

Commentary Notes - Nehemiah

by Walter Beuttler

The book of Nehemiah teaches that the sovereignty of God is demonstrated through the instrumentality of divine sovereignty, as seen in the life and work of Nehemiah.

Scripture: Nehemiah 2:4

Topics: "God's Sovereignty", "Spiritual Leadership"

Description

Walter Beuttler preaches on the book of Nehemiah, a natural sequel to Ezra, focusing on the personal account of Nehemiah and his task of protecting Jerusalem by rebuilding its walls. The underlying truth in Nehemiah is the sovereignty of God in particular, emphasizing divine instrumentality in human affairs. Nehemiah's journey to Jerusalem, building of the walls, and re-establishment of worship highlight his divinely chosen, commissioned, led, and enabled role in fulfilling God's plan despite opposition and challenges.

Transcript

A. THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

1. The book of Nehemiah is a natural sequel to the book of Ezra of which it formed a part in the Jewish canon. It begins and ends with prayer
2. The story which was begun in Ezra is continued and completed in Nehemiah
3. It comprises largely the personal account of Nehemiah himself and the work in which he was engaged
4. Ezra had achieved the rebuilding of the temple and the restoration of its worship, but the city of Jerusalem was left unprotected against the incursions of hostile peoples
5. The protection of the city and its population by the rebuilding of the walls became the task of Nehemiah

B. THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK

1. Whereas the underlying truth in Ezra is the sovereignty of God in general, so the underlying truth in Nehemiah is the sovereignty of God in particular, namely, the instrumentality of divine sovereignty
2. The book teaches that a human instrument of divine sovereignty must be:

(1) Divinely chosen - It was doubtless God who, in his sovereign providence, chose Nehemiah for the task to be performed and caused him to obtain the responsible office of cupbearer from which point his work was to begin

(2) Divinely commissioned - The reaction of Nehemiah to Hanani's report concerning the sad conditions at Jerusalem must be attributed to more than mere human sentimentality. The depth of Nehemiah's feeling is evident

from:

a. The nature of his prayer

b. His persistence in prayer

c. The effect upon his physical appearance

(3) Divinely led - The questioning of Artaxerxes and his replies to Nehemiah's answers are so incongruous with the ordinary behaviour of an oriental monarch, that they can be accounted for only by attributing them to the influence of divine providence

(4) Divinely enabled - Nehemiah's achievement in rebuilding that great wall in the short time of seven weeks despite hindrances from within and without must be, and is indeed by himself, credited to God. The same must be said of his energetic resoluteness as an uncompromising attitude exhibited in his insistence on religious reforms

BUILDING OF THE WALLS, 1-6

A. NEHEMIAH'S JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM, 1:1-2:10

1. Identify "Shushan," 1:1 - Susa, capital of Persia

2. Account for Nehemiah's reaction to the report concerning the conditions in Jerusalem, 1:2-4: His sorrow and burden because of the affliction of his people and the state of Jerusalem was a manifestation of the sorrow and compassion of the heart of God

3. Point out various elements in Nehemiah's prayer, 1:5-11, as seen in:

(1) 1:5 - Affirmation of God's attributes

(2) 1:6-7 - Supplication and confession

(3) 1:8-11 - Intercession in the light of God's promises

(4) 1:11 - Petition for a favourable response from Artaxerxes, the king

4. Describe Nehemiah's position in Shushan the palace, 1:11:

He was one of the cupbearers to the king, which office gave him access to Artaxerxes

5. What does the elapsed time between 1:1 and 2:1 indicate? That Nehemiah carried his burden for four months before the opportunity came to present his petition before the king

6. Comment on:

- (1) 2:1-5 - Divine providence provided Nehemiah with a needed opportunity
- (2) 2:6-9 - Divine sovereignty caused a heathen king to perform the will of God
- (3) 2:10 - The execution of a divine commission might meet hostile opposition

B. BUILDING OF THE WALLS, 2:11-6:19

1. Comment on Nehemiah from:

- (1) 2:12 - He was discreet in that he did not make a premature disclosure of a secret
- (2) 2:13-17 - He was wise in that he appraised a situation before he took action
- (3) 2:18 - He was judicious in that he recognized the time and opportunity to reveal his plans
- (4) 2:19-20 - He was resolute and fearless through faith in God
- (5) 3:1-32 - He was qualified in that he possessed leadership and organizing ability

