

From the Garden to Glory

Nehemiah

Author: Uncertain, Possibly Ezra and/or Nehemiah

Timeline: 446-445 B.C.

Location: Jerusalem

Category: Historical

Theme: Rebuilding the Wall/Perseverance and Prayer

Overview:

Nehemiah was a cupbearer to King Artaxerxes of Persia and was burdened by God concerning the welfare of Jerusalem and its people. Nehemiah's concern prompted him to take a bold step and ask the king for permission to go and rebuild the wall around Jerusalem. Nehemiah challenged the people of the city to arise and reconstruct the wall. Despite opposition from without and abuse from within, through perseverance and prayer, the wall was built in fifty-two days.

Nehemiah was a governor who brought physical and political reconstruction and led the people in moral reform. Ezra the priest brought spiritual revival to the people. Malachi, who was the last Old Testament prophet ministered during this time. The book of Nehemiah takes us to the end of the historical account in the Old Testament approximately four-hundred years before the birth of Christ and the beginning of the New Testament.

Introduction:

As we begin our study of the book of Nehemiah, consider the following questions and write your responses:

1. Nehemiah's name means "Comfort of Yahweh." Look up the word *comfort* in a dictionary and write the definition. How has the Lord brought comfort in your life? In what area of your life do you need Him to bring you comfort today? Read and meditate on Psalm 147:3.
2. Jeff Lasseigne says that the theme of the book of Nehemiah is "Prayer and Perseverance." Sit before the Lord and make Jeremiah 33:3 your prayer, calling to Him and asking Him to reveal "great and mighty things" concerning your prayer life and your perseverance. Make a note of everything He shows you.
3. The word "build" is used over 20 times in the book of Nehemiah. What is the Lord currently building in your life? What are you in turn building into the lives of others?

Nehemiah Prays for His People

Read Nehemiah 1

1. Look at verses 2-3. What was the condition of the wall surrounding Jerusalem? The purpose of a wall is to protect or separate; usually a wall is constructed to keep someone or something in or out. Think about your own life and answer the following questions:
 - What *walls* have you created to protect yourself, your family and your home from the world?
 - What is the current condition of these walls? Are any of them broken down and in need of repair?
 - What could you do to strengthen or rebuild your walls?
2. Look at verse 4. What was Nehemiah's reaction when he heard about the conditions in Jerusalem? What is your reaction when you hear about the moral decay of our nation?

3. Look at verses 5-11. Nehemiah ran to the Lord with His sorrow. Where do you go when you are brokenhearted? Nehemiah confessed that he and his father's house had sinned against God. Spend some time today in prayer, praising the Lord, confessing sin, and interceding for those you love.

Rebuilding the Wall

Read Nehemiah 3

1. Verse 1 says that Eliashib the high priest rose up and built the sheep gate. As a spiritual leader, he initiated the rebuilding of the wall. What are you initiating in your position as a spiritual leader?
2. Verse 5 says that the Tekoites made repairs but their nobles did not work. Is it possible that they thought they were above such menial labor? Ask the Lord to search *your* heart. Is there a task which you think is too menial for you to do for the Lord?
3. The building of the wall proceeded quickly and efficiently. Each person did his part, rebuilding the portion of the wall for which he was responsible. This is similar to the way the Lord has created the body of Christ to function. Read 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4:1-6 and answer the following questions:
 - What is your part in the body of Christ?
 - Have you given yourself completely to do what God has called and gifted you to do? If not, what do you need to do?
 - Why is it important and necessary that each Christian fulfills his or her individual call?

Overcoming Opposition

Read Nehemiah 4

1. Look at 4:1-3. Sanballat and Tobiah harassed and mocked the Jews as they were rebuilding the wall. This was initially a verbal attack on their minds and emotions. Consider the following questions:
 - As the Lord has directed you to be involved in a *building project*, have you encountered any mocking, criticism or harassment? If so, have any of these attacks been on your mind or emotions?
 - What have you done to protect your mind and emotions from these attacks?
 - Can you share a verse that has been especially helpful during these times?
2. Verse 6 says that *the people had a mind to work*. What does this mean? How do you stay focused on the work the Lord has for you to do? How do you avoid discouragement and distraction?
3. Look at verse 14. Nehemiah encouraged the fatigued and fearful Jews. List some ways that you *remember the Lord* during times of fear or discouragement.

Ezra Reads the Law

Read Nehemiah 8:1-12

1. Look at verses 3 and 5. What does it mean to be *attentive to the Book of the Law*? How are you attentive to God's Word? Verse 5 says that the people showed their respect for the Word of God by standing while it was read. In a daily, practical way, how do you show your respect for the Lord and His Word?
2. Verse 6 describes the way that the people worshiped the Lord. How do *you* worship the Lord?

3. Look at verse 10. Nehemiah told the people, "The joy of the Lord is your strength." Look at the following verses and note what you learn about the source of joy:

- Psalm 16:11
- Jeremiah 15:16
- John 16:24
- Romans 14:17

Nehemiah Rebuilds the Morals

Read Nehemiah 9

1. Look at verse 2. Before the Israelites confessed their sins, they separated themselves from all foreigners. How can *foreigners*, the people and things of this world, keep you from being aware of your sin? Are there any *foreigners* in your life from which you need to be separated?
2. Look at verse 3. The Israelites read God's Word for one fourth of the day and then spent one fourth of the day in prayer. What fraction of your day is consumed with the Word and prayer? If you are not satisfied with this amount of time, what is your plan for change?
3. Verses 6-38 describe many ways in which the Lord had blessed the children of Israel. Take some time today and make a list of the blessings that *you* have received from the Lord

Nehemiah Dedicates the Wall

Read Nehemiah 12:27-47

1. Look at verse 27. The wall was dedicated to the Lord. When something is dedicated, it is set apart and committed for a specific use. What have you dedicated to the Lord? How has doing so resulted in gladness and thanksgiving in your life?

2. Look at verse 30. What did the priests and Levites do? Why do you think this was necessary (see Leviticus 11:44-45)? How do you purify your own heart for service to the Lord?
3. Look at verse 43. The greatest sacrifice we can offer the Lord is that of *self*. Look at Romans 12:1. How have you offered yourself as a *living sacrifice* to Him? How has this caused you to *rejoice with great joy*?

Reforms of Nehemiah

Read Nehemiah 13

1. Look at verse 4 and Nehemiah 2:10. Eliashib had allied himself with Israel's enemy. Who or what are the enemies of God's people today? How do you keep from becoming allied with them?
2. Look at verses 6-9. During Nehemiah's absence the people returned to their former sinful ways. Their obedience seemed dependant on Nehemiah. How can you develop a desire to please and obey the Lord that is not dependant on any other person?
3. Look at verses 14, 22, and 31. For what do you want God to remember you?

Summary

As you conclude your study of the book of Nehemiah consider the following questions and write your answers:

1. What is the most important lesson you have learned from your study of this book? How can you apply this lesson in your life this week?

2. What "new insights" did you learn about the Lord and yourself from your study?

3. List one way in which your study caused you to do each of the following:

Praise and worship the Lord:

Confess an area of sin to the Lord:

Thank the Lord:

Ask for something from the Lord: