

NEHEMIAH

Last of the Old Testament Historical Books

Written around 445 B.C.

- Either by Nehemiah or Ezra

Covers the 3rd return of the exiles to their homeland of Jerusalem

- Zerubbabel led the first group

- Ezra led the 2nd group

- Nehemiah leads the final group

Jerusalem has been rebuilt

- The temple has been rebuilt

- but the city wall has not

- without a wall and gates, cities were very vulnerable to attack

The book opens with Nehemiah (the cup bearer of the king) asking about the condition of those who returned to their homeland

- it is reported to him that they are in bad shape

- the city walls are in ruins and the gates are burned

What everyone remembers about the book of Nehemiah is that he was responsible for rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem

- but look what happened before that

The first thing he does is weep and mourns for days

- he fasts and prays

- he repents and confesses the sins of his people

- he asks the Lord for favor in the eyes of the king

With a heart like that and a desire to do the right thing, surely the Lord granted his request

- well he did, but not how we would expect Him to

- He heard of the news and began to pray in the month of Chislev (March?)

- He didn't approach the king until Nisan (July?)

- He waited 4 months for God's timing

-How many of us approach our prayer lives that way?

- we have a need

- we gather in a small prayer meeting

-we expect results by morning

look at our typical prayer request vs. Nehemiah's

-ours typically include basics like:

-health, finances, joy, emotional healing...

-basically, it is all focused on us

-and we expect results right away

-If we don't get an answer right away, we are told we have weak faith, sin in our life, or that God said no

Nehemiah's prayer is different

-it has nothing to do with gain or benefit for himself

-he is actually praying for a harder life

-he is the cup bearer of the king

-from what I can guess, that doesn't sound to "labor-intensive"

-but his heart breaks for the things that trouble God

-and on top of that, he waits 4 months to get a response

-we live in a microwave society

-many of us have allowed our fast paced lives to creep into our spiritual lives

He approaches King Artaxerxes

-God puts people in positions of influence

-He asks for permission to go rebuild the walls and gates of Jerusalem

-he also uses his influence with the king to ask for more

-asks the king to write letters to the governors of the land to give him safe passage, lumber and building materials

-the king gives him permission

-A group is assembled and work begins

-the enemies are mock them and fight with them

-they try to discourage them to get them to stop

-They pray and find new courage

-and a new plan

Neh 4:15 And it happened when our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had frustrated their plan, then all of us returned to the wall, each one to his work.

Neh 4:16 And it came about from that day on, that half of my servants carried on the work while half of them held the spears, the shields, the bows, and the breastplates; and the captains *were* behind the whole house of Judah.

Neh 4:17 Those who were rebuilding the wall and those who carried burdens took *their* load with one hand doing the work and the other holding a weapon.

Neh 4:18 As for the builders, each *wore* his sword girded at his side as he built, while the trumpeter *stood* near me.

You have to admire this kind of passion

- it would be easy to say "well, we tried, but they are trying to kill us"
- God gave us courage and the ability to defend ourselves

-Contrary to what some Christians think, God doesn't expect us to be floor mats

-Listen to what Jesus Himself tells His disciples

Luk 22:35 And He said to them, "When I sent you out without purse and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?" And they said, "*No*, nothing."

Luk 22:36 And He said to them, "But now, let him who has a purse take it along, likewise also a bag, and let him who has no sword sell his robe and buy one.

The repairs are complete

- feasts, laws and ceremonies are restored
- the people confess
- make and sign a new covenant with God

The wall gets dedicated

Nehemiah closes with the Tithes and Sabbath being restored

Jesus Types:

Nehemiah:

- being a cup bearer, (usually sat at the right hand of the king)
- Nehemiah had to be willing to die for the king
- Like Jesus, he left a high position of authority with the king
- he identifies and gets involved with the plight of his people
- like Jesus, Nehemiah weeps over the condition of Jerusalem
- like Jesus, his ultimate goal is to restore his people to a right relationship with God
- And like Jesus, he leaves Jerusalem and to return to the king
- but returns to an unspecified amount of time later and has to set right what has gone wrong since he left