

Nehemiah 1:1-4 – A Man with A Broken Heart

TSK, HebrewLexicon, Gill, Trapp, Armstrong, Henry, Poole, Gray, Geneva, Clarke, Barnes, Gaebelein, JFB, Delitzsch, Expositor, Maclaren, Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: **The Bible is amazingly applicable to you today** as it was for believers 3500 years ago when God gave the very first books! **And why not?** The Bible was **written for long ago for them AND for us**. Of course, some books are more applicable at certain times than others. **Today we will begin to look at one that is most important for a time as this: Nehemiah.**

Now if you have to think of this book in one sentence, think: Rebuilding the walls of a broken-down church so the one who came to die for her can rejoice.

Our headings are:

The Reminder of where Nehemiah Was

The Report of the Situation in Jerusalem

The Response of a Christian Man

Our goals are: **That you will have a broken heart, cry, and mourn when you see the weakness of the church today and learn to help strengthen her so the one who gave his life for the church will rejoice.**

The Reminder of where Nehemiah Was

1 The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. It came to pass in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the citadel,

1. The Jews concluded their 70 years in Babylonian captivity as punishment from God for their lust for wealth that caused them to be cruel to widows, orphans, and foreigners, to break the Sabbath Day, and to turn to idols.

2. After the 70 years, Medo-Persia conquered Babylon and King Cyrus, the new emperor, sent Jews back to Jerusalem.

The returning Jews were to **rebuild the temple, restore worship, and to ready themselves for the coming of the Savior.**

Other Jews **remained in Medo-Persia willingly, while some were forced to stay there – like Nehemiah - who remained in Shushan, the capital city of the Medo-Persian Empire.**

3. Nehemiah (who name means “Yahweh Comforts”) was the personal trusted servant of the king, the one who, among other things, would taste the king’s food to make sure it wasn’t poisoned.

This was a most important job. Isn’t it amazing a Jew would be trusted to do this and not his own people?

This first account took place between November and December – Chislev.

4. Nehemiah had to wait patiently for his commission from Yahweh to come, waiting while serving a foreign king.

But in his waiting, **he would have had access to many diplomats and foreigners** and would have learnt the art of leadership and negotiations. This was important providence of God! It might have seemed like wasted time, but **it was preparation!**

5. Lessons:

a. What a mighty God we serve! No one can stop God from doing his work. He said Judah would be punished for 70 years and he was. He said the Medo-Persian Empire would conquer Babylon (even when the Medes and the Persians were relatively small nations that hated each other), and it did. He told King Cyrus to send the Jews back and he did.

b. God can lift you up anywhere and make you progress in life. Even in the midst of opposition, he will build you, your family, and his church.

c. It doesn’t matter what limitations you have in life, you can still be productive for God’s kingdom. You might not be a eunuch in a foreign land, **but are you single?** There are things to do. **You don’t have children?** You can help others with theirs. **You are old?** You can make phone calls. **You can fix computers?** Help others with them. **You are an elder?** Oversee others’ spiritual lives. **You are illiterate?** You can love people. **You are a child?** You can help your parents care for younger ones, or be a friend to one with no friends.

d. Are you patiently waiting and preparing for how you may serve God’s kingdom...as a wife...as a teacher...as a pastor...as an encourager? Let God prepare you now! Learn what you need to learn. Read good books. Get training. Learn how to be a godly wife and manage a house.

e. You have to learn to work with others for the sake of the kingdom. Christ your Savior’s honor is at stake.

The Report of the Situation in Jerusalem

2 that **Hanani one of my brethren** came with men from Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had **escaped, who had survived the captivity**, and concerning Jerusalem. 3 And they said to me, "The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The

wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire."

1. One of Nehemiah's brothers came with other men and brought news from Judah about the condition in Jerusalem.

They came on a long journey, likely for the purpose of bringing this news.

Were these Nehemiah's brothers? Yes, they were spiritual brothers – real brothers – not just those who have the same DNA.

2. Nehemiah asked about the state of those who had returned from captivity (and of those who were originally left there).

He wanted to know if they were prospering or suffering? Had the walls and the temple been rebuilt? Was there security for the people? Were sacrifices being made again? Were the Levites singing God's praises?

With all his dignity and honor of a position in the palace of the greatest nation on earth, Nehemiah never forgot who he was!

3. The report of Nehemiah's brothers was not good, for the Jews were in great distress – in a deplorable state in Jerusalem.

The returning people faced **threats which stopped them from restoring regular life in Jerusalem**. The Samaritans (the half-brothers of the Jews (The Assyrians took some of the northern 10 ½ tribes away and brought in pagans who intermarried with the remnant of the northern tribes.) terrorized the remnants and the returning Jews.

The holy seed – the people of God - was in great reproach.

The walls of Jerusalem were broken down so thieves and murderers could roam wild! They were defenseless! Yes, maybe they started to do some rebuilding, but leadership and labor were missing.

