



Nehemiah: God the Rebuilder

Memory Verse: Nehemiah 4:6 "So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart."

Background

Nehemiah is the 16th book of the Bible and the 11th book of history in the Old Testament. Although Esther follows the book of Nehemiah to round out the history books, Nehemiah covers the last historical period in the Old Testament some 400 years before the birth of Christ. The Hebrew title of the book means "Comfort of Jehovah." Scholars believe that Nehemiah, cupbearer to the king in the Persian royal court, is the author of the book. Much of the book is told from his first-person perspective. However, others think that Ezra could also have written Nehemiah using Nehemiah's personal accounts and other materials. Nehemiah was likely written around 425 BC.

The time period covered in Nehemiah is around 19 years from 444-425 BC. During this time, Nehemiah leaves his prominent position in Persia as cupbearer to King Artaxerxes to lead the third and final return of Jews to Jerusalem following the Babylonian exile. Although the temple in Jerusalem had been rebuilt as mentioned in the book of Ezra, the walls around the city were still in disrepair. Nehemiah leads the final group of Jewish peoples back to Jerusalem in order to rebuild the city walls thirteen years after Ezra's return and reforms. Malachi was a prophet during the time of Nehemiah.

The Short Story

Nehemiah leads the returning Jewish exiles to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem.

What's the Big Idea?

While the book of Ezra focused on the spiritual restoration of Judah, the book of Nehemiah focuses mostly on the political and geographical restoration. Nehemiah was neither priest nor prophet. However, his time as cupbearer to the Persian king gave him leadership skills that were needed by the people in Jerusalem. The first seven chapters in Nehemiah are devoted to the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, something that had not been done in the 94 years since the first remnant had returned under Zerubbabel. Without these walls, Jerusalem was not really considered a city. As the spiritual and political center of the nation of Judah, it was very important that these walls be rebuilt. Nehemiah and the people faced opposition from all sides in the rebuilding process. Nevertheless, Nehemiah overcame the opposition with prayer and action, challenging the people to rebuild the walls. The walls were rebuilt in 52 days and a spiritual revival soon follows. Nehemiah becomes governor of Jerusalem and with Ezra, they rebuild the political and spiritual foundations of the Jewish peoples following the Babylonian captivity.

So What? Why is this book so important? What was God's purpose for the book?

God's power and restoration is seen in the book of Nehemiah. The building of the walls in 52 days against all opposition, revealed God's power to all. Nehemiah 6:16 records that, "When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God." God is a God who is in the business of restoration and rebuilding. He reestablished His people in their homeland just as He had said He would do. Seeing His hand in their lives, the lives of the Jewish people were changed and they experience spiritual revival. In the book of Nehemiah, we see everything being restored in Judea except the king. The temple is rebuilt, Jerusalem and its walls are reconstructed, the people are reformed and the covenant with God is renewed. The Messianic line is still intact and the next king that Judea would have is our Lord and Savior, Christ the King. God still rebuilds things today...broken lives, broken hearts, broken relationships...When we seek God in prayer and follow Him in obedient faith, His power becomes evident in our lives, opposition is overcome, and we are so very blessed.

**Material taken from various sources.*

Teaching Text

Nehemiah 8:5-10 “And Nehemiah continued, “Go and celebrate with a feast of rich foods and sweet drinks, and share gifts of food with people who have nothing prepared. This is a sacred day before our Lord. Don’t be dejected and sad, **for the joy of the LORD is your strength!**”

Sermon-Based Discussion Questions

- Why was it important for Nehemiah to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem? Why were they in ruins?
- How does Joel 2:25-26 apply to what Nehemiah is doing in Jerusalem? Why does God restore?
- Why were the people so convicted and sorrowful in Nehemiah 8:5-7? How can you relate?
- Why does repentance bring joy to those who are sincere? Why are we to rejoice and celebrate?
- What does the phrase “**the joy of the LORD is your strength!**” mean to you today?

Practical Application

- Where do you need to rebuild & restore an area of your life? Where are you under reconstruction?
- Neh. 8:8 suggests understanding: How hard is it for you to understand the Word and things of God?
- Do you find it hard to repent to the Lord? What makes it so difficult to do?
- Where do you need the joy of the Lord in your life? Where do you need His strength applied?
- Where do you sense God is telling you to stop lamenting over the past and move into celebrating?

Hitting the Highpoints

- Nehemiah 4:1-6 “Then I prayed, “Hear us, our God, for we are being mocked...”
- Nehemiah 5:9-13 ““What you are doing is not right! Should you not walk in the fear of our God....”
- Nehemiah 6:15-16 “They realized this work had been done with the help of our God.”
- Nehemiah 8:1-6 “...All the people listened closely to the Book of the Law. “
- Nehemiah 9:5-36 “We have sinned greatly, and you gave us only what we deserved...”

Bonus Features

The Jews needed someone to help them, and God used Nehemiah to fit the bill. Like Jesus, Nehemiah left a respected position with the King and many comforts to one that was not nearly as easy. He identified with the people around him and lead them into restoration. Through all of this, Nehemiah was constantly in prayer and seeking God’s help to rebuild the city. He did not claim glory for himself but always gave God the credit for his successes. Today, Jesus Christ is our Savior who brings us the restoration that only He can provide.

Personal Takeaways and Notes