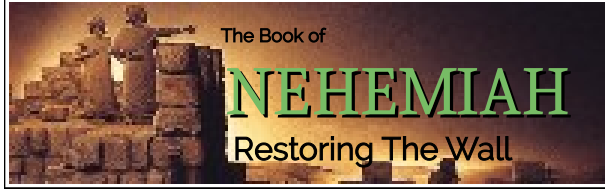


A TIME TO BUILD

Let us rise up and build ... Nehemiah 2:18



Surveying the Wall
Nehemiah 2
Lesson 10

Background Information

What do you do when you hear bad news? Do you fall apart or make preparations to meet the challenge head on? For months after Nehemiah heard of the condition of the walls of Jerusalem, he prayed, fasted and sought the Lord for direction. How many of us are willing to seek the Lord for His timing, instead of taking things into our own hands and trying to fix the problem. His waiting was not spent idle, but in preparation and planning, so that in God's timing, he was ready. For Nehemiah, all of his spiritual preparation was not wasted, for when the opportunity presented itself, God's council was only a prayer away.

Three Persian kings were named Artaxerxes. The one mentioned in Nehemiah is most likely the successor of Xerxes I, Artaxerxes I. It was during the reign of Xerxes that Esther reigned as Queen. Because of the favorable hand of the Lord on Nehemiah, he was granted permission to assist in helping rebuild the broken down walls of Jerusalem. His plans were detailed, when the opportunity presented itself. He asked for a letter to ensure safe passage and also for provisions.

Nehemiah most likely took a long overland route from Susa to Jerusalem. The distance was about nine hundred miles and would have taken about four months. That would have been four hot, dry and hard months of travel. When he finally reached his destination he took the time to survey the situation and made plans to accomplish his task. Enter Sanballat and Tobiah, the first of much opposition to the task the Lord had called him to. Whenever the Lord calls, He enables us to accomplish His purpose, but that doesn't mean that it is effortless. Nehemiah needed much prayer and God's strength and wisdom to bring the project to it's end.

Treasures of the Heart

"Let us rise up and build." Then they set their hands to this good work.

Nehemiah. 2:18b

What does it say?

The first step is getting the lay of the land. Carefully observe the text looking to see where you might dig to find hidden treasure. Studying a narrative requires following the key characters and paying special attention to what God says and does. Mark your text looking for repeated words, contrasts or similarities. **Does a key verse stand out in each section?** Look for answers to: Who? What? When? Where? Why or How?

Nehemiah 2:1-8

1 And it came to pass in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, that I took the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had never been sad in his presence before. 2 Therefore the king said to me, "Why is your face sad, since you are not sick? This is nothing but sorrow of heart."

So I became dreadfully afraid, 3 and said to the king, "May the king live forever! Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire?"

4 Then the king said to me, "What do you request?"

So I prayed to the God of heaven. 5 And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it."

6 Then the king said to me (the queen also sitting beside him), "How long will your journey be? And when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time.

7 Furthermore I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, let letters be given to me for the governors of the region beyond the River, that they must permit me to pass through till I come to Judah, 8 and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he must give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel which pertains to the temple, for the city wall, and for the house that I will occupy." And the king granted them to me according to the good hand of my God upon me.

Nehemiah 2:9-16

9 Then I went to the governors in the region beyond the River, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me. 10 When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard of it, they were deeply disturbed that a man had come to seek the well-being of the children of Israel.

11 So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days. 12 Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me; I told no one what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem; nor was there any animal with me, except the one on which I rode. 13 And I went out by night through the Valley Gate to the Serpent Well and the Refuse Gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were burned with fire. 14 Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but there was no room for the animal under me to pass. 15 So I went up in the night by the valley, and viewed the wall; then I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned. 16 And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, or the others who did the work.

Nehemiah 2:17-20

17 Then I said to them, "You see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach." 18 And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king's words that he had spoken to me.

So they said, "Let us rise up and build." Then they set their hands to this good work.

19 But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they laughed at us and despised us, and said, "What is this thing that you are doing? Will you rebel against the king?"

20 So I answered them, and said to them, "The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem."

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What does it mean?

What lesson can I draw from my observations? Ask yourself, "What was the intended meaning of the original author?" Is there a command to obey, a warning to heed, or an example to follow or avoid? State each lesson in a simple sentence that you could share with someone else.

(aim for 10 words or less)

Nehemiah 2:1-8 _____

Nehemiah 2:9-16 _____

Nehemiah 2:17-20 _____

How can I apply it?

Ask yourself, "What course of action do I need to take to apply each lesson?" How should it change me? What does it challenge me to do? Does it point out error in my attitude or actions?

(aim for 10 words or less)

Nehemiah 2:1-8 _____

Nehemiah 2:9-16 _____

Nehemiah 2:17-20 _____

What did God say?

See if you can discover what God wants us to understand about His character and His ways? Which of His attributes is He displaying? When we are questioning the circumstances that surround us, understanding Who God is helps us trust Him when we don't see Him working. Simply state what God is trying to communicate about Himself **and how it affects your thinking**.

What words or phrases are repeated? Repeated words help us discover the main point.

Getting the point!

Discover the "Big Idea" of each section. The main point of the passage is like a topic sentence in a paragraph. See if you can boil down the meaning of each section into one or two words. This helps you fully understand what the author is trying to convey. (It's fun to alliterate if you want to try) Did you find the "Big Idea"

Nehemiah 2:1-8 _____

Nehemiah 2:9-16 _____

Nehemiah 2:17-20 _____

Title

State the main point of the entire passage in the form of a title.

Flex Your Muscles

From your title Can you discover a N.T. example of this O.T. truth?

Time to build

Take note of how Nehemiah prepared and planned. Ask yourself, how did he attack each challenge? How did it affect those who interacted with him? What building materials did he use? (prayer, confrontation, standing firm, waiting etc.) **What did you learn that can help you next time you meet an obstacle?**

Radiating His Truth

We must learn to consider God's timing instead of our own feelings of impatience.

Mark Roberts



