



Walking Thru The Bible

NEHEMIAH

INTRODUCTION

AUTHOR:

The author of the book is Nehemiah himself. Much of the book is a first-person account of the circumstance surrounding his return to Jerusalem. Nothing is known about Nehemiah's early years or family background except that his father's name was Hachaliah (1:1) and that he had a brother named Hanani (1:2).

Nehemiah lived in Persia and had risen to a position of prominence in his pagan environment. He was serving King Artaxerxes as his personal cupbearer (1:11; 2:1). This important position in the king's court gives insight into Nehemiah's life and character. A mighty monarch such as the king of Persia would select for that position a man who was wise and discreet, and consistently honest and trustworthy. Nehemiah's position alone reveals much about his intellectual capabilities and emotional maturity.

DATE:

The book covers about a 12 year period of Nehemiah's first term as governor (ch. 1-12). Nehemiah returned to the King's service in Persia for an unknown number of years and then return for a second time as governor (ch. 13). Nehemiah probably wrote his book name soon after all the events were completed. This means the book was written about 430 BC or shortly thereafter.

PURPOSE:

A great revival had taken place upon Ezra's arrival, but we again find the people in a very depressed condition. The temple had been rebuilt by Zerubbabel, beautified by Ezra, but the people are persecuted by their adversaries and unable to rebuild the wall of the city (Neh. 1:3). They are in "great affliction and reproach." Ezra is still present as a priest and teacher but now Nehemiah comes as governor with official instructions to rebuild the city (2:5). The first step is to rebuild the wall (2:17). The book tells how, under Nehemiah, the walls are rebuilt and the people revived.

The Book of Nehemiah

THEME: Rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.
1:3; 2:13; 4:6; 6:15; 12:27

KEY VERSE: 4:6 (6:15-16)

KEY WORDS: Wall = 32 times ; build = 23 times.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

I. Nehemiah Returns and Rebuilds the Wall-- ch. 1-6

Ch.1 Parts of the book are in the first person, being direct quotations from Nehemiah's official reports. Nehemiah learns of the affliction of his people in Judah.

Note: Nehemiah was a man of prayer, patriotism, action, courage, and perseverance. His first impulse always was to pray (1:4; 2:4; 4:4, 9; 6:9, 14). He spent 4 months in prayer before making his request to the king (1:1, 2:1).

Ch. 2 Nehemiah is sent to Jerusalem and makes his plans.

Ch. 3 Building of the wall and gates.

Note: "Stairs that go down from the city of David" (v. 15) "bend in the wall" (v.25) "tower that stands out" (v.26) are remains that may be clearly detected today.

Ch. 4 The old-time enemies of the Jews bitterly opposed the rebuilding of the wall. They mobilized their armies and marched against Jerusalem. But Nehemiah, with faith in God, skillfully arming and arranging his men drove straight ahead with the work day and night.

Ch. 5 The work hindered by internal selfishness and greed that Nehemiah had to correct.

Ch. 6 The wall was finished in a remarkable 52 days and Jerusalem was again a fortified city.

II. Spiritual Revival (chapters 7-10)

Ch. 7 & 8 After the wall was built, Nehemiah and Ezra gathered the people together to organize their national life. Ch. 7 is about the same as Ezra 2 giving a list of those who had returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel.

Then for seven days every day from early morning till midday Ezra and his helpers "opened the Book of the Law, and read in the Law of God, distinctly, and gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading." This public reading and exposition of God's Book brought a great wave of repentance among the people, a great "revival" and a solemn covenant to keep the Law, as noted in chapters 9 & 10.

Ch. 9 & 10 In deep penitence and great earnestness, they "made a sure covenant, and wrote it, and sealed it, and entered into an oath and curse, that they would walk in God's Law" (9:38, 10:29).

Note the seven provisions of this covenant: (1) not to marry heathens, v.30; (2) to observe the Sabbath, v.31a; (3) to observe the Sabbatic year, v.31b; (4) to pay temple tax; vv. 32,33. (5) to supply wood for temple altar, v.34; (6) to give the priests and Levites their due, vv. 35-38; (7) not to forsake God's house, v.39.

III. Reforming the Nation -- chapters 11 - 13

Ch. 11 Provision made to bring one-tenth of the population into the city to live.

Ch. 12 The dedication of the wall.
(Apparently after this Nehemiah returns to Shushan; then returns to Judah a second time as governor in chapter 13).

Ch. 13 Corrections of laxation about tithes, Sabbath, and marriages. (Note: The book of Malachi appears to be contemporary with Nehemiah's second term as governor.)

IMPORTANT LESSONS FROM NEHEMIAH

Nehemiah stands as perhaps the greatest book every written about leadership. From the book we learn the principles that every leader must strive to emulate, whether it is concerning "leadership" in the home; the church; the community; or the nation!

1. Nehemiah shows us how *to plan*--
2. Nehemiah teaches us how *to organize*--
3. Nehemiah teaches how to *integrate the duties* of various people.
4. Nehemiah shows the importance (and how) of motivating people.

One dominating feature of the book is **prayer** and its factor in our daily life. Not only does this book teach about prayer in a practical way, but the book contains the longest prayer in the Bible.

When You Get Busy for God

Nehemiah 4:1-23

Introduction:

1. What should you do when trouble confronts you at every turn?
2. Committing our lives to God does not remove us from the reality of problems in life.
3. When one gets busy for God opposition will inevitably raise its head. Nehemiah discovered that truth. Nehemiah 4.
 - a. Who was Nehemiah? [See "Walk Thru Nehemiah."]
 - b. His name means "the comfort of the LORD."
4. Nehemiah had opposition from *without*, Vs. 1-6. But even more discouraging was the opposition from *within*, Vs. 11-14.
5. Nehemiah was confronted by obstacles as he sought to accomplish the work God called him to do yet his is a success story (6:15).

NOTE THE KEY ELEMENTS TO HIS SUCCESS:

I. PRAYER

1. When you get busy for God and opposition comes, the first ingredient that will lead to success is intercession (v.9).
2. Nehemiah looked up before he launched out. He prayed before he proceeded. Intercession preceded interaction.

II. PERSPIRATION

1. When you get busy for God and opposition comes, the second ingredient that will lead to success is *work*. Notice Nehemiah's initiative in verse 9.
2. Intercession is not a substitution for initiative, but only a prelude to it, for the Bible says "the people had a mind to work" (verse 6).
3. Our devotional life and practical life must always move together. They are like two hands on the clock. One person said, "I pray as if everything depended on God. Then I work as if everything depended on me." Prayer and perspiration go together.

III. PRAISE

1. Nehemiah arose and spoke to the people about the power of God ("remember the Lord who is great and awesome") and about the purpose of their work (verse 14).
2. He motivated the people by positive affirmation.

CONCLUSION: When you get busy for God, trouble is going to come. Expect it. Through prayer, perspiration, and praise you can turn those stumbling blocks into stepping stones. Trouble can be transformed into triumph.

How are you facing your troubles?