

The Book of Nehemiah

I. THE NEWS CONCERNING THE WALL (NEHEMIAH 1).

- A. In December of 446 B.C., Nehemiah learns from a returning Jew named Hanani (and his own brother--see 1:2; 7:2) of the pitiful state of Jerusalem. The report breaks his heart (1:3).
- B. Upon hearing this, Nehemiah begins a time of confession and intercession (1:4-11).

II. THE REQUEST TO BUILD THE WALL (NEHEMIAH 2:1-8).

- A. In April of 445 B.C., after a prayer period of four months, Nehemiah asks the king to "send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchers, that I may build it" (2:5).
- B. Artaxerxes agrees and gives Nehemiah two letters of assistance.

III. THE NECESSITY FOR THE WALL (NEHEMIAH 2:9-20).

Soon after reaching Jerusalem, Nehemiah makes a secret midnight ride around the city itself. The next morning he assembles Judah's leaders and shares with them the burden of his heart (2:17, 18).

It may be concluded that there were at least two compelling reasons for building the wall.

- A. It was necessary for protection, that is, to keep the outsiders out. This would protect against sneak attacks.
- B. It was necessary for separation, that is, to keep the insiders in. This would cut down upon the growing worldliness of the Jews who had been associating freely with the surrounding pagan people.

IV. THE GATES IN THE WALL (NEHEMIAH 3).

The various gates mentioned here are in themselves a beautiful picture summary of the Christian life. Note:

- A. The sheep gate (3:1). This speaks of the cross. (See Jn. 10:11.)
- B. The fish gate (3:3). This speaks of soulwinning. (See Mt. 4:19.)
- C. The old gate (3:6). This speaks of our old nature. (See Rom. 6:1-23.)
- D. The valley gate (3:13). This speaks of sufferings and testing. (See 2 Con 1:3-5.)
- E. The dung gate (3:14). This speaks of the works of the flesh. (See Gal. 5:16-21.)
- F. The fountain gate (3:15). This speaks of the Holy Spirit. (See Jn. 7:37-39.)
- G. The water gate (3:26). This speaks of the Word of God. (See Jn. 4:10-14.)
- H. The horse gate (3:28). This speaks of the believer's warfare. (See Eph. 6:10-17.)
- I. The east gate (3:29). This speaks of the return of Christ. (See Ezek. 43:1, 2.)
- J. The Miphkad gate (3:31). This was thought to be the judgment gate and therefore speaks of the judgment seat of Christ. (See 1 Cor. 3:9-15; 2 Cor. 5:10.)

V. THE OPPOSITION TO THE WALL.

A work for God will always be met by both human and satanic opposition. These combined forces did their perverted best to halt the wall building. Many methods were employed to accomplish this.

- A. Ridicule (2:6; 4:1-3).
- B. Discouragement (4:10).
- C. Conspiracy (4:7, 8, 11).
- D. Laziness (4:10).
- E. Internal strife (5:1-5).
- F. Compromise (6:1-4).
- G. Slander (6:5-9).
- H. Treachery (6:10-14).
- I. Fear (6:9, 14).

VI. THE BUILDER OF THE WALL (NEHEMIAH).

- A. He set an unselfish example for all the people (5:14-18).
- B. He displayed total confidence in God (4:14; 8:9, 10).
- C. He refused to compromise (2:20).
- D. He prayed (4:4, 5, 9; 6:9).
- E. He contended for the faith (4:16-23).
- F. He remained steadfast (6:3).

VII. BLESSINGS OF THE (COMPLETED) WALL.

In spite of all the persecution and hardships, Nehemiah had the wall up and completed in early September, just fifty-two days after they had begun (6:15). This project resulted in many blessings, including:

- A. The reading of the Word of God (8:1-8; 9:3).
- B. The restoration of the feast of tabernacles (8:13-18).
- C. The prayer recitation of Israel's history (9:8-38). In this remarkable public prayer, Ezra summarized the entire history of the faithfulness of God bestowed upon Israel.
- D. The ratification of a special covenant (9:38; 10).
- E. The repopulating of the city of David (11:1, 2).
- F. The denouncing of sins:
 - 1. Of ungodly alliances (9:1, 2; 10:30; 13:4)
 - 2. Untithed possessions (10:32-39; 12:44-47; 13:10, 11)
 - 3. Unlawful Sabbath work (10:31; 13:15-22)
 - 4. Unequal marriages (13:23, 24)
 - 5. Unauthorized usage of the Temple (13:1-9)

Nehemiah's fantastic zeal and fearless actions helped bring into being repentance over sin.

- G. The rejoicing of all the remnant. When God's work is done in God's way, joy will follow. Note the various references to this.
 - 1. The people sent presents to each other and ate festive meals (8:12).
 - 2. The Levitical choir sang and played with cymbals, psalteries, and harps (9:4; 12:27, 28).
 - 3. Nehemiah divided the people into two groups. Each walked in opposite directions upon the completed wall singing their songs of praise to God (12:31-34).
 - 4. Ezra led a special corps of trumpet-playing priests (12:35-37).
 - 5. The result of all this was that "the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off" (12:43).