

NEHEMIAH 1-2

Nehemiah 1 – The Bad Report of Affairs in Jerusalem

A) *Nehemiah learns of the great distress of Jerusalem (vv. 1-3)*

- 1) In Shushan the citadel in the twentieth year of king Artaxerxes (446-445 BC) [13 years after Ezra's return – Ezra 7:8]
- 2) Nehemiah is the king's cupbearer – high official in the royal household
- 3) Asks Hanani, his brother, and other men about the condition of the Jews in Jerusalem
- 4) They report that Jews are in great distress and reproach, the wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are burned with fire
 - a) Problems likely caused by the situation described in Ezra 4:7-23

B) *Nehemiah prays to God (vv. 4-11; cf. Dan. 9:3-19)*

- 1) Nehemiah wept, mourned, fasted, and prayed for many days
- 2) Nehemiah's prayer
 - a) Lord God is great and awesome; God's people had sinned and acted corruptly
 - b) Remember promise to bring people back from captivity
 - c) God had redeemed this people by His great power and strong hand (cf. Ex. 32:11)
 - d) May Lord hear his prayer and grant him mercy in the sight of the king

Nehemiah 2 – Nehemiah Goes to Jerusalem and Views the Walls of the City

A) *Four months after hearing news, Nehemiah requests of the king to return to Jerusalem (vv. 1-6)*

- 1) King notices that Nehemiah is sad and asks why – causes Nehemiah to be afraid
- 2) Nehemiah tells king that he is sad about the condition of Jerusalem
- 3) King asks for Nehemiah's request – Nehemiah prays to God
- 4) Nehemiah asks to return to city and rebuild it
- 5) King asks about details of journey and return; king happy to send him

B) *Nehemiah requests letters for governors, and a letter for getting timber (vv. 7-9)*

- 1) King grants him his request (cf. 4:21) – Nehemiah gives credit to God's providence
- 2) Accompanied by king's army and horsemen, Nehemiah delivers the letters to governors

C) *Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant hear about Nehemiah's mission (v. 10)*

- 1) They are deeply disturbed that he is seeking the well-being of the children of Israel

D) *Nehemiah views the walls of Jerusalem (vv. 11-15)*

- 1) Nehemiah secretly examines the gates and walls

E) *Getting the people to work and the beginning of opposition (vv. 16-20)*

- 1) Nehemiah encourages people to build the wall; tells of God's help and king's words
- 2) People "set their hands to do this good work" – faith and works and cooperation
- 3) Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem the Arab laugh them to scorn and despise them – accuse them of rebelling against the king
- 4) Nehemiah proclaims his faith in God and tells Sanballat and Tobiah they have no business in the work

Questions

- 1) Why did the news of Jerusalem's condition shock and grieve Nehemiah?

2) What and why did Nehemiah pray to God before he made his request of the king?

3) How did Nehemiah convince the people to get back to work on the walls?

4) What methods do Sanballat and Tobiah use to try to discourage the people?