

We will now begin the sixth lecture on the Book of Ezra and the Book of Nehemiah. /Today we will begin with Nehemiah chapter 1. /In verses 1-3, Nehemiah hears about the state of Judah and Jerusalem while he is in Babylon. /“Nehemiah” means “Comforted by YAHWEH.”

/Verse 1 says that Nehemiah is the son of Hacaliah of the tribe of Judah, who was taken captive to Babylon. /Nehemiah returned in the twentieth year during the reign of Artaxerxes (also known as Longimanus) king of Persia. /Nehemiah was a leader of the third return of the captives in exile. /He returned to Jerusalem from Persia with many other who came from Judah.

/Nehemiah was a leader who returned and built the fallen city of Jerusalem. /The first return took place in 538 BC. /Zerubbabel was the leader of the people at that time. /The second return was led by Ezra. /That was in 457 BC. /Then thirteen years later, Nehemiah led the third return to Jerusalem.

/When Nehemiah returned, seventy years had passed since the building of the temple was completed. /The twentieth year of reign of King Artaxerxes was 444 BC. /The month of “Kislev” is the ninth month on the Jewish calendar. /It would be sometime between November and December on today’s solar calendar.

/“Susa” was the capital of the Elamite Empire. /Jeremiah 25:25. /The king of Assyria conquered Susa in 660 BC. /Then, Babylon conquered the land. /After the fall of Babylon, the land became Persian territory.

/At the time, there was a winter palace that belonged to Artaxerxes king of Persia in Susa. /Nehemiah was King Artaxerxes’ cupbearer, and thus, he was present in the citadel in Susa (verse 11).

/In verse 2, when Nehemiah was in the citadel of Susa, Nehemiah’s brother came from Judah with some other men to Persia. /Nehemiah heard about the state of Jerusalem and the people of Judah.

/Verse 3 says, “great trouble and disgrace.” /Judah was an independent nation in the past. /Yet, now it was a province of Persia. /The people of Judah and Jerusalem encountered hardships /because Judah sinned against God.

/In verses 4-11, /Nehemiah fasted and prayed to God. /In verses 4-7, Nehemiah repented before God. /In verse 3, Nehemiah heard that Jerusalem was ruined, /the city gates were burned with fire, and the people were distressed. /Therefore, in verse 4, Nehemiah mourned and fasted and prayed before God.

/Isaiah 58:3-4 /tell of the purpose of fasting. /Fasting is the act of repenting of one’s sins. /It is also the act of humbling oneself so that one’s voice can reach God.

/When Nehemiah prayed, /verse 5 says that he sought the Lord God of heaven. /When

Nehemiah prayed, he believed that God was in control over everything in heaven and on earth.

/Nehemiah believed and prayed that God is absolutely sovereign. /Second, /Nehemiah believed that God keeps his covenant and saves and shows mercy /on those who love and keep his commands.

/God punishes sinners. /However, God surely saves and has mercy on those who repent and keep God's commands. /Nehemiah repented before God, and he resolved to keep God's commands.

/Nehemiah realized why Jerusalem became pitiful. /Nehemiah realized that Jerusalem became pitiful because of the sin of the Israelites of disobedience against God's word.

/In verse 6, Nehemiah confessed, "I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's house, have committed." /Nehemiah took responsibility, confessed, and prayed to God. /True repentance is the act of taking responsibility.

/Passing on the responsibility of sin to another person is not acceptable before God. /In verse 7, Nehemiah confessed that he did not obey the commands, decrees, and laws of Moses.

/The "commands" refer to the Ten Commandments. /The "decrees" refer to God's commandments. /The "laws" refer to regulations on how to keep God's commandments.

/In verses 8-9, Nehemiah prays using God's word of his covenant. /Nehemiah confessed of his sins, and then he prayed with trust in God's word of covenant. /In verse 8, God said that he would scatter the people among the nations if they sinned against God.

/Yet, verse 9 says that God would allow the people to return /if they repented and obeyed God's commands. /God said this in Leviticus 26, /Deuteronomy 4:25, /and in Deuteronomy 28.

/Then Nehemiah prayed that God would save the repentant people. /Nehemiah prayed with faith in the God of the truth. /He prayed that it would be as God promised. /Nehemiah believed that God would surely save the people.

/In verse 10, Nehemiah prayed that the people would be given the grace of redemption. /God saved Israel from Egypt and protected them /for his name. /Nehemiah prayed that God would save the Israelites and not forsake them /because they were the people whom God had guided in the past.

/In verse 11, Nehemiah prayed for success. /God hears the prayers of those who revere God's name. /Nehemiah prayed that God would hear the prayers of the Lord's faithful servants who revered God's name.

/Nehemiah also prayed that God would hear his prayers. /It says, “in the presence of this man,” and “this man” indicates King Artaxerxes. /Nehemiah prayed that he would find favor before King Artaxerxes.

/This was because Nehemiah would only be able to return to Jerusalem and build the temple /if God moved the heart of the king. /Nehemiah realized that it was his calling to reconstruct Jerusalem.

