

Resurrection Life of Jesus Church

THE ORIGIN STORY OF JESUS

RLJ-1879

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PART 84: NEHEMIAH BUILDS THE WALL

ASSESSING THE SITUATION

The Godhead paused the virtual time run at 384 B.C. They knew that Jesus was going to arrive in Judah in nine hours heavenly time. As they assessed the situation in Jerusalem, they realized that the temple was still not secure; the walls of the city were in the same condition as when Nebuchadnezzar had broken them some 203 years earlier.

The Jews had been back in Judah for 136 years. Zerubbabel was dead and Ezra was old. A new leader was clearly needed and no man in Judah could be found for the job. Jesus had created a man named Nehemiah who lived in the Persian capital of Susa. Just like Daniel, he was deeply devoted to God and the Torah, holding the position as cupbearer for King Artaxerxes II. The Holy Spirit would work with Nehemiah and send him to Jerusalem.

CALLING OF NEHEMIAH

Nehemiah was at home in the city of Susa when he was visited by his friend, Hanani, and a group of men from Judah. When he asked how things were going, he was told that the situation in Jerusalem was bleak, and Nehemiah broke down and started to cry. This went on for several days as he cried, fasted, and mourned for Jerusalem.
Nehemiah 1:1-11

MOVE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

I do not believe that Nehemiah purposely looked sad when he returned to work for the king. Just like Ezra, he was a strong worshiper of God and grieved over the condition in Jerusalem. It is obvious that Artaxerxes II really liked Nehemiah and wanted to know what was wrong. **Nehemiah 2:1-2**

Nehemiah knew the king was an idol worshiper with the power to dismiss and put him in prison. Fear gripped Nehemiah until he realized that God had touched Artaxerxes II and the king was genuinely interested in the welfare of Nehemiah, but also that of the Jewish people and their city Jerusalem. **verse 3**

When Artaxerxes II heard about the conditions in Jerusalem, he offered to help and send Nehemiah to Jerusalem to supervise the rebuilding. **verses 4-8**

ARRIVING TO JERUSALEM

Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem in 384 B.C., 136 years after the first return under Zerubbabel. That entire generation had died off and the Jews that now lived in Judah were the third generation. Ezra by this time was very old and could no longer rule Jerusalem and Judah. Nehemiah came with a Persian military detachment that afforded him protection and power. **verse 9**

Not everyone was happy with the news, particularly Sanballat and Tobiah. **verse 10**



SANBALLAT, TOBIAH AND GESHEM

Sanballat the Horonite was governor of the city of Horonaim located in Moab, a territory on the eastern side of the Jordan River and part of modern-day Jordan. He also ruled the province of Samaria and was a provincial governor of the Persian kingdom.

Tobiah was also a provincial ruler under King Artaxerxes II. He ruled the area of the Ammonites north of Moab and also on the eastern side of the Jordan River.

Geshem the Arab was likewise a provincial governor in an area south of Judah.

TRAINED IN WARFARE

A cupbearer was usually a high-ranking military officer who had proven his loyalty to the king. In ancient times it was common that rulers were poisoned, and in order to protect himself, a king would never drink or eat until it had been tried by the cupbearer. Thus, a cupbearer was always subject to death.

Nehemiah knew that not all the Jews in Judah could be trusted and wanted to survey the broken walls of Jerusalem covertly. He did the inspection at night with some of the soldiers that were part of the detachment sent by the king. **Nehemiah 2:11-16**

Zerubbabel and the people had started but never finished repairing the broken walls of Jerusalem. The city had not been rebuilt since Nebuchadnezzar's forces burnt it some 203 years earlier. Nehemiah's plan was to rebuild the wall and the gates and then resurrect the rest of the city. **verses 17-18**

Spies among the Jews sent word to the three governors of Nehemiah's intentions, who laughed him to scorn. **verse 19**

Nehemiah responded firmly to his adversaries. **verse 20**

REBUILDING THE WALL

Nehemiah was not only skilled in military and politically matters, he was also proficient in construction. He divided the wall into 29 sections with its many gates and each section was assigned to different family groups of Jews. Nehemiah personally took a section that he supervised. But certain rich Jewish nobles refused to participate in the work. **Nehemiah 3:1-5**

