

BUILD : Setting the Stage

1.24.10

Quick Facts about the Book of Nehemiah:

Who wrote it? Some debate, but according to both internal and external evidence, it appears to be a combination of Nehemiah and Ezra.

When and why was it written? Likely between 445-432 BC. Most of the action takes place in Jerusalem. It serves largely historical & educational purposes.

What is it basically about? Human: It is the story of a man named Nehemiah who rebuilt the walls around the city of Jerusalem so that God's exiled people could return to their city (Jerusalem), reinstitute their worship of God and get back to being the kind of nation they were intended to be. Divine: God reveals His continued faithfulness to His people.

What are some of its major themes?

1. God's plans are always accomplished.
2. God gives vision and the strength to carry it out.
3. Prayer is an essential component of any successful endeavor.
4. Nehemiah provides a great example of leadership.
5. Nehemiah provides a great example of perseverance in the face of ongoing difficulties and distractions.
6. God brings repentance and revival to His people through His Word.

Why are we studying Nehemiah?

1. It is a great book to address where we are as a community and individuals.
 - a. Nehemiah set out to build a "City within the City." So are we.
 - i. "A City within the City" of Louisville built on the values of the Bible. Gospel. Community. Mission.
2. Nehemiah effectively accomplished a great building task. We hope to as well.
3. All of the themes in this book are things we need to learn about.

How to Get the Most Out of Our Study of Nehemiah:

Know:

1. This begins by reading Nehemiah *rightly*.
 - a. We begin with its historical, grammatical, biblical context. Then we recognize that even though these texts are about Nehemiah *first*, they are not about Nehemiah *only*.
 - b. He is a 'hero' in the Bible that points us to the "Hero" of the Bible.
2. We must understand the Bible as one "Big Story" of Redemptive History.
 - a. The Bible is not a loose collection of stories and pithy sayings but rather one, unified story that all points to Jesus.

Do:

1. Read (or listen to) the book in its entirety (www.esv.org).
 - a. Use the study notes in your Bible. Repetition leads to retention.
2. Read the Text we will teach each week. (We include it in the email.)
 - b. Write down some thoughts, questions, or observations.
3. Interact with your community group and on the City.

"The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah. Now it happened in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Susa the capital, 2 that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. 3 And they said to me, "The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire." Nehemiah 1:1-3 ESV

"Nehemiah" The main human character of the book. At least, the partial writer of the book. Chapters 1-7 and 13 are likely his journal entries. Amazing man who loved God, His glory and His people. Not mentioned anywhere else in Scripture. Not a 'religious professional' of any kind. Just a man, working a job that God used.

P: God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things.

Do I believe and live as if this is true?

P: God uses one man to make a world of difference.

What 'world of difference' is God wanting to make through my life?

"Chislev...twentieth year...Susa the capital" Winter. November/December. 20th year of the reign of the king that Nehemiah worked for.

"Hanani...certain men from Judah" Some visitors came to see him from Jerusalem. "Jews...exile...Jerusalem" God's chosen people had been carried away and enslaved by the Babylonians.

Backstory: God had called out a people for Himself (the Israelites) who were 'blessed to be a blessing' to the nations around them. Sometimes they fulfilled this role, but many times they didn't. In order to lovingly discipline them, God allowed their kingdom to be split in two and their people to be captured by the Assyrians and Babylonians. The Jews from Jerusalem had been living in exile in Babylon. Jerusalem, which was to be their archetypical "city within the city," was, instead, in great disrepair.

"wall...broken down and gates are destroyed by fire." The wall was of had both practical and

spiritual significance. It protected them from other attacking nations but it also symbolized how seriously they did/n't take their relationship with God.

P: Disobedience always leads to discipline.

How is God trying to get your attention today through his loving discipline?

P: The 'externals' in our lives reveal the condition of the 'internal.'

What do the 'externals' in my life reveal?

All that we learn about Nehemiah reminds us of all that we love about Jesus.