/In order for him to do so, he needed permission from King Artaxerxes. Therefore, Nehemiah prayed. /Nehemiah did not pray for his personal success.

/Nehemiah prayed that he would be allowed to build God’s holy city. /He prayed for God’s kingdom and righteousness. /We can do this by serving and making sacrifices for God’s kingdom.

/The Israelites said that they would construct the temple of Jerusalem and build the city of Jerusalem. There was a deep meaning in this. /To “construct the temple” /means that our souls grow. /To “build the city of Jerusalem” /means to construct the church and God’s kingdom.

/At the time, the temple was already completed under Zerubbabel and Jeshua. /However, the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem was not yet completed. /Even if the temple was well-constructed, /it would not be well-preserved if the city walls were not intact.

/Jerusalem would need walls to keep out the enemies. /The city would need walls for the light of the temple to shine brightly outside. /The same goes for us today. /It is important the for souls of believers to grow.

/It is also important for the church and denominations to stand upright in the truth. /We must also block out all powers, cults, and lies against Christianity. /Then, the spiritual temple will be well-preserved. /Then, the light of the temple can shine beautifully to all peoples.

/There are some whose souls grow and become strong, /yet, their actions cause others to curse God because they lack virtues of faith. /Some people are godly in their actions, /but their souls are weak.

/Therefore, we must grow in both spirit and character according to the Bible. /Verse 11 says, “I was cupbearer to the king.” /How was Nehemiah a cupbearer when he needed to construct God’s kingdom?

/In the Old Testament times, all except priests and Nazirites were allowed to make and drink wine. /However, we must not make or drink alcohol in the New Testament period. /Romans 13:13 and Ephesians 5:18 strictly says that we must not get drunk on alcohol. /Therefore, we must not drink even a little bit of any types of alcohol.

/In 2:1-3, /King Artaxerxes saw that Nehemiah was concerned. /The twentieth year of King Artaxerxes was 444 BC. /The month of “Nisan” is the first month on the Jewish calendar. /Nehemiah heard that the city of Jerusalem was ruined.

/Nehemiah heard that the gates of Jerusalem had been burned with fire. /He also heard that the people were in great trouble and distress. /Therefore, Nehemiah was filled with concern /and prayed for many months that he would be able to rebuild the Jerusalem city.

/The rebuilding of the Jerusalem city was possible only by God’s grace. /We too must pray in this way. /The spiritual Jerusalem city has fallen and is ruined. /We must have the heart to rebuild the fallen city /and pray earnestly to God.

/At the time, Nehemiah was a cupbearer to King Artaxerxes. /One day, the king saw that Nehemiah was sad, and he spoke. /The king said in verse 2, “Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill?”

/Then Nehemiah humbly explained before the king. /Nehemiah was very afraid. /Servants must not show signs of sadness or concern before the king.

/Nehemiah did not want to show his sadness before the king, /but the king noticed. /Nehemiah was afraid because he did not want the king to think poorly of him. /Then, Nehemiah honestly answered the king.

/In verse 3, Nehemiah said, “Why should my face not look sad when the city where my fathers are buried lies in ruins, /and its gates have been destroyed by fire?” /His answer received sympathy from all who were present.

/If Nehemiah had said that this was the city built by King Solomon, the king might have become suspicious. /Nehemiah spoke wisely so that the king would not misunderstand him. /This was a condition that the king of Persia might give ear to.

/In verses 4-8, /King Artaxerxes granted Nehemiah’s wish. /At the time, Nehemiah was a servant of the king of Persia who had gained the king’s trust. /When King Artaxerxes asked what Nehemiah wanted, /Nehemiah first prayed to God.

/In verse 5, Nehemiah asked the king that he would send him to the city of Judah where his fathers were buried so that he would rebuild the city. /Nehemiah first prayed to God as he stood before the king /because Nehemiah believed that all authority was with God.

/Thus, he believed that the king would give his approval if God showed him grace. /Nehemiah also knew that the king would deny his request if God did not show him grace. /Proverbs 21:1 says, /“The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD; /he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases.”

/In verse 6, it pleased the king to send Nehemiah to Jerusalem. /Then the king asked how long it would take to build the city /and when Nehemiah would return.

/The king asked this because he wanted Nehemiah to return and serve him. /Then Nehemiah responded with a set time. /We do not know more about the set time. /Yet, 6:15 says that the wall of the city was completed in fifty-two days.

/The set time was possibly a few months. /In 5:14, /Nehemiah remained as governor in the land of Judah for twelve years after the walls of Jerusalem were built. /It is possible that Nehemiah first received permission to go to Jerusalem for a short time.

/Then he would have returned with a report for King Artaxerxes. /Then Nehemiah was named governor of Judah when he asked for permission a second time, and he went to Jerusalem for the second time. /Thus, Nehemiah served in Judah for twelve years.

/In verse 6 it says, “the queen sitting beside him.” /The queen sat beside the king at the time. /In that time, the queen could not come before the king without permission from the king himself. /It is possible that the queen advised the king and helped Nehemiah.

