THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH
"Nehemiah - The Man"
Nehemiah 1:1-3

Introduction

1. Here is a great little book! There are 13 blessed chapters. Read them and digest them. Both Ezra and Nehemiah are treated as one book in some manuscripts with a total of 688 verses.

2. The date for the events of Nehemiah are placed during the reign of Artaxerxes I Longimanus (465-423 B.C.) and marvelously elucidated by the Elephantine papyri (cf. 2:1).

3. Here is a great book on spiritual leadership. It fosters the concepts of separation, protection, and forthright advance for spiritual purposes. It breathes with a passion for reality and action. Drink deep from this well stream and your soul will be refreshed. Note some salient. features about the author of this book:-

1. FAMILIAL v. 1

a. Identified. He is Nehemiah (comforted of Jehovah) and the son of Hachaliah (whose eyes Jehovah enlivens). He may have been related to the royal family (2:3) or have been a priest (9:38; 10:1). Whatever his station in life, he stood out.

b. Classified. There were three Nehemiah's in the Bible and this man is to be distinguished from two others (3:16; Ezra 2:2; 7:7). God always has his marked men!

NOTE: The depth of this man's heart and his height in strategic political realms shows that here is a man whose family had not neglected his proper spiritual and mental education. Nothing in the Bible diminuates carefulness in the home in the development of children. Take notice!

2. HISTORICAL v. 1

a. Time. The opening date provided is accurate (1:1) and those which are recorded later have substantial historical value (cf. 2:1-8; 13:6 and 5:14; etc.). The use of Chislev (1:1) and Nisan (2:1) as being in the 20th year of Artaxerxes note that Nehemiah used the "Tishri," reckoning regnal years counted from Tishri (September - October). A nugget to show the accuracy of the Word of God!

b. Space. Shushan was the capitol of Susiana, a province of Persia. From the time of Cyrus, it was a favorite winter residence of the Persian kings. Nothing here is indicated to question the absolute literalness of the text.

c. People. Hanani (gracious) was apparently a brother of Nehemiah. This may be only a reference to a familial relationship rather than a sibling. He, along with others in Judah, informed Nehemiah of the situation in Jerusalem while he was still in the Persian capitol.

3. VERBAL v. 1

The amazing thing which is recorded here about Nehemiah is that he was an instrument in the hands of God for revelation. The opening nouns "words of Nehemiah" are indicative of this fact. This is the true doctrine of inspiration. God speaks (2 Tim. 3:16, 17), but He does so through the instrumentality and mediation of chosen men (2 Pet. 1:19-21). This disallows any sort of dictation, but brings to the fore the absolute superintendence of the Spirit of God over the words employed in the Bible. Inspiration in the truest sense is verbal, plenary, and inerrant.

4. SPIRITUAL vv,. 2, 3

Here is the pith of the whole matter relating to Nehemiah. He is at once a man who has a concern:-

a. Nationally. The word used in the Hebrew is "Jews." This is first used in 2 Kings 18:26. The reference is to God's chosen people. Like Paul (Ro. 10:1), Nehemiah had a burden for people (Mt. 9:36-38).

b. Physically. The Jews concerned were "escapees" and this suggests that they had been depleted by slaughter. The group is also described as "left." This points to the O.T. remnant concept. Interestingly, the text (v. 8) states that the Jews were in trouble (cf. Judges 9:56, 57) and under scorn (cf. Micah 6:16). They are marked as a remnant which had been remnantized (cognate accusative).

c. Geographically. Here the city is in question. Land is important as a national item with Israel (Gen. 12:1-3). Jerusalem is the peal of Israel (Ps. 48:2). Tragically, however, the walls were down and the gates burned.

Conclusion

We need men like Nehemiah. He was a true man of God. He "asked" concerning the Jews. He took the initiative to ascertain the situation. Note how Nehemiah responded to the concerns of his heart (vv. 4ff). He was a giant in Israel. How do you stand for God? Like Nehemiah?