

READ Nehemiah 4

What – Nehemiah is the last book in the Old Testament chronologically. To realize the importance of what is going on, one must understand a bit of OT history. In 721 BC, the nation of Israel (The NORTHERN NATION, remember the kingdom split in two after Solomon) was captured and taken captive by the Assyrians. 140 years later, a wicked and unrepentant Judah (the SOUTHERN kingdom after the split) suffered the same fate at the hands of the Babylonians. Many of the books in the Old Testament refer to, look forward to or talk about this event that we refer to as “the exile”. Not long after the exile took place, PERSIA overtook Babylon and began to let captives from all over the world return home. As Jews began to return to Israel, they found their homes and towns destroyed. God told them to rebuild. Nehemiah’s book is written about the rebuilding of the walls and city gates around Jerusalem.

Why – This book is important for several reasons. First is the history. As the last book of the Old Testament chronologically it is one of the few historical events recorded between the exile (the end of Israel as a nation) and the birth of Jesus. From this and several related books (Ezra, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi) we get the only picture of the spiritual and physical state of the Jews before Jesus came. Perhaps more important practically, we get a wonderful example of Godly leadership and fortitude. The people who had taken Israel over when the Jews were carried away were in no hurry to give back their land and homes. Over a hundred years had passed, and the new inhabitants did not care about the spiritual heritage of the Jews. Much like the world today, there was a constant battle with the world, one that only God can win. This is where we pick up the story in chapter 4. Nehemiah was encouraging the people to stand up to the world, reminding them of the power and promise of God.

WOW – The walls were not just a physical safeguard. The city walls and the gates served as social meeting places, places where decisions were made, and justice was dispensed (see Deut 22). What was at stake here was the very spiritual heritage and future faith of the nation. Make no mistake, the world today seeks to strip the faith from your life and wipe the Godly heritage of this nation from the history books. They have no respect for the work, Word or will of God, and our fight is just as difficult. Our answers are also the same. Look at chapter 4 closely. Nehemiah bathes EVERYTHING in prayer. A constant theme in this book was Nehemiah on his knees. God wants to be involved in EVERY thought and decision we make. Nehemiah also acted decisively. Look at verse 13. He took appropriate action to counter what the world is doing. APATHY CANNOT BE ALLOWED TO RULE. If the church is guilty of anything in our current time, it is a lack of action. We have sat by and watched the devil take away our nation and our children’s future while we have hidden inside our churches making ourselves feel better. Nehemiah knew action was needed and he acted. We must do the same. Finally, Nehemiah made a statement that changed my life personally when I read it, and I know finalized his victory over his enemy. Vs 18 says that “the builders wore their SWORDS at their side when they worked”. Ephesians chapter 6 reminds us that the WORD OF GOD is the “SWORD” of the Spirit. The first time I read this, God spoke to me so clearly. The Word of God HAS TO CENTRAL in our lives if we are to fight the good fight. As Christians,

we must not only be in the Word, but we have to LIVE IT. It should go with us, define us, leads us and be on our hearts, minds, and lips. Our enemy will flee if we fight with the sword God gave us.

Nehemiah was an amazing leader. Simplicity and faith were his underlying principles, and they guided him to success and blessing that God had ordained. God has ordained the same for His church today. My prayer is that we His people are listening. We need to be praying for guidance, acting to change the world around us and letting God's Word be the center of our lives. When that happens, we will again see God's church become the fortress of hope, love and salvation for the world He has designed it to be.