

# The Great Story

## Week 21 – The Wall Rebuilt

### Bible Study

#### I. Introduction

- a. Ezra 6:15 - The Temple was completed in 516BC.
- b. There were three exilic returns to Jerusalem from Babylon
  - i. 538 BC – Ezra 1-6
  - ii. 458 BC – Ezra 7-10
  - iii. 445 BC – Nehemiah 1-13
- c. Reigns of the Kings of Persia
  - i. Cyrus 559-530 BC
    1. King when Babylon was captured in the time of Daniel. Originally sent first group of Jews home with Zerubbabel as their leader
  - ii. Darius I – 521-486 BC
    1. King who followed up on Cyrus’ command to rebuild the Temple of God
  - iii. Xerxes (Ahasuerus) – 486-465 BC
    1. King during the time of Esther
  - iv. Artaxerxes – 464-424 BC
    1. King during the lives of Ezra and Nehemiah.

#### II. Ezra

- a. Ezra was a scribe and a priest. His lineage is traced in Ezra 7:1-5.
  - i. He was some type of official, appointed by Artaxerxes, over religious institutions.
- b. Ezra traveled to Jerusalem during the second return in 458 BC.
- c. Ezra 9:1-2
  - i. Upon returning to Jerusalem, Ezra learned that the Jews had intermarried with women from the surrounding nations.
  - ii. The Law did not forbid all foreign marriage, but it did forbid the marriage when it meant a compromise to their religious beliefs
    1. Rahab and Ruth were not Jewish and they are in the Messianic line.
- d. Ezra repented for the sins of the people because they were doing the same things that caused their exile to Babylon.
- e. Ezra 10:1-4
  - i. The people understood their sin and repented.
  - ii. The “responsibility” here is Ezra’s responsibility as their spiritual and human leader to divorce the masses.

#### III. Nehemiah

- a. Nehemiah was the cup-bearer for Artaxerxes.

- i. Nehemiah 2:2-5
- ii. He tested all of the king's food for poison. He also developed a close relationship with Nehemiah as the king inquired why Nehemiah was sad.
- iii. Letters were given to Nehemiah as a sign of authority
- iv. The captains of the army and horseman provided protection for Nehemiah as the journey from Susa to Jerusalem took about 3 months and was dangerous.
- b. Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem during the third exilic return in 445BC.
- c. The other governors in the region were not happy that Nehemiah was there to show favor to the Jews.
- d. Nehemiah arrived in the city (Nehemiah 2:11) and secretly checked on the condition of the wall.

#### **IV. The building of the Wall**

- a. Nehemiah 2:17-20
  - i. Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arab mocked Nehemiah and accused him of rebelling against the king.
  - ii. These men were perhaps former rulers over this region and were upset with Nehemiah's new role as governor.
- b. There were seven attempts to stop Nehemiah from working on the wall
  - i. 2:19 – He was mocked by Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem
  - ii. 4:1-3 – Sanballat and Tobiah were again angry at the construction and jeered at the Jews in front of their armies
  - iii. 4:7-23 – They threatened to attack Jerusalem
  - iv. 6:1-4 – They tried to lure Nehemiah out of the city
  - v. 6:5-9 – They falsely accused Nehemiah of rebelling and setting himself up to be king.
  - vi. 6:10-14 – A prophet was paid to discredit Nehemiah
  - vii. 6:17-19 – Tobiah sent letters to make Nehemiah afraid.
- c. Nehemiah organized his construction well. Forty-five individual sections of the wall are mentioned and 10 gates.
  - i. While he organized the construction, half the men at his disposal stood guard in case of an attack. Everyone was armed with a sword.
- d. Nehemiah 8 - When the Wall was finished Ezra the priest read the Book of the Law and everyone listened
- e. Nehemiah 9:2-3
  - i. Upon hearing the Law, the people confessed their sins before God and declared their devotion.

#### **V. The Reforms**

- a. In 433BC, Nehemiah returned to Persia as he promised.
  - i. Nehemiah 13:6 indicates that he spent "a certain time" or "some time" in Persia. The length is not specified, but he likely returned in 424 BC.
- b. Upon His return, he found many things wrong in Jerusalem.
  - i. Tobiah was living in the courts of the Temple of God, desecrating it.

1. Similar to what happened when Jesus cleansed the Temple from people using it for personal gain.
- ii. The portion set aside for the Levites was not being collected so they had all gone back to their fields.
- iii. The people were working on the Sabbath and not keeping it holy.
- iv. The people were again marrying foreign wives.
- c. Nehemiah put a stop to all of these practices
  - i. Nehemiah 13:30-31, “Thus I cleansed them from everything foreign, and I established the duties of the priests and Levites, each in his work; and I provided for the wood offering at appointed times, and for the firstfruits. Remember me, O my God, for good.

## **VI. Malachi**

- a. The book of Malachi was likely written during the time that Nehemiah was absent from Jerusalem in Persia.
- b. Malachi describes all the sins that Nehemiah reformed.
- c. Malachi was the last Old Testament Prophet, after him, there were 400 years of silence from God.
- d. Malachi 3:1
  - i. A messenger was being sent
    1. Isaiah 40:3, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness”
- e. Malachi 4
  - i. Elijah the prophet (the spirit of Elijah)
  - ii. The Messiah is coming

## **VII. Lesson from the Story**

- a. Men love the darkness. It is easier to sin than it is to follow the Law of God. Even after punishment, people will return to their wicked ways unless someone shows them the Light.

## **VIII. Sources**

- a. *The MacArthur Study Bible*. Edited by MacArthur, John, Jr. electronic ed. Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997