

Lesson 2, NEHEMIAH 1

The first wave of Jews had returned under Cyrus, King of Persia. He appointed Zerubbabel to lead his people back to the Promised Land. They were successful in building the Temple, but it lacked the splendor of the first temple built by King Solomon. However, the people of God were back in Jerusalem and the surrounding countryside. Over time, the Jews lapsed back into the ways of the world, intermarrying pagan women, and not continuing with the mission of reestablishing Jerusalem. Ezra led one revival, but the people seemed to be unable to keep the covenant with God that they had agreed upon.

God then raised up another leader named Nehemiah. Read Nehemiah 1.

1. What was the condition of Jerusalem according to these verses? What do you think is the purpose of walls around a city in ancient times? What do you think is the purpose of gates? Why would the absence of these be a disgrace to the Jewish people? Why do you think the reestablishment of Jerusalem was so important to the Jewish people?

2. The Jewish people had returned to God's holy city of Jerusalem, but they were still not restored. They had lapsed into complacency and were not securing the protection of the city walls for their defense. If Jerusalem is a symbol of our own lives as God's people, are the walls of your life broken down? What are some of the issues in our world that can plague Christians today? (Example: sexual promiscuity, pornography, greed, power, jealousy, fear, past hurts etc.)

3. Perhaps also your gates are burned. Gates are ways in and out. They are the way by which other people get to know you as you really are. What attitudes keep us from allowing others to see us as we truly are? Gates can keep some out who may be harmful to us but allow others in.

4. What was Nehemiah's reaction to the condition of Jerusalem? What does this tell you about how we start to build up strong walls and gates to live the life God has called us to live?

5. Reread Nehemiah's prayer in Nehemiah 1:5-11. This is a beautiful example of intercessory prayer. What do you notice about it? What does this reflect about Nehemiah's heart towards God? Towards the people?

6. Nehemiah was interceding for the nation of Israel. Following Nehemiah's pattern of prayer, write out a prayer for our nation whose walls may seem broken and whose gates may seem unhinged. See also 2 Chronicles 7:14.

Application: Write out a prayer asking the Lord God to reinforce the defenses of your life so that you can be free from the attacks of the enemy. Ask Him to be the guard over who enters your life and who may need to exit so that you can be all God has called you to be.

Prayer: Holy and gracious Father, how we long to be totally in your will, but the things of this world seem to hamper us. We ask for your divine power to establish the walls of our life so that Satan cannot thwart Your plans for us. Give us wisdom and grace to know who and what to let into our lives and who and what we need to avoid, so that we do not stumble but walk securely in the path you have ordained for each of us. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.