

Nehemiah 1:1-11 – Jerusalem's Report Card

The first six chapters of Ezra dealt with the first group of Babylonian exiles who returned to Judah. Their primary purpose was to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. After some setbacks, the temple was completed in 516 BC. About 58 years later, Ezra the priest traveled to Jerusalem and brought about religious reforms. He was committed to study, do and teach the law of God. Ezra went to Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes I. Nehemiah went to Judah and Jerusalem in the 20th year of Artaxerxes, about 13 years after Ezra. Nehemiah's primary goal was to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem which were still in ruin. There was an overlap in Jerusalem between Ezra and Nehemiah.

Read Nehemiah 1:1-3.

Who wrote the book of Nehemiah? The book starts in the twentieth year in the month Chislev. What does the twentieth year refer to? When is Chislev on our calendar? During this time, where was Nehemiah? (1:1)

Who was Hanani and where did he come from? What did Nehemiah ask Hanani about? (1:2)

What did Hanani tell Nehemiah about the state of Jerusalem and its people? (1:3)

Read Nehemiah 1:4-11.

How did Nehemiah respond when he heard the report about Jerusalem? (1:4)

Given that Ezra had already been in Jerusalem, is the state of Jerusalem surprising? See Ezra 4:7-23.

Verses 5 through 11 contain Nehemiah's prayer to God. In verse 5, how did Nehemiah describe God?

In verse 6, Nehemiah asked God to hear his prayer. We are only given 7 verses of Nehemiah's prayer. How fervent was Nehemiah in his request? Who was Nehemiah praying for? (1:6)

In verse 6, before Nehemiah made his detailed request, Nehemiah confessed sin? Is Nehemiah's prayer a good model for us? Whose sins did Nehemiah confess?

How did the people of Israel sin against God, according to Nehemiah? (1:7)

In verses 8 and 9, Nehemiah based his request on God's promises. What promises did Nehemiah refer to? Where are they found in scripture? See Deuteronomy 30:1-4.

In verse 10, how did Nehemiah refer to the exiles who were living in Judah and Jerusalem?

In verse 11, Nehemiah again asked that God would listen to his prayer as well as to the prayer of others who feared God. What did Nehemiah ask God to do for him?

Who does "this man" refer to in verse 11?

What was Nehemiah's occupation? What does his job say about Nehemiah? What did his duties include? What type of person held this position?

When we look at the state of the church in Europe and now the United States, are there any similarities with Jerusalem in the time of Nehemiah? What grade would you give to the US church? How should we respond to the state of the church?