

Handout 1: Nehemiah Lesson 2

The events in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah constitute a new stage in Salvation History. The return to the Promised Land, rebuilding of the Temple, and the renewal of the covenant people in their relationship and obedience to Yahweh moves forward God’s continuing divine plan for humanity’s salvation. The exodus of the Jewish captives out of Babylon recalls the exodus of the captive children of Israel out of Egypt:

The Exodus out of Egypt	The Exodus out of Babylon
The Israelites endured a period of tribulation in Egypt.	The Judahites endured a period of tribulation in Babylon.
An Egyptian king with a hard heart resisted God’s call to free the Israelites from bondage (Ex 5:1-2).	A Persian king with a receptive heart responded to God’s call to release the Israelite/Judahite captives (Ezra 1:1).
The Israelites left Egypt with treasure and goods supplied by their Egyptian neighbors (Ex 12:12:35-36).	The returning exiles left Babylon with treasure and goods supplied by their neighbors (Ezra 1:4).
Moses led the twelve tribes of Israel out of Egypt as a free people.	Sheshbazzar led twelve groups of exiles out of Babylon as a renewed people.
There was a registry of the men making the journey (Num 1:27-28, 36-37).	There was a registry of the men making the journey (Ezra Chapter 2).
The twelve tribes of Israel and their leaders returned to the Promised Land of Canaan.	Twelve groups of people and their twelve leaders from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin returned to the Promised Land of Judah (Ezra Chapter 2).
The exodus out of slavery in Egypt prefigures Jesus Christ leading the New Covenant people of God out of slavery to sin and death and into the Promised Land of Heaven.	The exodus out of Babylon prefigures Jesus Christ leading the Kingdom of His Church on their journey of salvation to the Promised Land of Heaven.

The return of the Jewish exiles also prefigured the mission of Jesus the Messiah:

1. Before the advent of the Messiah, humanity was held captive by sin and death.
2. Jesus is the Messianic Davidic heir who led His people out of captivity to sin and death.
3. Twelve men became the spiritual fathers of the newly restored people of God.
4. The liberated take with them the treasures of the seven Sacraments on their journey to salvation.
5. The names of the liberated are in a registry of the baptized in Christ (the Book of Life).
6. Those who are spiritually restored by Jesus Christ are citizens of His Kingdom of the Church.
7. Jesus and His Church continue to guide the faithful of every generation on their journey to the Promised Land of Heaven.

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Handout 2: Nehemiah Lesson 2

Great too is the memory of Nehemiah, who rebuilt our walls which lay in ruins, erected the bolted gates and rebuilt our houses.

Sirach 49:13

The events in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah constitute a new stage in Salvation History. The rebuilding of the Temple and the renewal of the covenant people in their relationship and obedience to Yahweh moves forward God's divine plan for humanity's salvation.

Nehemiah's Mission in Lesson 2:

1. King Artaxerxes gives his permission for Nehemiah's mission (2:1-10)
2. The arrival of Nehemiah in Jerusalem and preparation to reconstruct the wall (2:11-20)
3. A record of the builders (3:1-32)
4. The opposition to the reconstruction (3:33-38/4:1)

After the king approves Nehemiah's mission, he makes two requests:

1. He asks for orders for the governors of the provinces through which he must pass to reach his destination to give him safe passage.
2. He requests an order for timber from the royal forests for beams to rebuild the gates of the city, for the city's walls, and his house.

The sites mentioned in 2:13-14:

1. The Valley Gate was in what had been the city's eastern wall, facing the Kidron Valley (3:13).
2. The Dragon's Fountain or Spring is an unknown location.
3. The Dung Gate, called the Potsherd Gate in Jeremiah 9:2, was at the southern end of the city and led into the Hinnom Valley where refuse was burned.
4. The Fountain/Water Gate was at the southeastern end of the city.
5. The King's Pool or Pool of Shelah (Shiloah) had the Gihon Spring as its source and was father up the valley (cf., 3:15, Is 8:6).

Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem (2:19) used various plots to disrupt the work on rebuilding the walls:

1. They will plot to organize attacks against the builders (Neh 4:1-2).
2. They will formulate a plan to harm Nehemiah (Neh 6:2).
3. They will intimidate him with false reports (Neh 6:5-6).
4. They will deceive him and the citizens of Jerusalem with false prophets (Neh 6:7-13).
5. They will influence the nobles of Judah to turn against him (Neh 6:17-19).

In 2:20, Nehemiah gives his response to his enemies:

1. They are not greater than his God who will grant them success.
2. He and other "servants" of his God will begin rebuilding the wall immediately.
3. They will have no share or right nor memorial (historical right) as part of the holy city of Jerusalem.

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A list of the numbers of workers assigned to different sections of the wall:

1. The northern section had eight work assignments (3:1-5).
2. The western section had ten work assignments (3:6-13).
3. The southern section had two work assignments (3:14-15).
4. The eastern section had twenty-one work assignments (3:16-32).

The builders seem to have built an entirely new wall on the east which may explain the large numbers of workers.

In Chapter 3, Nehemiah names ten city gates beginning with the gates in the city's northern wall that was most vulnerable to attack:

1. Sheep Gate
2. Fish Gate
3. New Gate
4. Valley Gate
5. Dung Gate
6. Fountain Gate
7. Water Gate
8. Horse Gate
9. East Gate
10. Muster Gate

See the document on the Gates of Jerusalem in Jesus' time:

<https://www.agapebiblestudy.com/documents/The%20Gates%20of%20Jerusalem.htm>.

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