

Destin Church of Christ

August 13, 2023

Chapter 21: Rebuilding the Walls

Ezra 7; Nehemiah 1 – 2; 4; 6 – 8; Malachi 1 – 4

Introduction:

In chapter 1 of *The Story*, God created the heavens and the earth. He placed Adam and Eve in the garden and told them to work the land and enjoy the fruit of their labors.

In chapter 21, we see that God's pattern of calling his people to fruitful labor was still in place. God called them to rebuild the temple and reestablish worship under the leadership of Ezra.

Lesson Breakdown:

- Sent on a Mission (Ezra 7; Nehemiah 1-2)
- Opposition ... Again (Nehemiah 4, 6)
- Reformation (Nehemiah 7-8; Malachi 1-4)

Plot Points:

- God's sovereign hand is at work, preserving his people and paving the way to blessing if they chose to obey.
- The Word of God brings revival and reformation to the covenant community.
- God's purposes are accomplished through the hard work of prayer, the sweat of faithful labor, and the courage to stand and fight.
- The people of God cannot dwell in his Promised Land as faithful witnesses if they are living compromised lives, failing in matters of basic obedience and ethical integrity.

As you watch the video for Session 21, notice some of the main points.

- ✓ The people are initiating their own restoration with God.
- ✓ And as he (Ezra) opened it, the people all stood up.
- ✓ And their joy was very great.
- ✓ "Prepare the way for the Lord. Make straight paths for him."
- ✓ We each have the opportunity to overturn Adam's choice.

UNDERSTAND THE STORY:

➤ Ezra 7:

Artaxerxes is identified as the king of Persia and we have the genealogy of Ezra through the line of Aaron. (291) [Ezra 7:1-5]

Ezra, a student of the Mosaic Law, returns from Babylon to Jerusalem and gains Artaxerxes' favor. (291) [Ezra 7:6]

Ezra, some of the children of Israel, the priests, the Levites, the singers, the gatekeepers, and Nethinim came up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes. (291-292) [Ezra 7:7-8]

1. How long did his journey from Babylon to Jerusalem take? (292) [Ezra 7:9]

King Artaxerxes gives a letter to Ezra. (293-294) [Ezra 7:11-26]

Artaxerxes commands Ezra to offer all the gold and silver found in Babylon for the temple. (293) [Ezra 7:13-16]

Ezra's primary role was being the priest and teacher for the people in Jerusalem, but he was also given the power to impose taxes, except on any of the priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, Nethinim, or servants of the temple. (293-294) [Ezra 7:21-24]

Ezra gives thanks to God for his gifts, generosity and goodness. (294) [Ezra 7:27-28]

➤ Nehemiah 1:

Ezra came to Jerusalem in the seventh year of king Artaxerxes. (292) [Ezra 7:8] Nehemiah comes in the twentieth year of the reign of the king. (295) [Nehemiah 1:1]

Nehemiah hears about Jews' struggle to rebuild Jerusalem. (295) [Nehemiah 1:3]

Hearing that, he wept, fasted, and prayed, pleading with God for mercy and help. (295) [Nehemiah 1:4-6]

Nehemiah confesses his sins and those of his people and recalling Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 30, reminds God of His promises. (NIB) [Nehemiah 1:7-9]

Nehemiah casts himself upon the mercy and goodness of God. (295) [Nehemiah 1:11]

2. Who is the "This man" near the end of verse 11? (295)

3. What position did Nehemiah hold in King Artaxerxes' kingdom? (NIB) [Nehemiah 1:11]

The temple in Jerusalem was completed, but the wall of the city still lay in ruins. A city without a wall just invites the pillagers to walk through the open doors. Nehemiah decided he would lead the people in rebuilding the city's walls. (295)

➤ Nehemiah 2:

Nehemiah appears sad before the king and the king calls attention to it. Nehemiah explains that it is because of news from Jerusalem. (NIB) [Nehemiah 2:1-2]

Nehemiah gets permission from the king to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls. (NIB) [Nehemiah 2:4-5]

Nehemiah receives appropriate royal letters of permission to pass through the region and an honor guard from the king accompanies Nehemiah. (NIB) [Nehemiah 2:7-9]

The three leading enemies of Israel are disturbed that Nehemiah has come to help his people. (NIB) [Nehemiah 2:10]

Nehemiah comes to Jerusalem, makes an inspection of the damage at night, and estimates the extent of the job. (295-296) [Nehemiah 2:11-16]

Nehemiah calls together the leaders of Israel and reveals his plan to rebuild the walls and gates of Jerusalem. The people are encouraged to begin the undertaking. (296) [Nehemiah 2:17-18]

Despite some local opposition (NIB) [Nehemiah 2:19-20], the rebuilding starts. (296) [Nehemiah 2:18]

➤ Nehemiah 3: Lists the sections of the wall and who built them.

➤ Nehemiah 4:

As the work progresses, the enemy uses the weapon of ridicule. They laugh at their workmanship, saying that a fox could knock down the wall. (296-297) [Nehemiah 4:1-3]

Nehemiah ignores their sarcasm, prays to God, and continues to build. (297) [Nehemiah 4:4-6]

When the enemy sees that the wall is going up in spite of their ridicule, they become angry and decide to try to destroy the wall. Nehemiah continues to pray and build. (297) [Nehemiah 4:7-9]

Opposition comes from within their own ranks. There's discouragement in the huge undertaking and the threat of the enemy making a surprise attack. (297) [Nehemiah 4:10]

Nehemiah arms the workmen and places people on guard behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families. The plan to attack comes to nothing. (297) [Nehemiah 4:13-15]

Half of the men did the work, while the other half stood guard. Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other. (298) [Nehemiah 4:16-18]

They did not take off their clothes except when they took a bath! (298) [Nehemiah 4:23]

➤ Nehemiah 5: Some Jews have to mortgage their houses to eat and borrow money to pay taxes. Nehemiah calls a meeting, urging lenders to cancel debts and not practice usury. Nehemiah does not tax the people and prays that God may remember his good deeds.

