

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH



1. Nehemiah's Prayer

Introduction

Nehemiah was a Jew who had been taken captive, along with many of his countrymen, from the city of Jerusalem, to Susa in Babylon. There he worked as a cupbearer to the king, Artaxerxes. One day Nehemiah received news from his brother about the city of Jerusalem. The news was not good! The walls of the city had been broken down and the gates had been burnt. Nehemiah was greatly burdened and began to fast and pray. God wonderfully answered his prayer. Let's read this story.

Scripture Reading: Nehemiah 1:1-2:9

- ⊗ Nehemiah begins his prayer by acknowledging that God is the God of Heaven who 'keeps his covenant'. Why is this so significant do you think? See Exodus 19:5-6, 20:6, 24:7-8

(God had made a covenant with his people – they would be his people and he would care for them, but in response they were to love and obey him. Nehemiah is acknowledging that God keeps his covenant and is expressing his confidence in God.)

- ⊗ Nehemiah went on to confess his sin and the sin of his people, admitting that they had broken their covenant with God in verses 6 to 9. Why was this so important?

(The people of Judah had been taken captive as a result of their sin. Nehemiah understood that repentance is essential before God could fulfil his promises to them.)

- ⊗ What place does confession and repentance have in our lives if we want our prayers to be answered? 1 John 1:9, 3:21-22, 5:14-15

(Sin can block our prayer being answered, but as soon as we confess our sin and receive forgiveness we can come to God in confidence.)

- ⊗ What did God promise to do if his people turned back to him? v9, 2 Chronicles 7:14

(God promised that he would hear their prayer, gather them together and bring them back to their land.)

- ⊗ God already knows what he has promised! What difference does it make when we bring God's promises to him in prayer?

(We are showing God that we believe he will fulfil his word.)

Conclusion

Nehemiah was burdened when he heard the news that the walls of the city of Jerusalem had been broken down. There are many people around us whose lives are like this. They are broken and the enemy has come in to steal, kill and destroy. God wants us to be concerned for them.

How easily Nehemiah could have prayed a quick prayer and forgotten about it. After all he was probably living comfortably as the cup bearer to the king. But he didn't! He continued to pray, even with fasting, and was willing to do something about it. When the king asked what he wanted to do, he said he wanted to go to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls.

Let's be concerned for those who are lost. It's not enough just to say a quick prayer, but we need to continue to pray and be willing to do something about it.

