

RENEWAL OF THE HEART

NEHEMIAH 8-9 | ERIC SIMPSON | NOVEMBER 22, 2020

Nehemiah 6:15

So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of Elul, in fifty-two days.

- Approx. 2 miles of wall, 50 ft. in height, 10-15 ft. thick...in 7 ½ weeks!

Nehemiah 1-7 = reconstructing the wall (key leader = Nehemiah)

Nehemiah 8-13 = reconstructing the people (key leader = Ezra)

LOOKING UP

Nehemiah 8:1-4

¹When the seventh month came and the Israelites had settled in their towns, all the people assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded for Israel. ²So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. ³He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law. ⁴Ezra the scribe stood on a high wooden platform built for the occasion.

- The wall wasn't the end of the project but a means to a greater end.
- This mission was about restoring God's PEOPLE.
- God's people reflecting God's heart, character, values, desires.
- God's law was central to re-establishing what it means to be God's covenant people (i.e. their role in salvation history).

Nehemiah 8:6

Ezra praised the LORD, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

- "The most important thing about us is what we think about God." – A.W. Tozer
- To better understand yourself, deepen your understanding of God.

LOOKING BACK

Nehemiah 9:7-8 → story of Genesis

Nehemiah 9:9-12 → Exodus, Israelites being freed from 400 yr. captivity in Egypt

Nehemiah 9:13-15 → Giving of the law at Mt. Sinai + manna from heaven

Nehemiah 9:16-21 → Desert wanderings, rebellion, pillar of fire, pillar of cloud

Nehemiah 9:22-25 → story of Joshua, how God brought them to the Promised Land

Nehemiah 9:26-29 → story of Judges, spiritual ground-hog-day

Nehemiah 9:30-31 → story of the kings & eventual exile to Babylon

- Reflecting on our history with God gives us perspective on our current realities

- Trace the track-record of the trustworthiness of God
- God can make a way when there seems to be no way. God + anybody = majority

LOOKING IN

Nehemiah 9:33-37

³³*In all that has happened to us, you have been just; you have acted faithfully, while we did wrong.* ³⁴*Our kings, our leaders, our priests and our fathers did not follow your law; they did not pay attention to your commands or the warnings you gave them.* ³⁵*Even while they were in their kingdom, enjoying your great goodness to them in the spacious and fertile land you gave them, they did not serve you or turn from their evil ways.*

- Taking ownership of what they did to contribute to what has taken place
- Honest assessment = God's faithful even in when we're not
- You can't change something you're not aware of.

LOOKING AHEAD

Nehemiah 9:38

"In view of all this, we are making a binding agreement, putting it in writing, and our leaders, our Levites and our priests are affixing their seals to it."

- Their history = disobedience, their commitment going forward = obedience
- Public affirmation of that new commitment = Nehemiah 10



Robertson McQuilkin was president of Columbia International University for 22 years when his wife of 40 years, Muriel, was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. In the midst of wrestling with the decision about Muriel's long-term care needs, their eldest son was tragically killed in a diving accident.

McQuilkin left his life work as president of Columbia to care of his dying bride, something he did for 13 years, the last 8 years Muriel didn't speak a word to him or anyone. He wrote this in the midst of the valley...

"Life was heavy on me...I was numb. Not bitter...Why should I be? That's the way life is, life in a broken world. But the passion in my love for God had evaporated, leaving a residue of resignation...I knew that I was in deep trouble, and I did the only thing I knew to do - I went away for prayer and fasting. It took about 24 hours to shake free of the preoccupation with my own wounds and to focus on the excellencies of God...I wrote God a love letter, naming 41 of his marvelous gifts to me, spotlighting 11 of his grandest acts in history, and exulting in 10 of his characteristics that exceed my imagination. Surely he enjoyed my gratitude - who doesn't appreciate gratitude? But I discovered something else...I call it the reflex action of thanksgiving...that ingratitude impoverishes but a heavy heart lifts on the wings of praise."