

Through the Bible Book by Book

Old Testament

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Nehemiah

Theme: This book centers around a person - Nehemiah. It is an autobiography of a man who sacrificed a life of ease and luxury in order to help his needy brethren in Jerusalem. It describes a man who combined spirituality with practicality - one who knew how both to pray and work. Absolutely fearless, he refused to compromise with enemies on the outside or with sin on the inside. After rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem and effecting many sweeping reforms among the people, he humbly gave GOD the glory for all that had been accomplished. The main lesson taught by his life is that prayer and perseverance will overcome all obstacles.

Author: Nehemiah.

Scope: From Nehemiah's journey to Jerusalem to the restoration of temple worship, covering a period of about 12 years from 446-434 B. C.

CONTENTS:

- I. The Building of the Wall of Jerusalem (1-6).
- II. The Revival of Religion and the Re-establishment of Worship (7-13:3).
- III. Correction of Abuses (13:4-31).

I. The Building of the Wall of Jerusalem (1-6)

- 1. Nehemiah's prayer and commission (Chapters 1,2).
- 2. The builders of the wall (Chapter 3).
- 3. The opposition of the Samaritans (Chapter 4).
- 4. The nobles rebuked for their oppression of the people (Chapter 5).
- 5. The completion of the work of building (Chapter 6).

What news did Nehemiah receive (1:2, 3)?

What effect did it have on him?

How often did he pray for Israel (1:6)?

What position did Nehemiah hold?

"The cup-bearer, in ancient Oriental courts was always a person of rank and importance; and,

from the confidential nature of his duties, and his frequent access to the royal presence, possessed of great influence. Xenophon, a Greek historian, has particularly remarked the polished and graceful manners in which the cupbearers of the Median and Persian monarchs performed their duty of presenting the wine to their royal master. Having washed the cup in the king's presence, and poured into their left hand a little of the wine which they drank off in his presence, then they handed the cup to him, not grasped, but lightly held with the tips of their thumb and fingers."

What led indirectly to Nehemiah's being sent to Jerusalem (2:1,2)?

Note that Nehemiah's fear is explained by the fact that it was considered highly unbecoming to appear in the presence of the king with any signs of sorrow or mourning.

What did Nehemiah do before making his request to the king (2:4)?

Who were grieved at his coming to Jerusalem (2:10, 19)?

What was the first attempt to discourage Nehemiah (4:1-3)?

How did he treat this attempt (verses 4-6)?

What second attempt was made to discourage him (4:7, 8)?

To what did he then resort (verse 9)?

What other discouragement came at this time (4:10, 16)?

What precautions did Nehemiah take against a surprise attack (4:16-23)?

What had the people been compelled to do on account of their poverty (5:1-3)?

Who had been guilty of oppression (verse 7)?

What example had Nehemiah set before the nobles (5:14-19)?

What other attempts were made to hinder Nehemiah's work (Chapter 6)?

What does 6:11 reveal concerning Nehemiah's character?

What fact discouraged his enemies (6:16)?

How long did it take to build the wall (6:15)?

II. Revival of Religion and Re-establishment of Worship (7-13:3)

1. Register of the people (Chapter 7).

2. The reading of the law (Chapter 8).

3. The repentance and reconsecration of the people (Chapters 9, 10).

4. Resettlement at Jerusalem (Chapter 11).

5. Dedication of the wall and restoration of temple service (Chapters 12 to 13:3).

Whom did Nehemiah leave in charge of Jerusalem while he returned to the king of Persia (7:2)?

What precautions were the people to take against surprise attacks (7:3)?

Before leaving, Nehemiah took another register of the people based upon the one made by Ezra. This was for the purpose of distributing the land according to the ancestral abode of each family, and for ascertaining with accuracy to whom the duty legally belonged of ministering before the altar and conducting the various services of the temple. Chapter 7:73 tells the result of this registration; namely that all the families were in their own cities.

Who later joined Nehemiah (8:1)?

For what purpose?

What was the command of Moses concerning the public reading of the law (Deuteronomy 31:9-13)?

How many of the people gathered to listen to the reading of the law (8:2)?

Who explained its meaning (8:7, 8)? What effect did it have on the people (8:9)?

What other effect did it produce (8:12)? How many days did this reading continue (8:18)?

What followed the reading of the law (9:1-3)?

What historical events were reviewed in the prayer of the Levites?

What was then done (9:38)?

How many signed this covenant?

What did they covenant to do (10:28-39)?

Chapter 11 records the settlement of the people at Jerusalem. Since that city was the metropolis of the land, it was necessary that the seat of government and an adequate population should be there for its defense and for the custody of its buildings. Accordingly every tenth man of Judah and Benjamin was chosen by lot to become a permanent inhabitant of that city.

III. Correction of Abuses (chapter 13:4-31)

1. Violation of temple's sanctity. (verses 4 to 9).
2. Violation of law concerning Levites (vv. 10-14).
3. Violation of the sabbath rest (verses 15-22).
4. The violation of the law of separation (vv. 23-31).

After his first reforms, Nehemiah returned to the court of the king of Persia (13:6). On his return, he found that the priesthood and people had lapsed into their old sins. The high priest was entertaining a heathen governor within the sacred precincts of the temple; the support of the priesthood had been neglected; the spirit of commercialism was threatening the sanctity of the Sabbath day; and many of the people had contracted unlawful unions with the heathen. With his characteristic zeal and energy, Nehemiah quickly corrected their abuses.

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