



....the man who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem

The Study of Daniel - "The Rest Of The Story"

Session Fourteen

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Pastor Dan Betzer

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NEHEMIAH - THE MAN WHO REBUILT THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM

1 In 586 B.C., King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon made his third and final foray into the
2 Holy Land and destroyed Jerusalem and Judea. On all three attacks he captured Jews
3 and took them to Babylon, among them Ezekiel and Daniel. During the decades of their
4 captivity, Daniel rose to prominence in the Babylonian government - and even after the
5 fall of that empire he had a major role in the Persian Empire.
6

7 With the fall of Babylon, the new Persian monarch Cyrus decreed that the Jews could
8 return to the Holy Land and rebuild the city of Jerusalem and the Temple. Only about
9 ten percent of the Jews took advantage of the offer and so the rebuilding of Jerusalem was
10 along process. As we studied last week, Ezra the scribe and prophet assisted greatly in
11 the Temple restructuring. Today we study Nehemiah who led the rebuilding of the
12 walls.
13

14 **Actually, these three books we are studying, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther, are in reverse
order in Scripture to their chronological occurrence. Esther, I believe, came to
prominence before the Jews were liberated; then came Nehemiah to rebuild the walls
(as we study tonight) and then Ezra returned to Israel for the great Temple rebuilding.**

15
16 Nehemiah had a good thing going for him in Persia as he was the King's cupbearer, a
17 place of enormous responsibility and trust. For him to leave that position in order to
18 return to the destroyed city of Jerusalem in a rebuilding effort shows his great love of his
19 heritage and of God.
20

21 A cupbearer was an officer of high rank in royal courts whose duty it was to serve the
22 drinks at the royal table. Because of the constant fear of plots and palace intrigues, a
23 person with that position had to be regarded as thoroughly trustworthy. He was to guard
24 against poison in the king's cup and was sometimes required to swallow some of the wine
25 before serving it. His confidential relations with the king often gave him a position of
26 great influence. The position of cup bearer to the king was highly valued and given only
27 to a select few throughout history. Thus Nehemiah was known for his courage and
28 faithfulness.

1 As we begin, let's remember that the first seven chapters of Nehemiah deal with the
2 rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. The rest of it deals with revival and reform which
3 followed.

4 5 CHAPTER ONE 6

7 Neh. 1:1-4

8 **The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. And it came to pass in the month**
9 **Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace, [2] That Hanani, one**
10 **of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning**
11 **the Jews that had escaped (the Jews who had returned to Judea), which were left of the**
12 **captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. [3] And they said unto me, The remnant that**
13 **are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the**
14 **wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.**
15 **[4] And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and**
16 **mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven,**

17
18 Nehemiah was not a priest; he was a dedicated layman. As a Jew, he had remained in
19 Persia. I will not judge his motives for doing so for he was incredibly used of God. It is
20 very possible that Nehemiah had been born in captivity. We don't know that for sure,
21 but it is believed that he was still quite young at this time.

22
23 When he learned of the plight of the returned Jews to the Holy Land he sat down and
24 cried. The next verses - 5 through 11 - were his prayer that God would use him to do
25 something about the deplorable conditions far to the west in Jerusalem.

26 27 CHAPTER TWO 28

29 On a day that followed, the king noted that Nehemiah seemed very downcast and asked
30 about it. These verses are remarkable:

31
32 Neh. 2:1-5

33 **And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the**
34 **king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king.**
35 **Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence. [2] Wherefore the king said unto**
36 **me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but**
37 **sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid, [3] And said unto the king, Let the**
38 **king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of**
39 **my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire? [4]**
40 **Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the**

1 **God of heaven. [5] And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant**
2 **have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city**
3 **of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it.**

4
5 The king agreed that Nehemiah could go. (Verse 6) This verse tells us that the queen
6 was sitting by him. Some scholars think the queen might have been Esther. Now
7 Nehemiah knew this would be a dangerous adventure and he not only asked for
8 permission to go, but authority and supplies:

9
10 Neh. 2:7-8

11 **Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the**
12 **governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into Judah; [8]**
13 **And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber**
14 **to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertained to the house, and for**
15 **the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted**
16 **me, according to the good hand of my God upon me.**

17 18 The Enemies Are Revealed

19
20 Neh. 2:10

21 **When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it,**
22 **it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the**
23 **children of Israel.**

24
25 We meet two of them in this verse, Sanballat and Tobiah, and later we will meet Geshem.
26 These are bitter enemies of the Jews and will do everything in their power to stop
27 Nehemiah and his project to rebuild the city. (Nothing new there, is there? The enemies
28 of the Jews continue to this day in their attempts to stop the Jews in Jerusalem!)

