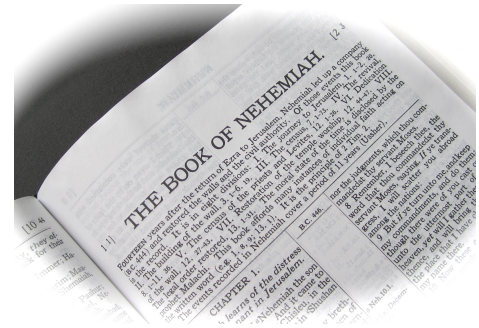


Christ in All The Scriptures

Nehemiah

Introduction

Nehemiah is a book which is normally read in its historical and spiritual setting as it pertains to building the walls of Jerusalem and the people of God. However, the Lord said: "Search the scriptures . . . they are they which testify of me" (Jn. 5:39), and with that in mind, we can expect shadows of the Lord in Nehemiah.



Nehemiah and The Lord

- 1) The first observation is the significance of His name which means, "Jehovah comforts". In reading that, it is easy to think of Isaiah when he recorded the words of God: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people" (Isa. 40:1). The gospels record times when the Lord was moved with compassion (Matt. 9:36; 14:14; Mk. 1:41); when He wept (Jn. 11:35); and how tenderly He encouraged those who showed devotion to Him (Mk. 14:3-9).
- 2) Nehemiah had those who worked with him and chapter three gives a list of such persons and what they did. The Lord was very practical for He knew He would not be on this earth forever to continue the work he began, to bring others into "the work" (Matt. 9:10; 12:49; 15:36; Mk. 1:16, 19). It is a blessing afforded to us today for after His ascension we read: "And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them" (Mk. 16:20; 2 Cor. 6:1).
- 3) Nehemiah faced unrelenting opposition for the Holy Spirit had been pleased to record several occasions when there was opposition to the work of restoration. He and the work God had given to him was mocked (ch. 4:2); they were despised (ch. 4:4). There was opposition in seeking to fight at Jerusalem against Nehemiah and his associates (ch. 4:7-8). The Lord also faced stiff opposition:
 - a) They brought Him to the brow of a hill to cast Him down (Lk. 4:29)
 - b) They would have stoned Him but He stopped them by his words of condemnation (Jn. 10:31-33)
 - c) Their desire was to kill him (Jn. 8:40)
 - d) They mocked and scourged Him (Matt. 20:19)
 - e) They cried: "Crucify Him" (Mk. 15:14)
 - f) Added to this were the many temptations which were oppositions and were Satanically instigated (Matt. 4:1-11; Lk. 22:28).
- 4) Nehemiah did the work God gave him to do. It was a glorious work of restoration (ch. 1:3; 2:17, 20; 3:1; 4:1) which is engulfed by the work of restoration by the Lord at Calvary. To appreciate, even in a small degree the vastness and fulness of the work of the Lord, we need to understand what was lost and the need for restoration. In Nehemiah's day the walls had been broken and the gates were burned. The place was utter devastation (ch. 2:13). What was lost when Adam sinned? When Adam sinned a triple harmony was broken; fellowship with God, with man, and with himself. Because fellowship with God was broken by his sin, he hid himself (Gen. 3:8), the fellowship with Eve was severed, or at least strained, for he blamed Eve and indeed blamed God for what had happened (Gen 3:12). Finally, he lost the peace and quietness in his own soul for he knew he had done wrong. The result was he was aware that he was not only naked and afraid (Gen. 3:10), but kept seeking another covering to hide from God (Gen. 3:7 then verse 8). What a work God gave the Lord to do, and it was even more serious because it could not be repeated a second time and had to be perfect the first time. What was the work God gave Him to do? It was twofold:
 - a) "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do" (Jn. 17:4). What was that work? It was the manifestation of the Father (Jn. 14:8-9); the manifestation of God (Jn. 1:18); and these were incorporated in the statement: "I have declared unto them Thy Name" (Jn. 17:26).

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- b) On the cross when the three hours of darkness was past, when the cup had been drunk (Jn. 18:11) and the sword of divine justice had executed the demands of God's moral character (Zech. 13:7), He cried: "It is finished" (Jn. 19:30). The work for redemption was forever done (Heb. 10:12). With that great work completed, the flood gates of mercy of God (Titus 3:5) was able to flow freely, abundantly, and the same is true of the love of God (Rom. 5:8) and grace (Eph. 1:7). Glorious reality salvation could be offered to the "whosoever will" (Rev. 22:17).

Space Forbids Dealing With The Following

- 1) Nehemiah came to a place which was structurally weak and in ruins (Neh. 2:3, 13, 17). What a dreadful state the people of Israel were in spiritually. When the Lord came to Israel they were functioning with dead formality (Matt. 15:8); leprosy was abundant (Matt. 8:2; 26:6); and poverty was on every side (Mk. 10:21; Lk. 19:8).
- 2) Cleaned out the house of the Lord. Eliashib had let Tobiah, the Ammonite, take up residence in the House of our God (ch. 13:4-5). The Lord also came to the temple and found there those who made merchandize of the people of God. The sacred house of God was degraded to a business center for those who had no care for the things of God (Jn. 2:14-16).

