



## K-I<sup>st</sup> Lesson

### Introduction

Refer to the Exodus to Malachi Timeline. We've been learning about the Jews returning home to Judah after living in Babylon, or Persia, for 70 years.

Refer to Lesson 113 Flip Chart. Zerubbabel led the first group of Jews home to rebuild the temple in the city of Jerusalem.

Refer to Lesson 115 Flip Chart. Later, Ezra wanted to teach God's laws to the people. But when he got to Judah, he found out that the Jews were disobeying God by marrying foreign people who worshipped false gods.

The people were sorry and confessed their sin to God. But, as a consequence of their sin, they had to send their foreign wives and children away.

Refer to the Exodus to Malachi Timeline at #31. Today, we'll learn about a third group of Jews who went back to Jerusalem. God used Nehemiah to lead these Jews home to do a big job.

Before we read about Nehemiah, we're going to play a game called "Be Ready!" Have students gather around an area where they can work together to build a wall with blocks or cups. Explain that as they work, they must be ready for the signal. When they hear the bell/whistle (whenever you choose), they all must stand in a line in front of the wall they are building. Tell them to defend their wall by using their hands as shields while you and your assistant toss pom-poms or wads of paper at them.

### Nehemiah Travels to Jerusalem

Refer to the Books of the Bible Poster. Great job defending the wall you were building! But what does that have to do with our lesson today? Let's look in the book of Nehemiah to find out.

It all started while Nehemiah was still in Persia and heard some bad news about some of the Jews in Judah. The wall around the city of Jerusalem was broken down and the gates had been burned and destroyed.

- ? Cities back in those days had walls to protect the people inside from enemies. What could happen if the city didn't have strong walls and gates? Allow discussion.

If the walls were broken and the gates were ruined, then enemies could sneak in and attack the city at any time!

Nehemiah was upset when he heard that his people in Jerusalem were in trouble, but he knew he couldn't do anything about this problem without the king's permission. Nehemiah was very close to the king; he was the king's cupbearer. That meant he tasted all the drinks before the king drank them to make sure they weren't poisoned.

One day, the king asked Nehemiah why he looked so sad. Nehemiah explained the news he had heard about Jerusalem's walls.

### Nehemiah 2:4-6

Would the king help Nehemiah? Listen to what Nehemiah said in chapter 2. Have the student with the Bible bring it up and turn to the sticky note. Read verses 4-6.

- ? When the king asked Nehemiah his request, or what he wanted to do, what did Nehemiah do before he answered? (Verse 4) He prayed to God.
- ? Where did Nehemiah want the king to send him? (Verse 5) To Judah.
- ? What did Nehemiah want to do in the city (Jerusalem)? Rebuild it.
- ? Did it please the king to let Nehemiah go? (Verse 6) Yes, it pleased the king to send him.

God gave Nehemiah favor with the king so that he could take another group of Jews back to Jerusalem. The king gave Nehemiah permission to travel through the land and to use the trees in Judah to rebuild the gates and walls of Jerusalem. He even sent soldiers with the group to protect them.

### The Jews Rebuild the Walls

Nehemiah wanted to get to work on the walls right away. First, he had to see how bad the walls and gates were to know where to start, but he couldn't let the enemies see him. So, he got up in the night and took a few men with him to take a closer look.

Uh oh! Things were pretty bad! The stone walls were broken, and the wooden gates had been burned. In some places, there were so many loose stones and broken pieces that Nehemiah couldn't get past the mess and had to go another way! This would be a big job.

Show the Lesson Flip Chart. When Nehemiah told the Jews that he wanted to rebuild the walls, they all got ready to work. Everyone helped—rich noblemen, priests, storekeepers, and families, including women, all did their part. They cleared away the broken pieces of wood and stone, rebuilt the gates and doors, and stacked stones for the wall.

But the Jews had enemies who weren't happy that Nehemiah had come to rebuild. Three men, Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem, were leaders of the other people who also lived in Judah. They were not Jews, and they didn't want the Jews to protect their city; they wanted them to be weak and afraid. When these troublemakers heard that things were going well on the wall, they tried to make the Jews feel bad so they would stop working.

"Look at these weak and wimpy Jews!" Sanballat jeered. "How will they ever finish their wall? All they have is broken stones that have been burned with fire!"

Tobiah made fun of them too, saying, "Even a little fox could break down their wall if he climbed on it!"

Nehemiah didn't say anything mean back to these men. Instead, he prayed to God and asked him to deal with those bullies. And the Jews kept working until the wall went all the way around the city, although it was only halfway up! They still had a lot to do.

The enemies didn't like what they saw. Sanballat and Tobiah plotted with the others living nearby. Together, they planned to attack

the Jews, forcing them to stop building and to fight to protect themselves and their families. When Nehemiah heard about this, he and the Jews did two things: they prayed, and they acted in faith. They asked God for help and protection and trusted him, but they also set a guard to watch for their enemies so they could be ready to fight.

When the enemies heard that the Jews knew about their plan to attack, they knew it wouldn't work and called it off. God had put a stop to their plans. The Jews went back to their building, but Nehemiah had an idea to get the people ready in case their enemies decided to try again.

### Nehemiah 4:16-18

Let's read what they did in Nehemiah 4. Read Nehemiah 4:16-18.

- ? This was a good plan! Half of the people worked on the wall. What did the other half do; what did they hold? (Verse 16) Spears, shields, bows, and coats of mail; weapons and armor.
- ? What about those who carried burdens, like supplies or stones? How does it say they did their work? (Verse 17) They worked with one hand and carried a weapon in the other.
- ? What did the builders working on the wall do to be ready? What did they have strapped at their sides? (Verse 18) A sword.
- ? What did the man who stood beside Nehemiah have? A trumpet.

Refer to the Flip Chart Everyone did their work, but they were always ready with a weapon nearby. If an enemy was seen, the man beside Nehemiah would blow his trumpet. That would be the signal for everyone to stop working and gather together to defend their wall. It was kind of like how you defended your wall in the game we played at the beginning of our lesson—but Nehemiah and the Jews had real enemies who wanted to hurt them.

God helped Nehemiah make a wise plan that helped the people stay ready for an attack while still working on the walls. Nehemiah prayed to God for protection and trusted God to help him. God answered Nehemiah's prayers. He protected the people, and the wall was finished in just 52 days!



**NEHEMIAH**  
led the people to  
rebuild the walls.

