

Key to NEHEMIAH

1. STATISTICS:

Writer, Nehemiah, cup bearer (i.e., confidant, advisor) to Persian king, Artaxerxes (1:11); possible co-writer, Ezra. Time of writing, 450 B.C.; years covered, 40; key verse, 2:5; key thought, restoration of defenses of Jerusalem and reforms of the people.

2. THEME:

A partially autobiographic history of the completion of the outer and inner defenses of Jerusalem following the captivity, from the pen of a sincere, prayerful man of great faith and courage. Forming a spiritual team with Ezra the priest, Nehemiah governed righteously for GOD many years.

3. OUTLINE:

Prayer (1) Work on internal problems (7-13)
Work on walls (2-6)

4. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS:

Nehemiah's expedition (about 444 B.C.) was third at Persian government's expense and with army escort.

Parts of book are in the first person, possibly taken from the official reports which Nehemiah, as prime minister, made to the king.

Nehemiah was a man of great prayer (1:4; 2:4; 4:4, 9; 6:9, 14). Note that before he made request to the king he spent 4 months in prayer.

5. OUTSTANDING TEACHINGS:

GOD fulfills His purposes. In this case the chosen nation was reestablished by the dictum of heathen kings and by the example of men of faith and courage.

Opposition appeared, as is always the case when a real work for GOD is being done. Some came as a bulldozing giant, some as a crafty fox. Nehemiah was tested by compromise, ridicule, and by threats of assassination.

Chapter 3 is a commentary on human nature. Among the workers on the wall, some worked "earnestly" (v. 20); some did extra work (v. 4 and 21); others did not help at all (v. 5); a few did an outstanding job (v. 13). All will meet the record someday.

Building was not the only problem. Evil practices within were equally serious. Nehemiah was able to right this grievous wrong because of his own unselfishness (chapter 5).

As the wall was completed the very next matter was the deepening of the spiritual life. The law of GOD was read at a public meeting (8:8); then confession was followed by expressions of trust in GOD and praise. With firm hand Nehemiah corrected abuses of unholy marriages and violating the Sabbath (chapter 13).

6. INTERESTING FEATURES:

How to really preach is explained in 8:8.

Some able-bodied daughters helped on the wall (3:12) and even the high priest was not afraid to soil his hands on the wall (3:1).

Prominent in the book are the words "so" and "we."

7. KEY TO UNDERSTANDING:

You will understand and enjoy the book more when you put yourself in Nehemiah's place. Against tremendous odds he proved himself to be first a man, then GOD's man.

~ end of Nehemiah ~

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