It Was a Great Work

Perhaps the most notable shadow was when Nehemiah was agitated to come down from the work he was doing (Neh. 6:3). When our Lord was on the cross a challenging mockery was cast at Him: "If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross" (Matt. 27:40). Not only did they say this to him, but mockingly said it among themselves, for it is recorded: "Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him" (Matt. 27:41-42). Yet, the Lord neither answered them nor did He come down from the cross. It is interesting to consider the things the Lord could have done and did not, and could have said but did not. He could have called twelve legions of angels but He did not (Matt. 26:53). He could have, when taunted to come down from the cross, said the words of Nehemiah: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down" (Neh. 6:3), but He said nothing. It is on this truth I draw our meditation.

The more deeply we muse on the work of the Lord when He suffered for our sins in the three hours of darkness, the more wonderful it becomes. It is a great work because of:

- 1) The greatness of the Person doing the work.
 - a) Our Lord said that He was greater than the temple which was, "My Father's House" (Jn. 2:16); "greater than Jonas" as a sign (Matt. 12:41); and greater than Solomon" in his glory (Matt 12:42). Furthermore, He strongly indicated that He was "greater than Jacob" in giving life satisfying water (Jn. 4:12); and "greater than Abraham" in being (Jn. 8:53). He is the "fulness of the Godhead" (Col. 2:9); the "Saviour of the world" (Jn. 4:42); and the "Son of God" (Matt. 14:33). He stands throughout the ages and eternity as preeminent in worthiness and glorification (Rev. 5:9-13).
 - b) When our Lord was on earth He was acknowledged as the great prophet (Lk. 7:16), and because of His experiences, He was qualified to be our Great High Priest (Heb. 4:14). Through His sacrifice He became the Great Shepherd of the Sheep who secured the everlasting covenant (Heb. 13:20). The One who offered Himself as the sacrifice to end all sacrifices was none other than "The great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13) and will one day rule this earth as the great King (Psa. 47:2).

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2) Some of the effects flowing from that great work are:

a) Eternal efficacy

1. Such is the assurance, God has in the eternal efficacy and effectiveness of the work of our Lord that, before He ever went to Calvary, indeed in eternity past, God promised eternal life (Titus 1:2). In reading of the burnt offering there was the assurance that it would be accepted before it was even offered (Lev. 1:4). Considering the work of Christ, God promised “everlasting life” (Jn. 3:16); and “eternal life” (Jn. 10:28) before He ever went to the cross.

b) Universal availability

1. Thank God for the word “whosoever”. There have been those who have been used by God to preach the gospel in large venues, others through radio etc, and to all who are listening, or watching, or are present, the message is the same: “Whosoever will” (Rev. 22:17). When I was a child I was taught the unbounded fulness of the word “Come” by an acrostic.

- (a) “C” informs us that children can come
- (b) “O” informs us that old people can come
- (c) “M” informs us that middle aged people can come and
- (d) “E” means everyone can come.

The promise still stands, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (Jn. 6:37).

c) Universal suitability

1. Paul confessed: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (1 Tim. 1:15). Such is the fulness of the perfections of Christ that, irrespective of what sin an individual has committed or how often they have sinned, the pledge of God still stands true: “The Blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 Jn. 1:7).

3) That which it manifests of Christ:

- a) The fulness of His devotion. On the night of His betrayal the Lord spoke, the only recorded time, of His love for the Father. He had eaten the Passover with His disciples, the Supper had been instituted, and the hour had come. Speaking to them He said: “Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence” (Jn. 14:30, 31). Such love, beyond all human and angelic comprehension.

4) That which it removes.

- a) Our sins and iniquities: “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb. 8:12).
- b) Our transgressions: “As far as the East is from the West, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us” (Psa. 103:12).

5) In how it was done.

- a) It was accomplished in righteousness. “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference”. “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” (Rom. 3:21, 22, 25, 26).

6) He could not come down because:

- a) This was the reason He had been sent: “And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world” (1 Jn. 4:14).

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- b) To destroy the works of the devil. “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil” (1 Jn. 3:8).
- c) To destroy him that had the power of death. “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14).
- d) To glorify God on the earth. “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do” (Jn. 17:4).
- e) To authenticate the truth that He had power to lay down His life and take it again. “No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father” (Jn. 10:18).

Summary

The Lord could have said, “I am doing a great work so I cannot come down”, but thank God He did not come down, and throughout the eternal ages adoring praise and adoration will arise to He and God because of His devotion to the will of God and His glory. No wonder we now sing:

Great God of wonders! All Thy ways are matchless, Godlike and divine;
But the fair glories of Thy grace, more Godlike and unrivaled shine.

Refrain

*Who is a pardoning God like Thee, or who has grace so rich and free?
Who is a pardoning God like Thee, or who has grace so rich and free?*

Crimes of such horror to forgive, such guilty, daring worms to spare;
This is Thy grand prerogative, and none shall in the honor share.

In wonder lost, with trembling joy, we take the pardon of our God;
Pardon for crimes of deepest dye, a pardon bought with Jesus' blood.

O may this strange, this matchless grace, this Godlike miracle of love,
Fill the whole earth with grateful praise, and all th'angelic choirs above.

... Samuel Davies

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**

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