



NEHEMIAH

A BROKEN HEART

RICHARD BROWN

NEHEMIAH 1

NEW LIVING TRANSLATION

¹ These are the memoirs of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah.

In late autumn, in the month of Kislev, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes' reign, I was at the fortress of Susa. ² Hanani, one of my brothers, came to visit me with some other men who had just arrived from Judah. I asked them about the Jews who had returned there from captivity and about how things were going in Jerusalem.

³ They said to me, "Things are not going well for those who returned to the province of Judah. They are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem has been torn down, and the gates have been destroyed by fire."

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⁴ When I heard this, I sat down and wept. In fact, for days I mourned, fasted, and prayed to the God of heaven. ⁵ Then I said, “O Lord, God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps his covenant of unfailing love with those who love him and obey his commands, ⁶ listen to my prayer! Look down and see me praying night and day for your people Israel. I confess that we have sinned against you. Yes, even my own family and I have sinned!

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⁷ We have sinned terribly by not obeying the commands, decrees, and regulations that you gave us through your servant Moses.

⁸ “Please remember what you told your servant Moses: ‘If you are unfaithful to me, I will scatter you among the nations.’ ⁹ But if you return to me and obey my commands and live by them, then even if you are exiled to the ends of the earth, I will bring you back to the place I have chosen for my name to be honoured.’

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¹⁰ “The people you rescued by your great power and strong hand are your servants. ¹¹ O Lord, please hear my prayer! Listen to the prayers of those of us who delight in honouring you. Please grant me success today by making the king favourable to me. Put it into his heart to be kind to me.”

In those days I was the king’s cup-bearer.

NEHEMIAH – A BROKEN HEART

Three things to consider

- Responding to a nation in crisis?
- Why was rebuilding the city walls so important?
- Why had it take around 70 years before this seems to have become an issue?

RESPONDING TO A NATION IN CRISIS

“Things are not going well for those who returned to the province of Judah. They are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem has been torn down and the gates have been burned.”



RESPONDING TO A NATION IN CRISIS

- Nehemiah sat down and wept
- For days he mourned, fasted and prayed
- He identified himself as part of the problem: *“I have sinned”*
- His heart is broken and stands humbly before God.



RESPONDING TO A NATION IN CRISIS

How does Nehemiah pray?

- *“O Lord hear my prayer... Please grant me success now as I go to ask the king for a great favour...”*
- Nehemiah owns the burden and makes himself available to God.



RESPONDING TO A NATION IN CRISIS

What are the ruins we see today?

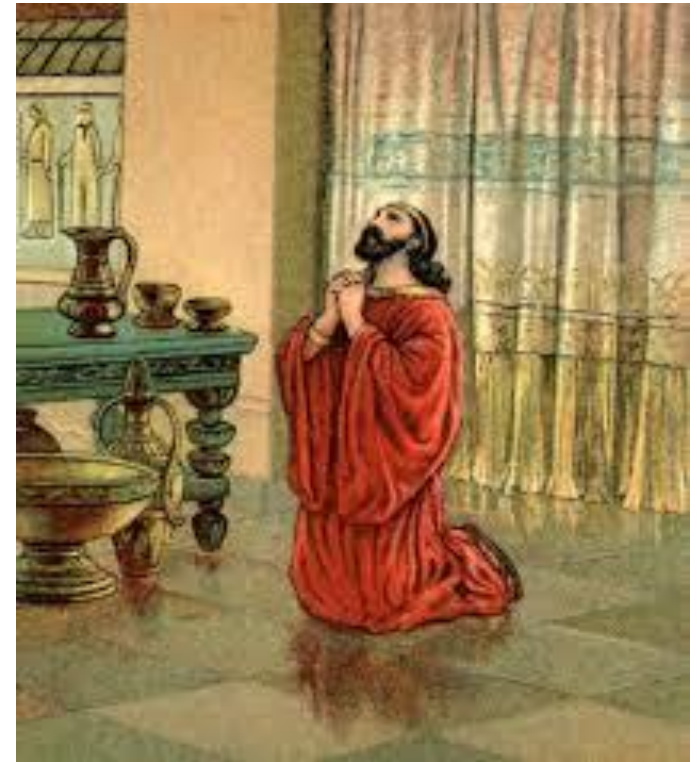
- Major morality and sexuality issues
- Terrorism is the name of religion
- Humanitarian crises
- The destruction of our planet
- Hidden ruins of broken lives

Where is the church in all of this?



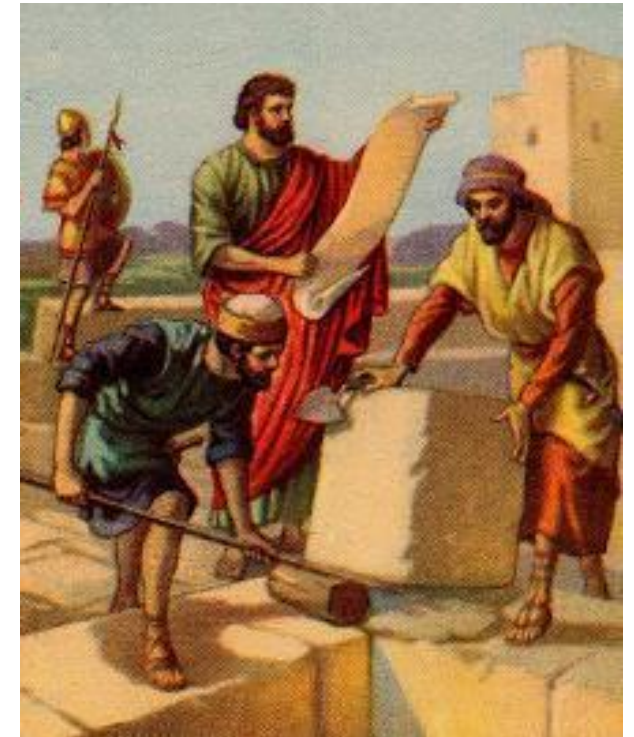
RESPONDING TO A NATION IN CRISIS

- God's world is broken
- Our hearts should break too
- We need to be praying, fasting...
- What does God want me to do?