➤ Nehemiah 6:

Sanballat and others invite Nehemiah to meet them, with the intention of killing him. (298) [Nehemiah 6:1-3]

4. In verse 2 (298), the enemies wanted to meet in one of the villages of where?

5. What was Nehemiah's answer?

The enemy approaches Nehemiah four times. (298) [Nehemiah 6:4]

On the fifth approach to Nehemiah, Sanballat spreads a rumor that Nehemiah is planning to rebel against Persia and become king. (298-299) [Nehemiah 6:5-7]

Nehemiah politely calls them liars. (299) [Nehemiah 6:8]

Shemiah, a false prophet, unsuccessfully urges Nehemiah to take refuge in the temple. (299) [Nehemiah 6:9-13]

Without fanfare of trumpets, great ceremony or ribbon cutting, and despite some who were friends with the enemy Tobiah, the wall is finished. (299) [Nehemiah 6:14-15]

6. How many days did it take to complete the wall? (299) [Nehemiah 6:15]

The enemies heard about this and were afraid because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God. (299) [Nehemiah 6:16]

➤ Nehemiah 7:

Nehemiah, having finished the wall, puts Hanani and Hananiah in charge of Jerusalem. (300) [Nehemiah 7:1-2]

A repetition of the genealogy given in Ezra 2. (NIB) [Nehemiah 7:5-73]

➤ Nehemiah 8:

All the people came together in the square where Ezra read from the Book of the Law of Moses. (300) [Nehemiah 8:1-3]

7. He read from when until when? (300) [Nehemiah 8:1-3]

All the people could see him because he was standing above them on a wooden pulpit. (300) [Nehemiah 8:4-5]

While Ezra praised the LORD, all the people lifted their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. (300) [Nehemiah 8:6]

Ezra would read a portion and then the Levites, scattered in the crowd, would explain it to the people so they could understand it. (300) [Nehemiah 8:7-8]

Many people are overcome with emotion and weep. Nehemiah urges them not to weep but to rejoice. (300-301) [Nehemiah 8:9-12]

8. What did Nehemiah say was the people's "strength"? (300-301) [Nehemiah 8:10]

The Jews observe the Feast of Tabernacles, not done since the days of Joshua. (301) [Nehemiah 8:14-18]

➤ Malachi:

The book of Malachi was written to correct the lax religious and social behavior of the Israelites, particularly the priests.

9. What does the word "*Malachi*" mean?

➤ Malachi 1:

"A prophecy: The word of the LORD to Israel through Malachi." (302) [Malachi 1:1]

The prophecy of Malachi is built around questions the people asked God. These questions revealed their doubting, discouraged, sinful heart.

People's Question #1: In what way have You loved us? (NIB) (Malachi 1:2-3)

Disobedience of the Priests was the result of them breaking the Covenant through blemished sacrifices. They offered God a hand-me-down or something broken or useless. (302) [Malachi 1:6-11]

People's Question #2: In what way have we despised Your name? (302) (Malachi 1:6)

People's Question #3: In what way have we defiled You? (302) (Malachi 1:7-8)

➤ Malachi 2:

The neglected and divorced wives of the priests come and weep at God's altar. (302-303) [Malachi 2:13-16]

There is grumbling that the wicked prosper more than the godly. (NIB) [Malachi 2:17]

People's Question #4: In what way have we wearied Him? (NIB) (Malachi 2:17)

➤ Malachi 3:

The first part of Malachi 3:1 (NIB) is also quoted in Matthew 11:10, Mark 1:2, and Luke 7:27. It is a reference to the messenger who announced the first coming of Christ, fulfilled by John the Baptist. The last part of the verse refers to the second coming of Christ. He will need no messenger to announce His second coming. He Himself is that Messenger.

If we return to the Lord, he will return to us. (303) [Malachi 3:6-7]

People's Question #5: In what way shall we return? (303) (Malachi 3:7)

People's Question #6: In what way have we robbed You? (303) (Malachi 3:8)

10. How did Malachi say the people robbed God? (303) [Malachi 3:8]

11. What was the result of them robbing God? (303) [Malachi 3:9]

12. Are we robbing God today when we withhold our offerings?

The Lord tells the people to try Him, He will bless them, and all nations will call them blessed. (303) [Malachi 3:10-12]

People's Question #7: In what way have we spoken against You? (303) (Malachi 3:13-15)

The people were blaming God for their apathetic and pathetic condition. But there was a remnant who served God and will be among the jewels of the Lord when He arranges them for display. (303-304) [Malachi 3:16-17]

The distinction between the righteous and the wicked will become evident. (NIB) [Malachi 3:18]

➤ Malachi 4:

Malachi 4 is a vivid description of the Great Tribulation Period.

- The day is coming, burning like an oven. (304) [Malachi 4:1]
- The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings. (304) [Malachi 4:2]
- The wicked shall be trampled. (304) [Malachi 4:3]
- Remember the law of Moses. (304) [Malachi 4:4]
- Elijah will be sent before the day of the Lord and will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents. Otherwise, the Lord will come and strike the land with total destruction. (304) [Malachi 4:5-6]

➤ The Old Testament ends.

Next week we'll look at the story of the birth of the King as we shift our focus to the New Testament story. Read chapter 22 of *The Story* before our next class.

Matthew 1 – 2; Luke 1 – 2; John 1