

## LESSON 8. Nehemiah Travelled To Jerusalem

Nehemiah 2:6 - 2:20

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding that I may learn thy commandments” (Psalm 119:73).

### **GOD PROVIDED THE WAY**

Nehemiah was a captive slave, assigned to serve as cupbearer to the king. He was distressed by the news he heard concerning the plight of the people in Jerusalem and the condition of the walls around the city. He wanted to help the people and restore the city walls. Yet, he was a slave. How could he do anything for Jerusalem when he was hundreds of miles away, and a servant to the king of the Persian empire? In his heart he yearned to serve God and help his brethren. As he pondered the situation his heart heavy with grief. He prayed and fasted. He mourned. He asked God to remember His promise to help if the Jews would confess their sins, repent and turn back to Him. For four torturous months Nehemiah was saddened - except during the time he was in the presence of the king. At those times he was cheerful, and pleased the king in all he did.

Nehemiah’s problem seemed impossible to overcome. But, as Jesus would say almost 500 years later, things which man cannot do, God can, “for with God all things are possible” (Mark 10:27). God heard Nehemiah’s prayer. In a providential way God influenced King Artaxerxes to look with favor upon his servant. When he realized Nehemiah was sad, the king wanted to know why, and what he could do to help. Nehemiah told the king he wanted to leave his service to go work on the city of his forefathers. The king asked when would he be back. Instead of being angry with this lowly slave, Artaxerxes wanted Nehemiah to come back and serve him again.

Artaxerxes was evidently the same king who had stopped the Jews from working on the walls of Jerusalem (Lesson 4). Now at Nehemiah’s request the king granted permission for his own servant to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls. God’s providence is not evident in day-to day living. Yet, He still uses man to accomplish His goals in a providential way. Miracles are no longer a part of God’s methods. This is not because of a lack of His power. It is because man now has His written Word to show God’s will. Miracles are no longer needed to help people believe He is the God of heaven and earth, and sent His Son to die for us. For Nehemiah, God provided the way to not only solve his problem, but to have the king’s blessing in doing so!

### **NEHEMIAH’S REQUESTS GRANTED**

Nehemiah related his desire to go to his homeland and rebuild Jerusalem’s walls. Showing respect and fondness for his servant, the king asked when would he return. After a date was set, the king granted Nehemiah’s request. He also granted Nehemiah’s requests for letters to the governors of the provinces through which Nehemiah would travel, requesting their help. Nehemiah was concerned that some of the governors might hinder his journey. He asked the king to write a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the woods instructing him to give Nehemiah timbers for the rebuilding of the walls and gates of Jerusalem and Nehemiah’s own house. To signify his desire for Nehemiah’s safety, the king sent soldiers and horsemen to protect him on the journey to Jerusalem.

After being granted all his requests by the king, Nehemiah neither took personal credit for his success, nor did he indicate they were due to the goodness of the king. It was to God that Nehemiah acknowledged these came, saying, “And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me” (Nehemiah 2:8). God had heard and answered Nehemiah’s prayers.

### **NEHEMIAH ARRIVED IN JERUSALEM**

No one in Jerusalem knew why Nehemiah and the men with him had come to the city. He took no supplies for the wall, nor anything that might indicate his purpose. For three days he told no one why he was there. He wanted to inspect the damage done to the walls before talking to the people. At night he rode his horse in and out of various burned-out gates to the city, looking at the walls and the gates. The walls were in heaps and the gates had been burned when the Babylonians defeated Judah. At the gate of the fountain the rubble was so deep his horse could not get through.

As he looked over the damage to the city, Nehemiah knew much work needed be done. He was not discouraged. He met with the leaders and people of the city and said all could see how the city lay in waste. He told them why he had come to Jerusalem and said, “come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach” (Nehemiah 2:17). Nehemiah related how God had blessed him in getting the king’s permission and He would bless them as well.

Nehemiah chose to give the people the opportunity to make their own decision about resuming work on the walls. It would be hard work and much needed to be done. But, the people responded with enthusiasm saying, “Let us rise up and build” (Nehemiah 2:18). Immediately they “strengthened their hands” or began to gather materials needed for the job.

### **NEIGHBORS OPPOSED THE WORK**

An obstacle to the rebuilding of the walls soon became evident. When the leaders of cities and provinces around Jerusalem heard about the work, they were fearful of a re-fortified city. Instrumental in stirring up trouble were Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite, and Geshem who was an Arabian. They made fun of the Jews for undertaking such a long and tedious job. When that didn’t stop the work, they accused the Jews of rebelling against the king. Sanballat was a leader of the Samaritans (Nehemiah 4:2). These were descendants of Jews who had intermarried with the nations around them. Years before they had volunteered to help rebuild the walls, hoping to sabotage the work being done (Ezra 4:1-2).

Nehemiah answered the accusations brought against them saying that God would aid them, and the Jews themselves would build the walls. He told Sanballat and others causing the trouble, “ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem” (Nehemiah 2:20).

The Samaritans also worshiped God. But they had mixed His worship with that of idols (Ezra 4:2, 3). Thus, like much worship in the name of Jesus today, their worship was vain or useless. It was such worship of the scribes and Pharisees in the first century that prompted Jesus to say, “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me, But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:9).

### TRUE OR FALSE

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Nehemiah prayed for almost a month before God provided an answer to his prayer.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. When the king saw Nehemiah's sadness, he wanted to know what was wrong.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. God still works in a miraculous way in the lives of people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The king agreed to let Nehemiah go to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The king provided Nehemiah with soldiers and horsemen to escort him to Jerusalem.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The people in Jerusalem did not want to rebuild the walls because it was too hard.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Enemies of the Jews around Jerusalem accused them of rebelling against the king.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Nehemiah invited the Samaritans to help so the work would be easier.

### FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. In a \_\_\_\_\_ way, God made King Artaxerxes look with \_\_\_\_\_ on Nehemiah.
2. Nehemiah asked the king for a \_\_\_\_\_ to Asaph telling him to furnish \_\_\_\_\_ as needed for the work in Jerusalem.
3. Nehemiah gave \_\_\_\_\_ the credit when the king granted his requests.
4. In trying to go to the gate of the \_\_\_\_\_, the rubble was so deep Nehemiah's \_\_\_\_\_ could not get through.
5. Nehemiah was in \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ days before he told the people why he was there.
6. Sanballat was a leader of the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ the rebuilding of the walls.

### SCRIPTURE SEARCH

1. "Let us rise up and \_\_\_\_\_. So they strengthened their \_\_\_\_\_ for this \_\_\_\_\_ work" (Nehemiah 2:18).
2. "The God of \_\_\_\_\_ he will \_\_\_\_\_ us; therefore we his servants will \_\_\_\_\_ and build" (Nehemiah 2:20).
3. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause \_\_\_\_\_ and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and \_\_\_\_\_ them" (Romans 16:17).

### POINTS TO PONDER

1. Why was the king not angry when Nehemiah asked to leave serving him to go to Jerusalem?
2. When he first got to Jerusalem why didn't Nehemiah tell anyone why he had come to the city?
3. Why did Nehemiah not allow the Samaritans and men from other nations to work on the walls?
4. What did Jesus say about the value of teaching the doctrines of men?