/The queen helped Nehemiah return to Jerusalem and build the city walls. /God moved the hearts of those who Nehemiah needed to help him. /Therefore, God’s works were well carried out.

/In verse 7, however, it says that there were governors of Persia /who opposed of Nehemiah’s rebuilding of Jerusalem. /Hence, Nehemiah requested of the king. /Nehemiah asked that the king send letters to the governors so that he would arrive safely in Judah.

/Nehemiah also said that he needed timber to build his house and the city walls in Jerusalem, and asked if the king could give him supplies. /The king was gracious and granted Nehemiah’s requests. /All this was done by God’s grace. /The “keeper of the king’s forest” in verse 8 was the person in charge of the forest.

/In verses 9-10, /the enemies became disturbed when Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem. /The king gave Nehemiah his letters to the governors and the keeper of the first. /Not only that, but the king sent army officers and cavalry to escort Nehemiah.

/The road from Persia to Jerusalem was rough. /There were many robbers and enemies on the road. /Nehemiah did not request of the king, but the king sent an army with him.

/Nehemiah did not need the army’s protection to travel safely. /Nehemiah would have arrived safely in Jerusalem with God’s protection.

/However, we can receive protection from the state /if we do not cover God’s glory and the truth. /God uses national and military powers /when it is needed.

/In verse 9, Nehemiah went to Judah and gave the governors of Trans-Euphrates letters from the king. /In verse 10 it says, Sanballat the Horonite /and Tobiah the Ammonite

were greatly disturbed.

/This was because they knew that Nehemiah had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites. /The people of Judah did not greatly welcome Nehemiah. /The enemies knew about Nehemiah and they became disturbed. /The devil's servants hate it when God's works are carried out smoothly.

/In verses 11-16, /Nehemiah inspects Jerusalem's walls at night. /Three days after Nehemiah arrived at Jerusalem, /God moved Nehemiah's heart. /Nehemiah secretly inspected the city at night.

/Nehemiah looked around the city the night God moved his heart. /Verse 13 says that Nehemiah went out through the Valley Gate. /He passed the Jackal Well and came to the walls of the city. /The walls of the city were just as his brother Hanani had informed him about.

/The walls were broken down. /The gates were destroyed by fire. /Verse 14 says that Nehemiah's mount could not pass through the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool. /The "Valley Gate" was the southwest gate of Jerusalem.

/The "Jackal Well" was approximately 450 meters from the Valley Gate. /The "Fountain Gate" was located southeast of Jerusalem. /The "King's Pool" was Solomon's Pool at Kidron Valley. /The people of Judah built the temple seventy years earlier after the first return from Babylon, /but they left the city of Jerusalem as it was because they did not have the strength to build it.

/It was now Nehemiah's calling to rebuild the city. /Nehemiah inspected the city walls at night. /Then why didn't Nehemiah tell anyone about this as it says in verse 16? /First, Nehemiah wanted to first see for himself.

/Second, he was worried that people would oppose if they found out. /Third, Nehemiah wanted solid proof and then figure out how he would assign work to the people.

/In verses 17-18, /the people rebuild the city of Jerusalem with Nehemiah's encouragement. /Nehemiah gained solid proof and confidence /after he inspected the city at night. /In verse 17, Nehemiah gathered the priests, nobles, and officials who would work.

/Nehemiah gathered the leaders and encouraged them to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. /In verse 18, Nehemiah told them about God's gracious hand. /He told them about the orders and letters of King Artaxerxes.

/The leaders then decided to build the city of Jerusalem.

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/The leaders heard Nehemiah speak, and they decided to build the city. /Here, three things came together and became one in agreement. /First, God worked in all of this. /God sent Nehemiah, /and God allowed Nehemiah to receive approval from the king.

/Second, the leader Nehemiah took charge. /Nehemiah was filled with faithfulness for his calling. /Third, all the people cooperated with one another.

/Even today, these three must come together for success. /First, there must be God's works. /Second, pastors must have a sense of duty and take charge in accordance with God's will. /Third, believers must obey and cooperate.

/In verses 19-20, /the enemies criticized them, but Nehemiah succeeded with God's help. /All the people of Judah came to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. /At that time, Sanballat the Honorite, /Tobiah the Ammonite, /and Geshem the Arab mocked and ridiculed Nehemiah.

/They said that the people of Judah were rebelling against the king of Persia. /The enemies attempted to stop the rebuilding of the city by making the people of Judah into rebels.

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/Enemies will ridicule and mock believers /in every generation when they build the truth and the true church. /In verse 20, it says that Nehemiah still believed that God would give them success. /Nehemiah spoke to the enemies, /"You have no share in Jerusalem /or any claim /or historic right to it."

/In Deuteronomy 23:3-6, /the Ammonites and Moabites /were not allowed to enter the assembly of the Lord. /It was not acceptable before God to compromise with the Ammonites and Moabites /in constructing the city of God. /The same goes for the church today. /We must not approve of anything that does not agree with the Bible.

/With this we will conclude the sixth lecture on Ezra and Nehemiah. /Thank you.