

Nehemiah and the Revival Out of the Rubbish!

Text: Nehemiah 4:1-6, 14

In Nehemiah 4:2 Sanballat said, "...What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?" Ezra and the remnant had already returned from captivity and built the Temple, but the walls of old Jerusalem were still in ruins. Nehemiah introduces himself (Nehemiah 1:1) in the twentieth year of the reign of Artaxerxes, who was the stepson of Queen Esther. If you read chronologically, the book of Esther would be located just before Ezra and Nehemiah. Hanani, the brother of Nehemiah had just returned from Jerusalem and Nehemiah was asking his brother of the state and condition of the Holy City. It was now ninety years since the first captives had returned to Israel. Nehemiah was born in captivity and yet his heart was broken, which led him into prayer and fasting for his homeland. He had never seen Jerusalem and yet in his heart he identifies with Jerusalem. Psalm 137 is a psalm of lament. Psalm 137:5 and 6 says, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget *her cunning*. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." In every generation God has placed a love in the heart of the Jew for this old city that defies human explanation. Even today, two thousand years after the destruction of the Temple, Jews of all backgrounds speak the phrase "*le-shanah ha-ba'ah bi-Yerushalayim*" which means, "next year in Jerusalem." This phrase makes two appearances annually in Jewish liturgy: at the conclusion of the Passover Seder and at the conclusion of the *Ne'ilah* service of Yom Kippur. The phrase began to appear in 11th century France, sung by the Jewish people living there. For one thousand years the Jews are still singing and saying this, now with more fervor than ever. In this phrase is the longing for the restored Kingdom of David. Although many do not realize it, they are longing for their Messiah, Jesus, Son of God, who is also the Son of David to return and when He does, they will worship Him in Jerusalem. Jeremiah 23:5 promises, "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth." Psalm 2:6 reinforces this truth with the promise, "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." Worship of mere mortal man is forbidden, but Zechariah 14:16 tells us that this King that shall reign is not just a man or descendent of David, for it says, "And it shall come to pass, *that* every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles."

Sandballet, the Horonite, Tobiah, the Ammonite and Geshem the Arabian did not have the power to stop the return of Israel and Judah to the possession God Himself has designated for His people. Old Gamaliel, the Apostle Paul's teacher affirmed this truth when speaking of the followers of Jesus in Acts 5:39: "But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God." God spake of Jacob's descendants in Deuteronomy 32:10 when

God declared, "...He kept him as the apple of his eye." Then in Zechariah 2:8 the Lord warns, "...for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye." No person and no nation will prosper who comes against Israel.

Returning to the thought, "...will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish?" (Nehemiah 4:2c), we see the promise of restoration for God's people. No matter how far we stray, we may hope in God. I appreciate the phrase in Isaiah 43:19b, "...I will even make a way in the wilderness...." God makes a way when there is no way. It appears that even in our churches, America has lost her way, but the promise in the New Testament is as true today as it was in the Old Testament; God will "...make a way..." (I Corinthians 10:13c). The heathen mocked the godly goals of Nehemiah by asking if the stones would be revived. The answer is yes, God can and will revive us - when we seek to obey Him. God inquired of Ezekiel, "And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live?" (Ezekiel 37:3). The Lord gave the answer, "Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live." (Ezekiel 37:5). When I read this promise to Israel, I am challenged to pray the same for the Church: "Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?" (Psalm 85:6). Revival will come...

I. WHEN WE ARE BOTHERED AND BULLIED

Nehemiah 4:3: "Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.

Nehemiah 4:8: "And conspired all of them together to come *and* to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it."

Nehemiah 4:11: "And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease."

Nehemiah 6:19b: "...And Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear."

Nehemiah 6:11a: "...Should such a man as I flee?"

II. WHEN WE ARE BOUND AND BOLD

Nehemiah 4:6: "So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work."

Nehemiah 4:9: "Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them."

III. WHEN WE HAVE BURDENS AND BROTHERS

Nehemiah 4:10: "And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall."

Nehemiah 4:12: "And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us they will be upon you."

Nehemiah 4:14: "And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses."

IV. WHEN WE ARE BUILDING AND BATTLING

Nehemiah 4:18: "For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me."

- A. Everyone had a job and everyone did his job. Nehemiah 4:15-18
- B. Everyone stayed in contact with each other and God. Nehemiah 4:19, 20
- C. Everyone did his job until the job was finished. Nehemiah 4:21-23, Nehemiah 6:3; Nehemiah 6:15, 16: "So the wall was finished...."

Conclusion:

The state of revival becomes perpetual when the worship of the Lord is integral with the foundation and continuation of a nation.

1. THE UNIFYING. Nehemiah 8:1. Acts 2:1: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place."
2. THE AUTHORIZING. Nehemiah 8:2-6. Joshua 1:8: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."
3. THE CODIFYING. Nehemiah 8:7,8. Acts 6:4: "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word."
4. THE ENERGIZING. Nehemiah 8:9, 10. Proverbs 29:18: "Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he." Deuteronomy 33:29, "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places."

-Pastor Pope-