29
30 Before taking any precipitous action, Nehemiah wanted to “scout out the land,” so to
31 speak, so:

32
33 Neh. 2:12-16

34 **And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man**
35 **what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither was there any beast**
36 **with me, save the beast that I rode upon. [13] And I went out by night by the gate of**
37 **the valley, even before the dragon well, and to the dung port, and viewed the walls of**
38 **Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire.**
39 **[14] Then I went on to the gate of the fountain, and to the king's pool: but there was**
40 **no place for the beast that was under me to pass. [15] Then went I up in the night by**

1 **the brook, and viewed the wall, and turned back, and entered by the gate of the**
2 **valley, and so returned. [16] And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did;**
3 **neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the**
4 **rulers, nor to the rest that did the work.**

5
6 What Nehemiah witnessed in his “midnight round” was disaster everywhere. Jerusalem
7 was the mess left by the Babylonians decades earlier. His conclusion:

8
9 **Neh. 2:18 Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good**
10 **work.**

11
12 When the enemies of Israel heard it, their response was predictable: Neh. 2:19

13 **But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and**
14 **Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said,**
15 **What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king?**

16
17 The fact of the matter was that Nehemiah was there with full knowledge and support of
18 the king.

19 20 CHAPTER THREE - REBUILDING THE WALLS AND GATES

21
22 Gates in Biblical times were more than just openings in the wall. There were rooms as
23 part of the gate structure, used for “city hall,” legal meetings, council meetings, etc.
24 There were ten gates that got Nehemiah’s attention and rebuilding:

- 25
26 1. The sheep gate – through which animals were brought for sacrifice. Verses 1-2
27 2. The fish gate - fish brought in from the Mediterranean Sea - Verses 3 - 5
28 3. The old gate - today we hear so much about “new, new, new.” Sometimes it takes
29 the “old to get the work done in God’s house. Verses 6 - 12
30 4. The valley gate. - verse 13 The gates leading west, south and east would all have
31 led to valleys so we don’t know for sure which gate this was.
32 5. The dung gate - today this gate is farther north than the original one and leads from
33 the Gehenna Valley to the Western Wall. Verse 14
34 6. The fountain gate - verse 15 This is not a gate that still exists as far as we know.
35 7. The water gate - verse 26. An ancient aqueduct brought water into the old city.
36 8. The horse gate - verse 28. Again, this gate no longer exists.
37 9. The east gate - verse 29 This was the first gate opened every morning. Today the
38 eastern gate is closed (by Suleiman 500 years ago).
39 10. The gate Miphkad - verse 31. It was at this gate that visitors had to register upon
40 entering Jerusalem.

1 In the previous chapter we saw that Nehemiah cleverly got different people allocated for
2 rebuilding the gates. As we get to the next chapter, the work - the walls - are about half-
3 way built and the enemies now go to work to stop it.

4 5 Chapter Four - Dealing With Enemies 6

7 Now the “bad guys” attempt ridicule!

8
9 Neh. 4:1-3

10 **But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was**
11 **wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. [2] And he spake before**
12 **his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will**
13 **they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they**
14 **revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned? [3] Now Tobiah**
15 **the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he**
16 **shall even break down their stone wall.**

17
18 Nobody like to be laughed at. These three enemies attempted sarcasm, ridicule, mocking
19 to get the work stopped. Tobiath laughed, “Why these walls are so flimsy that should a
20 fox run across them they would collapse! Ha, ha!”

21
22 Nehemiah’s response: Neh. 4:4-5

23 **Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own**
24 **head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity: [5] And cover not their**
25 **iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have**
26 **provoked thee to anger before the builders.**

27
28 Nehemiah asked God to dispense justice. Romans 12:19 **Dearly beloved, avenge not**
29 **yourself, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I**
30 **will repay, saith the Lord.** Probably everyone hearing this study has had reason to
31 want justice for one reason or another. Perfectly fine to want that - as long as we don’t
32 “take the law into our own hands.” Nehemiah knew God had called him to the work in
33 Jerusalem and He would take care of him.

34
35 Neh. 4:6

36 **So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for**
37 **the people had a mind to work.**

38
39 Nehemiah could well handle opposition from enemies of the Jews, but how would he
40 handle discouragement aimed at him from “friends?”

1 Neh. 4:10

2 **And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is**
3 **much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.**

4
5 Discouragement is perhaps the most effective weapon Satan uses against God's people.
6 Nehemiah wouldn't have it! And when warned about even more surprise attack from
7 the enemies, he wouldn't have that either! Neh. 4:16-20 **And it came to pass from**
8 **that time forth, that the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half**
9 **of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons (a mail**
10 **jacket, like armor); and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah. [17] They**
11 **which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every**
12 **one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a**
13 **weapon. [18] For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so**
14 **builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me.**

15 **[19] And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people,**
16 **The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from**
17 **another. [20] In what place therefore ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye**
18 **thither unto us: our God shall fight for us.**

19
20 The workers continued their quest even while they assumed defensive positions. This is
21 also a New Testament directive: Ephes. 6:11-12 **Put on the whole armour of God,**
22 **that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. [12] For we wrestle not**
23 **against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers**
24 **of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.**

