

Nehemiah

"Rise Up and Build"

Background Information

"Nehemiah" means "Jehovah comforts." He was a _____ to the king. In some ancient texts, this book was called "Second Ezra."

Nehemiah's personal notes are clearly seen in the book, but many suggest that Ezra collected these things into the book.

Continuing the theme of "restoration" that was begun in Ezra, Nehemiah rebuilds the wall around Jerusalem, showing a restoration of God's protection.

The Persian king, Artaxerxes, is also known as Longimanus in some secular historical works. He was the son of Xerxes, Esther's husband.

Time Covered and Outline

Starting in the 20th year of the Persian king Artaxerxes, and ending with Nehemiah returning to Jerusalem as governor, the book covers about 22 years. Between Nehemiah's first and second trips to the city of Jerusalem, about 10 years pass. During this time, Malachi prophesies to the people of Jerusalem.

The book follows a simple story, so a quick outline works:

- I. Rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem (1-7)
- II. Religion during Nehemiah's time (8-10)
- III. Jerusalem grows; priests listed (11:1-12:36)
- IV. Other reforms (12:37-13:31)

Major Themes

Obedience to God's Word
God's people will face opposition
The providence of God
Leadership
What unified workers can do

Trying to Stop the Work

Seven times in Nehemiah, people tried to stop the rebuilding of the wall:

1. Mocking by Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem (2:19)
2. Mocking by Sanballat and Tobiah (4:1-3)
3. Threatened military attack (4:7-23)
4. Attempts to lure Nehemiah away from the work (6:1-4)
5. False charges against Nehemiah made (6:5-9)
6. Enemies paid to give false prophecies against Nehemiah (6:10-14)
7. Spies sent in with letters to frighten Nehemiah (6:17-19)

Nehemiah's Answer to Opposition

God's people will be opposed when doing good works. Nehemiah's response to his opposition serves as a great example when we are opposed: "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?" (Nehemiah 6:3)

God's Character in Nehemiah

Glorious (9:5)
Good (1:10; 2:8; 2:18; 9:35)
Kindness (9:17)
Patience (9:30)
Merciful (9:17; 9:27)
Powerful (1:10)
Providence (entire book; see 9:6)
Righteous (9:8)
Wise (9:10)

Jesus in Nehemiah

The rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem continued the revival that would only find its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Key Words in Nehemiah

"Confess" (Hebrew *yadah*); "to throw [or cast] off." 1:6; 9:2-3
"Awesome" (Hebrew *yare'*); "to fear." 1:5; 1:11; 4:14; 6:14; 6:19; 7:2
"Build" (Hebrew *banah*). 2:17-18; 2:20; 3:1-3; 3:13-15; 4:1; 4:3; 4:5-6; 4:10; 4:17-18; 6:1; 6:6; 7:1; 7:4; 12:29

Elsewhere in the World...

Plato studies philosophy under the teaching of Socrates in Greece

Elsewhere in Scripture...

During the time between when Nehemiah serves as a governor on his first trip and returns on his second trip, Malachi's prophecy likely occurred in the city of Jerusalem. If that is true, then the final chapters of Nehemiah are the last words, chronologically, in the Old Testament.