

Nehemiah 2:1-20 – Nehemiah Goes to Jerusalem

In the 20th year of King Artaxerxes, in the 9th month of the Jewish calendar, Nehemiah received a report that Jerusalem was in disrepair. When Nehemiah heard the report, he wept, mourned, fasted and prayed. Nehemiah recognized that the condition of Jerusalem was a result of God's just judgment against sin. Nehemiah confessed the sins of the people and his own sin. Nehemiah was cupbearer to king Artaxerxes. Nehemiah asked that God would give him success and mercy in the presence of Artaxerxes.

Read Nehemiah 2:1-8.

Verse 1 may give us insight into 1:1 where it referenced the 20th year. In 2:1 it is clear that it was the 20th year of king Artaxerxes. What month was it in 2:1? How much time had passed between 1:1 and 2:1? Nehemiah brought wine to the king. We are told that Nehemiah had not been sad in the king's presence. This poses a question which may not have an answer for us. If Nehemiah was the cupbearer to Artaxerxes, wouldn't he have been in regular service to the king? Even if this was the first time in a while that Artaxerxes drank wine, which seems highly doubtful, the cupbearer should have brought the king his drink whatever it was. Was he happy before the king for 4 months but mourning in private? (2:1)

Part of the cupbearer's job was to drink some of the drink before giving it to the king. If the cupbearer didn't look good, it would be a red flag for the king. What did the king notice about Nehemiah? What was Nehemiah's initial reaction to the king's inquiry? What reason for being sad did Nehemiah give to the king? (2:2-3)

The king asked Nehemiah what he was requesting. How had Nehemiah previously prepared for this question? What did Nehemiah do in that moment before answering the king's question? (2:4)

In verse 5, what did Nehemiah request from the king? How did the king respond to Nehemiah's request? (2:5-6)

What additional request did Nehemiah make? How did the king respond to this request? Why did Artaxerxes grant Nehemiah's requests? (2:7-8)

Read Nehemiah 2:9-20.

Before Nehemiah came to Jerusalem, where did he stop first? How was his mission received? (2:9-10)

In verse 11, Nehemiah had arrived in Jerusalem and was there three days. What was Nehemiah's first order of business? Why didn't Nehemiah tell the "old" residents of Jerusalem what God had put on his heart? (2:11-12)

In verses 12 through 15, Nehemiah and a few select men went on a night excursion. What did Nehemiah do? Did Nehemiah inspect all the walls and gates of Jerusalem? What parts of Jerusalem did he inspect? What did Nehemiah see? (2:12-15)

In verse 16, we are told that Nehemiah didn't let the leaders of Jerusalem or the rest of the inhabitants know what he was doing? Why do you think Nehemiah inspected the walls in secret and did not reveal his plans? (2:16)

In verse 17, Nehemiah revealed his plan. What did Nehemiah say to the officials and the people of Jerusalem? What motivation did he give them? (2:17)

In verse 18, what encouragement did Nehemiah give to the people? How did the people respond to Nehemiah's plan?

Who opposed the work of rebuilding the walls and gates of Jerusalem? What did the opponents say? Why did they oppose the work? (2:19)

How did Nehemiah respond to those who opposed him? (2:20)

How can Nehemiah's actions be a model for us today? God used a cupbearer to lead and rebuild Jerusalem!