25 26 Chapter 5 - Opposition From Within

27
28 The Jews who had returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the city had their hands full - the work
29 itself, enemy activity, and now even poverty. Most were working on the reconstruction
30 so they couldn't work to make a living and many had mortgaged what property they had
31 just to buy food for their families. It was a desperate situation:

32
33 Neh. 5:1-5

34 **And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren**
35 **the Jews. [2] For there were that said, We, our sons, and our daughters, are many:**
36 **therefore we take up corn for them, that we may eat, and live. [3] Some also there**
37 **were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might**
38 **buy corn, because of the dearth. [4] There were also that said, We have borrowed**
39 **money for the king's tribute, and that upon our lands and vineyards. [5] Yet now**
40 **our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we**

1 **bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and some of our**
2 **daughters are brought unto bondage already: neither is it in our power to redeem**
3 **them; for other men have our lands and vineyards.**

4
5 Nehemiah had dealt well with all the external problems, but this one caused him deep
6 inner pain. Apparently some of the “loaners” of money were extorting outrageous
7 demands on repayment. Neh. 5:6 **And I was very angry when I heard their cry and**
8 **these words.** He rebuked these “loan sharks” severely and demanded justice for their
9 victims. Neh. 5:11 **Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their**
10 **vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money,**
11 **and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them.**

12
13 Nehemiah had had no part in this extortion. He was there to rebuild the city, not to get
14 into financial speculation. What a superb idea for pastors today! Don’t get involved
15 with the money!

16 17 Chapter 6 - The Wall Project Is Completed!

18
19 One of the several reasons the work was successful is that Nehemiah had a single-minded
20 purpose: build the wall! Now that it was about complete, the enemies tried this ploy:

21
22 Neh. 6:1-4

23 **Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and**
24 **the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no**
25 **breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;)**
26 **[2] That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in**
27 **some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief. [3]**
28 **And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot**
29 **come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you? [4]**
30 **Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same**
31 **manner.**

32
33 Those men would try anything to get Nehemiah “off the job.” Sometimes even your
34 friends (those on your side, spiritually) can innocently get you “off the job.” In our own
35 fellowship there are meetings after meetings to which I am invited - some of them in
36 Florida, most of them scattered around the country and even the world. I cannot go to
37 all of them. Or most of them. It does not often sit well with denominational leaders,
38 but there are only 24 hours in a day. So I use those hours to do what God has called me
39 to do - and that is to pastor this church. Are those other meetings wrong? No. It’s
40 just a matter of priorities.

1 So the enemies could not pull Nehemiah off the job, so they decided to accuse him of
2 something:

3
4 Neh. 6:5-8

5 **Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an**
6 **open letter in his hand; [6] Wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen,**
7 **and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou**
8 **buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words. [7] And**
9 **thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a**
10 **king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words.**
11 **Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together. [8] Then I sent unto him,**
12 **saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of**
13 **thine own heart.**

14
15 Nehemiah would not take the bait and so:

16
17 Neh. 6:15-16

18 **So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and**
19 **two days. [16] And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all**
20 **the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their**
21 **own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God.**

22 23 Chapter 7 - Nehemiah Registered The People

24
25 This is an important chapter, although I am not taking time with it tonight. I recommend
26 you read it. These were some safeguards for the people put in place by Nehemiah. It
27 was one thing to rebuild the walls, quite another thing to keep them safe.

28 29 Chapter 8 - The People Turn To The Scriptures

30
31 Upon completion of the construction, there were still great spiritual matters ahead. Once
32 again we hear about Ezra:

33
34 Neh. 8:1-6

35 **And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that**
36 **was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of**
37 **the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel. [2] And Ezra the priest**
38 **brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could**
39 **hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. [3] And he read**
40 **therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until**

1 **midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the**
2 **ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law. [4] And Ezra the scribe**
3 **stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him**
4 **stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah,**
5 **on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and**
6 **Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam. [5] And Ezra opened the**
7 **book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people; he was standing**
8 **on a platform) and when he opened it, all the people stood up: [6] And Ezra blessed**
9 **the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up**
10 **their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces**
11 **to the ground.**

12
13 Ezra understood his role very well. He was not there to deal with all kinds of
14 sociological issues (of which there must have been many). He was there to present the
15 Word of God. That is still the mandate for preachers of the Gospel today.

16
17 Unfortunately, many clergymen today have adopted a different tack, that of being
18 therapists for the people. They deal with psychology, material well-being, feelings,
19 sociological positioning, etc. As a result, there is a drastic lack of knowledge of the
20 Word of God among professing believers.

21
22 That which radically enhances human life is the Word of God. Pastor John understood
23 that and wrote: 1 John 1:4 **And these things write we unto you, that your joy may**
24 **be full.** Look what happened because of Ezra's preaching:

25
26 Neh. 8:12

27 **And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and**
28 **to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared**
29 **unto them.**

30
31 The people were blessed and fulfilled in life because of their KNOWLEDGE of the
32 Word.

33
34 (The last few chapters of Nehemiah describe revival and renewal in Israel. I encourage
35 you to read them and rejoice!)

36
37 **Next week: The story of Queen Esther.**