

# Nehemiah

## Rebuilding Jerusalem



# The Historical Books of the Old Testament

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6 – 8. Joshua, Judges, Ruth

9 – 14. 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles

15. Ezra The Exiles Return

16. Nehemiah **Rebuilding Jerusalem**

17. Esther

# Nehemiah Rebuilding Jerusalem

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- Zerubbabel went to Jerusalem after the decree of King Cyrus of Persia in about 538 B.C.
- Ezra followed with another group some 80 years later.
- This book begins another 14 years after Ezra returned.

# Nehemiah Rebuilding Jerusalem

- **Nehemiah** comes chronologically last in the order of Old Testament historical books.
- Forms of the words “**build**” or “**builders**” appear **20 times** in this book – **Rebuilding Jerusalem**.
- **Nehemiah** is filled with examples of prayer – both long and short – a total of twelve instances.

# Nehemiah Rebuilding Jerusalem

## An Outline of **Nehemiah**:

- I. Return to Jerusalem 1 – 2
- II. Rebuilding the Walls 3 – 7
- III. Repentance 8 – 12
- IV. Obedience 13

# Nehemiah Key Passages

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- **Nehemiah's Calling**      **1 – 2**
  - A Lesson on Prayer
- **The Walls Rebuilt**      **6:15-16**
  - A Lesson in Getting Things Done
- **Mourning and Joy**      **8:8-12**
  - A Lesson on Joy

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- He knew God's power.
- He admitted his own people's sin.
- He understood God's plans for his people Israel.

# A Lesson on Prayer

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- Nehemiah's prayers were utterly practical.
- He believed God had something better for his people.
- He deeply desired to help people in need.
- He was in a position to do something about it.
- This is what motivated his prayers.

# A Side Note on Middle East Quarrels

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- The people of Israel are in the land and in Jerusalem again at this time.
- Not all of their neighbors believe this is a good thing.
- Some believe they should not be there at all.

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- Going back to the promises to Abraham and running through the whole Bible, four intertwined components.
  1. Land
  2. Descendant(s)
  3. Blessing
  4. Blessing to the Nations
- If we eliminate Israel's right to the first, **land**, we undermine our right to the last, **blessing by means of Israel**.

# A Side Note on Middle East Quarrels

- That doesn't mean every political or military decision Israel makes is always right.
- It does mean we are in a touchy place if we try to biblically eliminate national Israel's right to exist.

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# A Lesson on Getting Things Done

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- Too often we see prayer and work as two contrasting ways of accomplishing goals.
- Nehemiah shifts from one to the other, seamlessly integrating both prayer and work in the process.

# A Lesson on Getting Things Done



*Nehemiah believed in the power of prayer. Yet, while he had absolute confidence in the God to whom he prayed, he also knew that God works through people. He saw no contradiction between divine action and human initiative.*

– Nupanga Weanzana, President, Faculté de Théologie Évangélique de Bangui, CAR

# A Lesson on Getting Things Done

- The rebuilding was finished without any miracles.
- But God was in the midst of the many answered prayers and all the hard work.
- Nehemiah knew that “this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.”

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# A Lesson on Joy

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- By hearing the Scriptures the people had a sense of their sin for the first time in many years.
- This was the cause of grief.
- Yet their leaders encouraged them not to grieve, but rejoice.
- They were turning back to God – which is what God wanted from them – and now God would surely accept them.

# A Lesson on Joy

- God's work in our lives usually gives us a sense of our own inadequacy.
- When we see our need, we can then see how Christ meets it.
- This is how grief and rejoicing can exist in such close proximity.

# Nehemiah Summary

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- Nehemiah's prayers were deeply scriptural and utterly practical at the same time.
- He understood God as he revealed himself in the Scriptures.
- He connected his prayers to real needs in the real world.

# Nehemiah Summary

- Nehemiah's shifted seamlessly from prayer to hard work.
- Since his efforts were biblically based, he could have confidence that God was with him in his efforts.

# Nehemiah Summary

- Together with Ezra, Nehemiah led the people back to God and his word.
- The people first began to grieve over their sin.
- Turning back to God in repentance leads to God's acceptance – a reason to rejoice.

# Nehemiah    *A Similarity with Jesus*

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- **Jesus** also began in a place of honor, but left it to meet our need when we were living in the ruin of our sin.

# Nehemiah    A Similarity with Jesus

- **Nehemiah** began in a place of honor, but left it to meet the needs of the people living in Jerusalem's ruins.
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# Nehemiah    A Similarity with Jesus

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- When there are needs that we are uniquely suited to meet, we have to first go and identify with people.
- This gives us the opportunity to serve them, sometimes by leading and usually with self-sacrifice.
- Who is God calling you to serve in this way?