

# **Nehemiah**

## **“Lessons in Leadership”**

### **I. Introduction to Nehemiah**

- A. Nehemiah illustrates the ministry principle found in 1 Corinthians 16:9  
“A great and effective door has opened to me and there are many adversaries.”
  - 1. Nehemiah tells the story of the work of God being accomplished in the midst of great opposition.
  - 2. “There is no winning without working and warring. There is no opportunity without opposition. There is no “open door” set before us without there being many “adversaries” to obstruct our entering it (1 Corinthians 16:9). Whenever the saint says, “Let us arise and build,” the enemy says, “Let us arise and oppose.”
- B. Nehemiah is closely linked to Ezra
  - 1. Until 1448, they were considered to be a single book in the Jewish Bible.
  - 2. Nehemiah completes the story where Ezra left off
  - 3. Ezra is a main character in Nehemiah and his story will be picked up again in the latter half of Nehemiah.
  - 4. Ezra records the building of the Temple
  - 5. Nehemiah records the repairing of the city walls.
    - a. 537 B.C. – Zerubbabel led 50,000 Jews to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple.
      - i. With the aid of Haggai and Zechariah this was accomplished in twenty years
    - b. 457 B.C. – Ezra arrives and begins his teaching ministry
    - c. 445 B.C. – Nehemiah arrives to rebuild walls and gates
      - i. This project takes seven weeks
      - ii. Ezra’s teaching ministry flourishes, leading to a national revival
    - d. 430 B.C. – The book of Nehemiah concludes; covers fifteen years
  - 6. The Biblical record goes silent until the voice of John the Baptist cries out in the wilderness and Christ appears on the scene.
    - a. These 400 silent years are a time of fulfilled prophesy and preparing for the coming King.
      - i. Galatians 4:4 “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, . . .”
- C. Nehemiah, whose name means “YHWH Has Comforted”, was a cupbearer to King Artaxerxes
  - 1. Artaxerxes reigned from 464 B.C. – 423 B.C.
  - 2. He reigned during the height of the Persian Empire
- D. Nehemiah was the 3<sup>rd</sup> great leader of the post-exilic period.
  - 1. He teamed with Ezra and completed the work which began under Zerubbabel
  - 2. Nehemiah stands out as a man of:
    - a. Great prayer
    - b. Faith
    - c. Courage
    - d. Accomplishment
  - 3. His story exemplifies the principle found in Judges 5:2  
“When leaders lead and people willingly offer themselves, bless the Lord.”
- E. We will follow Nehemiah through three periods of his life.
  - 1. Nehemiah 1:1 – 2:10      Cupbearer
  - 2. Nehemiah 2:11 – 6:19      Wall-builder
  - 3. Nehemiah 7:1 – 13:31      Governor
  - 4.

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### II. Outline of Nehemiah

#### A. Nehemiah divides naturally into 2 sections.

1. **Section 1** Chapters 1 – 6 Preparation to Rebuild the walls
  - a. Nehemiah 1:1 – 2:10 Nehemiah the Cupbearer
  - b. Nehemiah 2:11 – 6:19 Nehemiah the Wall-builder
2. **Section 2** Chapters 7 – 13 Reviving the people
  - a. Nehemiah the Governor
  - b. Assisted by Ezra the Scribe

#### B. Section 1 Chapters 1 – 6 Preparation to Rebuild the Walls

Chapter 1:1 through Chapter 2:10 introduces us to Nehemiah and the daunting task ahead of him

1. **Nehemiah the Cupbearer** in the palace of Artaxerxes, King of Persia
  - a. Cupbearer was a very prestigious position; especially for the son of immigrants or more accurately POW's
  - b. His position provided him with access to and audience with the King
    - i. His faithfulness in secular matters opened doors for Kingdom matters
    - ii. He will face a situation that will cause him to choose to live for another King
    - iii. After ascending to great heights in this life, he chose to leave it all for the mission field and the call of God
2. On a Day like any other, his world was forever changed.
  - a. One of his brethren, Hanani, arrived with news of the sad condition of Jerusalem and Ezra's missionaries. Nehemiah 1:3:
    - i. The wall and gates were unchanged for 150 years
    - ii. The people were discouraged
  - b. Nehemiah's reaction is an all too often neglected example
    - i. He wept
    - ii. He prayed
    - iii. He fasted
    - iv. This lasted Four months
      1. From the month of Chislev (1:1) – late November
      2. To the month of Nisan (2:1) – mid-March
  - c. It was during this time, Nehemiah:
    - i. Sensed the call of God on his life
    - ii. Planned for future ministry
      1. When asked by the King, he knew what God wanted
    - iii. Had to wait upon the Lord for an open door.
      1. Being a cupbearer might be a bit like working for the Mob – hard to get in, Impossible to get out
    - iv. This door opened in an unexpected way
      1. King saw his grief – this was a high crime (Esther 4:2)
      2. Nehemiah presents his case:
        - a. First to the Lord
        - b. Then to the King
  - d. Nehemiah will walk out of the palace and onto the mission field
3. **Nehemiah the Wall Builder** chapters 2:11 through 6:19
  - a. After a three month journey, Nehemiah arrives in Jerusalem and surveys the situation.