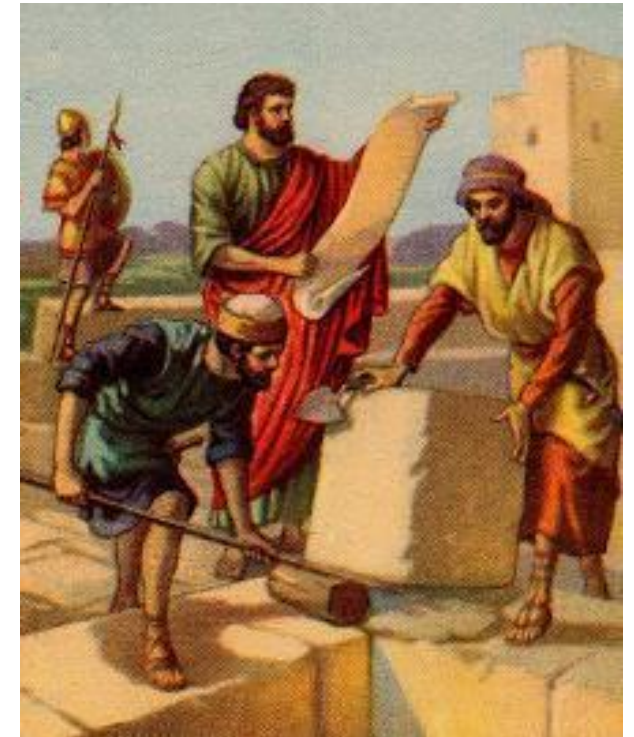
WHY WAS REBUILDING THE WALLS SO IMPORTANT?

- The temple had been rebuilt and worship re-established
- BUT – The Jewish nation was mixing and marrying with the pagan nations taking up *their detestable practices* (Ezra 9)



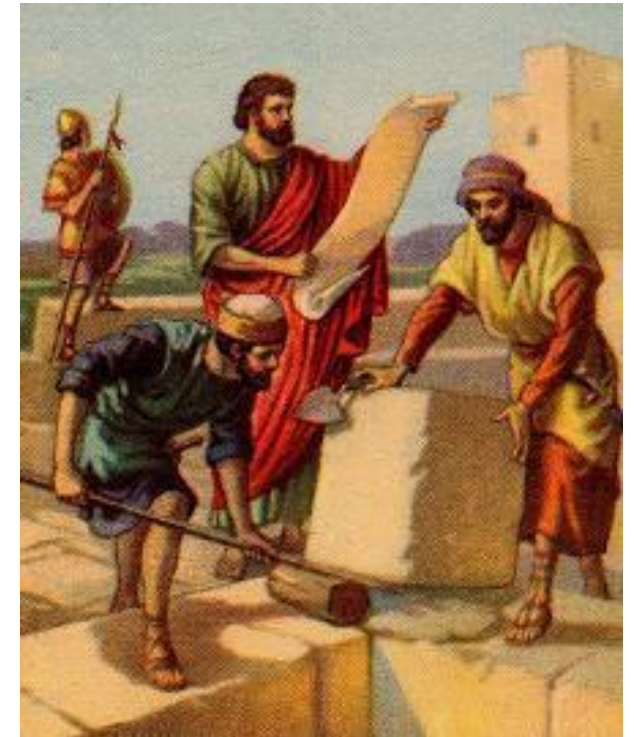
WHY WAS REBUILDING THE WALLS SO IMPORTANT?

- The walls which were designed to provide protection were in ruins.
- But hasn't God been saying to us that we need to get outside of our four walls?



WHY WAS REBUILDING THE WALLS SO IMPORTANT?

- God wants his church to be a holy people, distinct, different...
- Its message: *“There is another way”*
- Prepared to stand up and say *“That’s wrong!”*
- We need to redraw a line in the sand and not cross it
- In the world but not of the world.
- How can we have a voice, or ever have anything to offer, if we are simply the same as the world?



WHY HAD IT TAKEN NEARLY 70 YEARS BEFORE IT BECOMES AN ISSUE?

- Maybe they were still recovering from the opposition they came under when rebuilding the temple. Easier to simply keep the peace.
- We have our worship; the walls aren't that important.
- I've just come out of exile, I don't want to rock the boat. Let's proceed cautiously
- Actually, I like what the pagan nations have to offer. I don't want to be different.

WHY HAD IT TAKEN NEARLY 70 YEARS BEFORE IT BECOMES AN ISSUE?

- Perhaps God simply said: *“Enough!! This has gone on long enough; things need to change”*.
- Is this what God is saying to us all today?
- Our lights need to shine brighter; our salt needs to become saltier; we need to stand up and be the people of God.

SO WHAT NOW?

- Is my heart truly breaking over this fallen world? How do I feel and respond when listening to the news?
- I say I am a Christian; am I really living a Kingdom of God life? Am I really salt and light in my community? Do people even know I am a Christian or just that I go to church?
- Am I ready to say to God “Send me”? *If not, what do you need to do to get to that place? If you are, what does “Send me” mean?*