'"

Matt 7:13–14, 22–23 (Sermon on the Mount, ~ 2 years before Christ's crucifixion)

¹³ "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. ¹⁴ "For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. ... ²² "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' ²³ "And then I will declare to them, '**I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.**'"

Slide 19:

1. Why does God send those who reject Him into the Lake of Fire? (continued from slide 18)
2. My best estimate for the date of the Sermon on the Mount is Thursday–Saturday, April 26–28, Iyyar 15–17, AD 31. Christ was crucified about two years later on Friday, April 3, in AD 33, on Nisan 14, as the temple leadership designated the day.

Neh 2:1–20

God answers Nehemiah's request and more

- Nehemiah's request and the good hand of God, culminating four months of prayers
- The start of Daniel's 69 "weeks"
- Stealth and bravery before enemies
- Pursuing opportunities

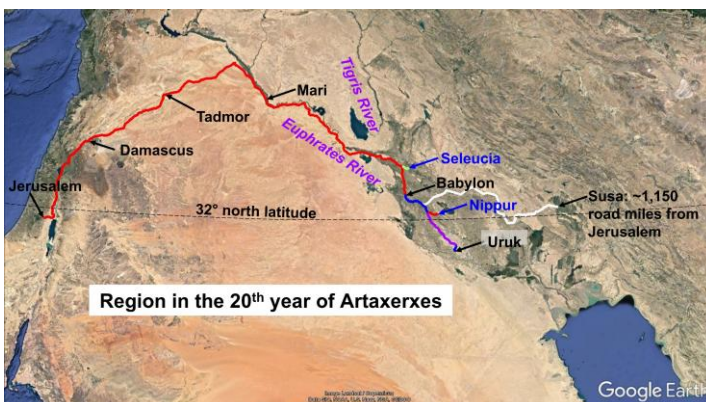
Slide 20: Nehemiah left everything to honor and lead others to the Lord. He took great risks. His passion for the Lord, accentuated by fervent prayers, led to a great revival and the decree that set the clock ticking for the Messiah! Nehemiah chose this path, anticipating that God's enemies would hate him. He concealed his plans until the right time and worked with God's people to bring them to fruition. He had a unique opportunity and used it! To God be the Glory!

What about us? Has God given us opportunities to pursue with similar zeal, prayer, and blessings? Ask Him and see what He does!

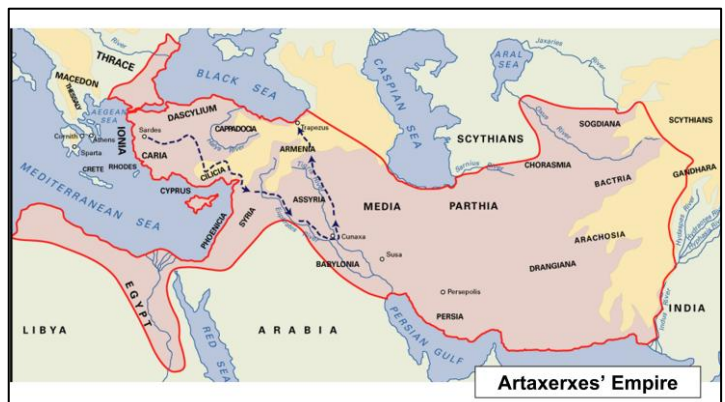
Hebrews 11

¹ Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ² For by it the men of old gained approval. ³ By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. ⁴ By faith Abel ... ⁵ By faith Enoch ... ⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please Him ... ¹³ All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

Slide 21: Potentially use this slide with the discussion after slide 11: Does God always bless these risk takers?



Slide 22, above: No notes.



Slide 23, above: No notes.