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- i. Nehemiah 2:17 – He calls Israel to the task
- ii. Nehemiah 2:18 – they respond to the call
- b. We see two important lessons illustrated
  - i. Lesson 1, Chapter 3 – The body works together  
Ephesians 4:16 “. . . from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”
    - 1. People from many walks of life:
      - a. High Priest (3:1)
      - b. Goldsmiths and perfumers (3:8)
      - c. Leaders (3:16)
      - d. Levites (3:17)
      - e. Farmers (3:22)
      - f. Family men throughout
    - 2. People served where they were the most effective (3:10, 3:29)
    - 3. People were all under one leader to accomplish the same task
    - 4. Sadly, some refused to work (3:5)
  - ii. Lesson 2, Chapters 4-6 They must work through much opposition
    - 1. Opposition on two fronts (this cost Germany the defeat in WWII, too difficult to give full attention to two battle fronts)
      - a. External - From their enemies in the form of:
        - i. Mockery
        - ii. Threats
        - iii. schemes
      - b. Internal
        - i. This came out of the carnality of the missionaries as they lived and served together
    - 2. Key Verse: Nehemiah 6:15 “So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth [day] of Elul, in fifty-two days.”
      - a. This is a miraculous work of God
      - b. A Cupbearer leads a rag-tag group of perfumers, goldsmiths, leaders, missionaries, etc. in an endeavor to build a wall that would fortify a city against military threats in the midst of internal and external opposition.
      - c. “O God, what You have done for us!” Psalm 68:28

#### **C. Section 2 Chapter 7 – 13 Nehemiah – Reviving the People**

- 1. Nehemiah, as Governor, is required to return to Persia and report to the King
- 2. Upon his return to Jerusalem, he and Ezra get to work on the further task of a revival of the people
  - a. During the 7<sup>th</sup> month, all Israel gathered in Jerusalem for a sacred feast.
  - b. Ezra continues his teaching ministry and instructs the people from the Word of God
    - i. Chapters 8 – 10 record the emphasis placed upon expository teaching
      - 1. Results were:
        - a. Worship
        - b. Confession of sin
        - c. Discovering new details in the Word
        - d. Separation from sin
        - e. Covenant with God

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- ii. Chapters 11 – 12:25 Records lists of those who dwelt in Jerusalem
- iii. Chapter 12:26 A dedication service
- iv. Chapter 13 Records how quickly compromise can enter the camp
  - 1. Ten years later store rooms that should have housed the offerings of the people sat empty
  - 2. This is the backdrop for the book of Malachi (Malachi 3:8-10)
  - 3. These same store rooms became the apartment for Tobiah, the enemy of Israel
    - a. Nehemiah’s response
      - i. Threw out his stuff,
      - ii. Cleaned the room,
      - iii. Rebuked the leaders
    - b. Sabbath became a common day
      - i. Nehemiah responds
        - 1. Rebuked the leaders
        - 2. Locked the gates
        - 3. Warned the wicked
      - c. People compromised in their relationship with believers (This sin even led Solomon away from God)
    - ii. Nehemiah responds
      - 1. Rebuked the leaders
      - 2. Ripped out hair
      - 3. Required repentance

### **III. Why Study Nehemiah**

- A. Finishes the chronological story of the Old Testament
  - 1. When Nehemiah concludes we have studied the entirety of divinely recorded history in the Old Testament
  - 2. All remaining twenty-three books of the Old Testament fit somewhere in the timeline of Genesis through Nehemiah.
- B. Nehemiah gives the backdrop for understanding the book of Malachi
  - 1. Especially the opening verses of Chapter 13
- C. Nehemiah gives the start date for one of the most important prophecies in all of Scripture
  - 1. Daniel 9:24 -27
    - a. “70 weeks” that deal with Israel and the coming Messiah
    - b. “69 weeks” between the command to rebuild Jerusalem and Messiah’s arrival.
    - c. March 14, 445 B.C. Artaxerxes commands Nehemiah to go, build
    - d. 483 years later is the time of Christ
    - e. The one remaining weeks is the subject of Revelation 6 – 19 as we await the return of Christ.
- D. Nehemiah exemplifies the importance of prayer
  - 1. Thirteen times we read of Nehemiah praying
  - 2. No great work of God will be accomplished without prayer.
  - 3. Three lessons concerning prayer
    - a. Nehemiah had a large view of God
      - i. His prayer life caused him to see obstacles in light of who God was
      - ii. This made him an overcomer
    - b. Nehemiah prayed the Promises of God

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- i. He asked God to accomplish what God had promised to do in His Word
  - c. Nehemiah prayed with persistence
    - i. Chapters 1 Four months of fasting and praying
    - ii. Throughout all, no matter what the obstacle or opportunity, he saw prayer as the solution
- E. Nehemiah teaches the value of expository teaching
  - 1. The great revival of Nehemiah was birthed out of the teaching of the Word.
  - 2. A few important principles
    - a. Nehemiah 8:2 All who could understand
      - i. Children were ministered to by teaching their parents
    - b. Nehemiah 8:3 Morning until evening
      - i. Gave ample time to the Word
      - ii. Stood, giving full attention
    - c. Nehemiah 8:8 Read distinctly from the Word
      - i. Gave the sense
      - ii. Helped them understand
        - 1. Was Ezra's goal that the people be clearly taught the Word
        - 2. Read, teach, illustrate; no theatrics
    - d. Nehemiah 8:18 Day by day
      - i. Not a one-time conference, but a continual practice
    - e. Nehemiah 8:6 People worshipped the Lord
      - i. True worship flows from good theology
    - f. Nehemiah 9:1 Fasting and sackcloth
      - i. Repented upon hearing the Word
      - ii. Separated themselves (9:2)
    - g. Nehemiah 10:1; 10:28 Commitment
    - h. Commitment to the Lord flowed from the Word

#### **IV. Types of Christ**

"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. John 5:39

- A. Nehemiah reminds us of Christ the disciple maker
- B. Nehemiah reminds us of Christ the Temple cleanser