2. Point out the forms of opposition from the Jews' enemies and Nehemiah's countermeasures thereto as seen in:

- (1) 4:1-6 - Anger, indignation, mockery and disdain to which Nehemiah reacted by confident prayer in the realization that their enemies had provoked the anger of God
- (2) 4:7-9 - Conspiracy to hinder the work. Nehemiah resorted to prayer unto God and watching against the enemy
- (3) 4:10-23 - Threatening by surprise attack met by organized defense and trust in God

3. What contributed to the successful building operations, 4:6? The fact that "the people had a mind to work"

4. Of what were the nobles and rulers guilty in 5:1-13?

- (1) Of greedy desires
- (2) Of greedy practices
- (3) Of a lack of compassion
- (4) Of a lack of the fear of God

5. How did Nehemiah deal with the situation in 5:1-13? He rebuked the guilty and demanded restitution of their unrighteous gain to those from whom it was exacted

6. Comment on Nehemiah from 5:14-19: Nehemiah was unselfish and did not use his position for personal advantage and gain

7. Point out the efforts of the Jews' enemies to hinder the work and Nehemiah's reaction as seen in:

- (1) 6:1-4 - Intrigue to do Nehemiah personal harm which he escaped by shrewd insight into their scheme
 - (2) 6:5-9 - False accusations to weaken their efforts through fear, but Nehemiah resorted to prayer for strength to carry on
 - (3) 6:10-14 - Intimidation to cause Nehemiah to sin through fear by violating the sanctity of the temple. He, however, placed principle before personal safety and resorted to prayer
8. Comment on 6:15-16: When the wall was finished after fiftytwo days, even the distressed enemies were compelled to recognize the hand of God
9. What, in 6:17-19, increased Nehemiah's difficulties? The actions of treasonable brethren

RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF WORSHIP, 7-13

A. ORGANIZATION AND REGISTRATION, 7:1-73; 11:1-12:47

1. Hananiah was given charge over Jerusalem for what two reasons, 7:2?
- (1) Because "he was a faithful man"
 - (2) Because "he feared God above many"
2. What circumstance led to the taking of a census, 7:3-5? The scanty population of Jerusalem and its inadequate defence
3. How is the wisdom of Nehemiah demonstrated in 7:3?
- (1) In that he posted the watches in the most practical and efficient arrangement
 - (2) In that he knew how to obtain their maximum effort by posting them in the area of their own houses
4. Under whose leadership did the first group listed in 7:6-73 return from the captivity? Under Zerubbabel, ("sown in Babylon") who was born in the captivity of the royal house of David, I Chron. 3:10-19
5. Give the two-fold purpose of the census and organization in 11:1-12:47:

- (1) To transfer one tenth of the rural population to Jerusalem for the defence of the city
- (2) To prepare the way for the restoration of the temple order and worship

B. REVIVAL OF WORSHIP, S: 1-10:39; 13:1-3

1. What takes place in 8:1-18: The public reading of the Word of God
2. Enumerate the various attitudes of the people toward the Word of God as seen in:
- (1) 8:1 - They came with earnestness
 - (2) 8:3 - They were attentive
 - (3) 8:5 - They were reverent

(4) 8:6 - They were worshipful

(5) 8:9 - They were contrite

(6) 8:12 - They were joyful

3. List the various responses of the people to the reading of the Word of God as seen in:

(1) 8:14-18 - They obeyed its precepts

(2) 9:1-2 - They repented and confessed

(3) 9:2; 13:1-3 - They separated themselves

(4) 9:3-38 - They made "a sure covenant"

4. The "sure covenant" included what provisions in:

(1) 10:30 - Not to intermarry

(2) 10:31 - To keep the sabbath

(3) 10:32-34 - To support the house of God

(4) 10:35-39 - To bring the first-fruits

C. CORRECTION OF VIOLATIONS, 13:4-31

1. List the violations of the law committed so soon after they made their "sure covenant" as seen in:

(1) 13:4-9 - They desecrated the temple by turning the rooms in the court of the temple, which were intended and used as storerooms for offerings and the vessels of the house of God, into a residence for Tobiah

(2) 13:10-14 - They failed to support the Levites

(3) 13:15-22 - They failed to keep the sabbath

(4) 13:23-31 - They intermarried with other races

2. Comment on Nehemiah's reactions to the violations in 13:4-31: He was very zealous for God and his house (John 2:13-17)

3. The repeated use of the words "Remember me, O my God," by Nehemiah in chapter 13 shows what? That he was a man of prayer and trust in God, and believed in a divine reward for faithful service

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net