

“REBUILDING BROKEN PLACES”
STUDIES IN THE BOOKS OF EZRA, NEHEMIAH, AND HAGGAI
Nehemiah 9
“END OF THE YEAR REFLECTIONS ON THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD”

INTRODUCTION: It is quite normal at this time of year to reflect on the past year and make plans for the future. Sometimes we do not look back far enough to express our thanks for all the Lord has done for us in the past. The only reason we are here today and able to make plans for the future, is because of the amazing grace of God and his ability to protect, provide, and pursue us when we did not know the danger into which we were walking.

BACKGROUND: Against opposition and obstacles from inside and out, Nehemiah led the people through a necessary rebuilding of the city walls for protection. The next step was to restore the community by getting the people to move back into the city, and to get the people to restore their relationship with the Lord and His Word. No community, no matter how beautiful the homes are, can be a good place to live if God is ignored.

I. GOD HAS BEEN GOOD ALL THE TIME. TAKE TIME TO REMIND YOURSELF OF WHO HE IS AND WHAT HE HAS DONE IN THE PAST. (Nehemiah 9:1-15)

A. The children of Israel separated themselves from those who were a hindrance to their spiritual growth, fasted, prayed, confessed their sins, and spent a long time listening to Scriptures. Hours of listening to Scripture was followed by hours of confessing sins and repenting. *Are we taking serious steps towards spiritual growth? (Nehemiah 9:1-3)*

B. Remind yourself of His role as Creator, and that He planned for you to enjoy all that He has made! (Nehemiah 9:4-6)

C. Remind yourself of the God who chooses to reveal Himself to humanity, chooses people to have the privilege of being in a relationship with Him, and keeps His promises to them. (Nehemiah 9:7-8) (Ephesians 1)

D. Remind yourself of the LORD who delivered you from sin and bondage when you were drowning in sin, just as He delivered Israel from bondage in Egypt. Praise Him for the guidance He provided when you did not know which way to go; how He kept the enemy of your soul from taking you back after He set you free! (Nehemiah 9:9-12)

E. Remind yourself of the LORD who cares enough to teach us how to live, miraculously provides for our every need, and gives His people an inheritance that He has prepared for them. (Nehemiah 9:13-15) (1st Peter 1:3-10)

1. **Ordinances** were decisions made by those authorized to be judges
2. **Laws** were instructions given by the Lord so the people could enjoy life
3. **Obligations** were things placed upon the people (i.e. sacrifices, tithes, observing feast days, etc.)
4. **Commandments** were moral commands like the Ten Commandments

II. HUMAN BEINGS HAVE AN AMAZING CAPACITY TO IGNORE THE GOODNESS OF GOD AND RETURN TO SINFUL WAYS. WE HAVE BEEN MORE LIKE ISRAEL THAN WE WANT TO ADMIT! (Nehemiah 9:16-31)

A. Israel became rebellious during difficult times and wanted to go back to the familiarity of slavery rather than trust God to lead them to a better way of living. (Numbers 14:4) We must have an attitude of “never going back” into our old lifestyles. (Nehemiah 9:16-21) (2nd Peter 2:20-22)

B. The Lord is full of compassion, and therefore did not destroy them or us, even when we deserved it. He guided us and provided for us, even though we **did not** deserve it. Do you remember those days??? (Nehemiah 9:16-21)

C. The Lord allowed Israel to drive out their enemies and take possession of the land that had been promised to them. They inherited homes, wells, and vineyards already fruitful for them. They had more than enough of everything.

Are you thankful for all that you were given that you did not have to work for or build yourself?
(Nehemiah 9: 22-25)

D. When Israel continued to disobey the Lord, He allowed them to be taken captive, yet showed compassion when they cried out to Him in their distress. Do you realize or remember that God allowed you to have hard times so you would make better decisions and cry out to Him? The amazing thing is, this cycle of disobedience and deliverance happened again and again. Yet, the Lord rescued them over and over! (Did we ever get into sin and trouble again after the LORD bailed us out??) (Nehemiah 9: 26-31)

III. GOD HAS BEEN GOOD. WE HAVE NOT. NOW WHAT??? (Nehemiah 9: 32-38)

A. The best response to the LORD, after being convicted of sin, is to acknowledge His character, admit that He has treated you with grace and compassion even during your difficult days. Thank Him for His faithfulness to you and your ancestors. If not for that, you would not be here as you are now! (Nehemiah 9:32-35)

B. As difficult as it may be, we must be brutally honest with the LORD in our assessment of our current situation. He knows everything, but is waiting for us to see what He is pointing out to us. The people of Nehemiah's day knew they were slaves in the place where they should have been enjoying total freedom. Likewise, we must admit that our sinful choices in the past and present are keeping us from enjoying total freedom in Christ. (Nehemiah 9:36-37)

NOW IS A GOOD TIME TO MAKE THE DECISIONS THAT WILL GIVE YOU A BETTER FUTURE. ARE YOU WILLING TO SHARE WITH OTHERS WHAT YOU HAVE COMMITTED TO THE LORD SO THAT YOU CAN BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE?

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