The entrances to the city were burned with fire by the Babylonians and never rebuilt.

Judah had become a province of the Medo-Persian Empire; they were not the independent people of God who loved and served him!

4. More significantly than these things, Nehemiah knew God's worship was now limited.

Worship was the Jews' greatest duty and they couldn't properly do it. God was being robbed.

5. Lessons:

a. What unites the children of God? You are of one blood and you love the Lord, so you must care for each other! You might not have the same DNA as the person next to you, but you are closer to that believing person than with your family member at home who is not a believer. **You may not be children of the same race, but you are children of the same grace.** You are one blood!

b. As brothers and sisters you are to care for each other. There is no excuse, whether believers are near or far, if you don't care for them. You must care for their physical, emotional, and spiritual welfare.

c. As brothers and sisters in the Lord, you must care about the worship of God. You must make sure it is possible. It must be a heart-wrenching thing when you are not able to worship. It must cause you pain when you can't worship. Does it? **Children, you must understand that what you do here in church is the most important thing you can do in your life!**

The Response of a Christian Man

4 So it was, when I heard these words, that I **sat down and wept**, and **mourned for many days**; I was **fasting and praying** before the God of heaven.

1. Nehemiah listened carefully, his heart was broken, so he sat down and wept.

Psalm 137:1 By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down, yea, we wept When we remembered Zion.

This wasn't some distant story that he could put out of his mind. These were his brothers who were suffering. This was the worship of God that was lacking! He could not compartmentalize this.

2. Nehemiah's sorrow was not temporary; he shed tears and then he mourned for many days.

And the normal way to mourn was to sin in dust and ashes.

3. Nehemiah then fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.

a. He did not fast and pray to the gods of the Medo-Persians, something that would have pleased his

employer. He fasted and prayed to the God of heaven – Yahweh. This pleased the real God.

b. He could have said, “My life is comfortable, serving the king; I don’t want to be bothered by the troubles in Judah.” But he didn’t.

c. He could have just been angry with the Babylonians who enslaved his people and leave it there.

d. He could have just shed a few tears and mourned a few days and let time help him forget.

Instead, he went to Yahweh– the one in whom he trusted, the one who could solve any troubles he had.

Nehemiah mourned and fasted and prayed for about 3 months! After which he would petition the king.

4. But why fast, what is the significance of fasting?

Fasting is a sacrificing of the body so the soul can focus on prayer. This was especially common in days of deep distress. You can see more examples in Esther 4:16 as she fasted prayed for help to approach the king to save the Jews, Daniel 9:3, 10:3, as he fasted and prayed for the sins of the Jews, and Zechariah 7:3-7; 8:19, as he fasted and prayed for the returning Jews to complete the work they were told to do.

5. Lessons:

a. Rich Christians must never forget the God who made you rich and don’t forget his children who may need help from you. Remember Moses:

Acts 7:23 Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel.

b. Take the time to listen and learn about the troubles the church is in today. Compare the situations with what the Word of God says. Invest time! Invest your money! Invest your abilities.

c. Learn to weep (outward) and to mourn (inward) for the state of the church today. It is not a good time. The church is losing ground in the Western world, and losing it fast. Christ’s honor is lacking. It will recover because God says it will recover, but weep and mourn so you will be reminded what you have to do.

d. Learn to fast and pray. When there are important things, it is good and necessary to fast. Jesus told his disciples to fast when he returned to heaven, and they were to fast when there were hard issues.

Conclusion:

Nehemiah, a true believer in Jesus Christ, showed his passion for the worship of God and for God’s people. He lived a comfortable life with a good future, but his love for God’s honor and the welfare of his people caused him to show great concern for them. But his concern was not just some feeling in his heart, it also led to actions – significant actions – starting with fasting and prayer.

Brothers and Sisters in the Lord Jesus:

1. How pained are you by the state of the church today...a church without strong doctrine...a church with weak worship...a church lacking in leadership? I pray to God you don’t think the church is okay...and that you can continue the way you are going!

2. What are you going to do about it? Do you cry for her? Do you mourn for her? Do you fast and pray for her? Are you willing to work hard, carrying the burdens of others, so together you can build her up into a strong kingdom – a kingdom in which Christ rules and glory goes up to him? Will you let godly men lead you in truth...and in godly worship? Or are you preoccupied with the simple and shiny things of this world?

3. Do you work to bring in new workers – those Christian workers who will join with you so you can do the work of Christ everywhere?

Finally: If you are not a Christian, you are outside of the family of God and none of the benefits, even of eternal life, can be yours. So join God’s family. God offers entrance for the price of Jesus’ life and death. It’s free for you. Take it and be joined to the family of God and work together to increase God’s kingdom.

Isaiah 9:8-10:27 - Finding the end of God's anger in Jesus Christ

1. False expectations for the end of God's anger (Isaiah 9:8-10:4)

2. False security from God's anger (Isaiah 10:5-19)

3. A remnant for the child promised (Isaiah 10:20-27)