It must have been a sight to behold as twenty-nine construction crews worked simultaneously on the wall. **verses 6-32**

GOD'S WORK IS RESISTED

The spies in Jerusalem reported to Sanballat that thousands of men were rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem and setting up a number of gates. He became furious since the region he ruled was the most powerful at that time and the Jews would become stronger if they restored Jerusalem's walls. **Nehemiah 4:1-3**

Nehemiah went to God in prayer. **verse 4-5**

The lower half of the wall surrounding the city was restored. **verse 6**

Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabians, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites conspired to attack the Jews rebuilding the city wall. **verses 7-8**

RESISTING THE ENEMY

Nehemiah had his own spy network and he began to pray when he found out what the enemy was doing. He ordered his workers to arm themselves. Some were assigned to be guard units. No man returned home, but slept inside Jerusalem. This allowed the Jews to keep an armed presence round the clock and sped up the work on the wall. **verses 9-23**

USURY AND GREED

The first generation had died and Nehemiah was dealing with the second generation who had come with Zerubbabel 136 years earlier and their offspring. Three social classes had developed over time.

1. Rich
2. Middle class
3. Poor

The rich people used their money from Babylon to purchase large farming estates in Judah. There was drought from time to time and the poor starved. The big farmers then sold grain to them in return for their farms.

Nehemiah had to deal with an uprising of poor Jews while rebuilding the wall. He became angry, rebuked the rich nobles, and called for a meeting to settle the issue.

Nehemiah 5:1-8

Nehemiah ordered the end of usury (interest) and commanded the rich nobles to return all the properties they had swindled from the poor. **verses 9-14**

NEHEMIAH THE GOVERNOR

Nehemiah made it clear to the Judeans that he had not taken any tax money for himself since he came from Susa to be their governor twelve years earlier. The people already had a heavy tax burden from the Persian government and Nehemiah did not want to add to it. Nehemiah told them why he had not burdened the people – he respected and worshiped the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! **verses 15-19**

SUMMARY

Over the course of 148 years a remnant of Jews returned to Judah to rebuild the temple and the walls of Jerusalem. Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah were all ignorant about the fact that they were preparing the way for the future Messiah who was going to need Jerusalem and its temple.

These three men loved the Lord, had a strong zeal for the five books of Moses, and wanted to teach the people to obey God. They were faithful in their leadership and trusted God to care for the people under their care. They were taken to Paradise when they died. After the crucifixion of Jesus, they had the privilege of spending three days with the Son of God in Paradise. **Luke 23:42-43**

Everyone in paradise was picked up by holy angels and brought to heaven forty days after the resurrection of Jesus. **Acts 1:9-11; Ephesians 4:8-10**

These three men are rejoicing in heaven today. They were not wealthy on earth but now they live in an environment that is far above anything earth can offer. They faithfully completed their earthly assignments and now they are reaping eternal rewards. How about you? **Luke 16:10-13**

Remember, it's not so important how you begin your life after salvation, but how you finish it!

Do you have an ear to hear with?

Appendix A

KINGS OF BABYLON

Nebuchadnezzar II reigned from 605-562 BC.

Amel-Marduk (Evil-Merodach) ruled from 562-560 BC until he was overthrown and killed by Neriglissar.

Neriglissar reigned from 560-556 BC. He was married to one of Nebuchadnezzar's daughters.

Labashi-Marduk was the son of Neriglissar. He was overthrown within one to three months when he began to reign in 556 BC.

Nabonidus ruled from 556 BC until 539 BC when the Babylonian were conquered by Cyrus II.

Belshazzar served as co-regent with his father, Nabonidus, who went on a pilgrimage.

KINGS OF PERSIA

Cyrus II reigned from 550-530 BC.

Cambyses II inherited the throne and reigned for 8 years from 530-522 BC.

Bardiya replaced his brother in 522 BC. but reigned for less than a year until he was overthrown by Darius.

Darius I would go on to rule from 522-486 BC.

Xerxes I (Ahasuerus) inherited the throne from his father and reigned from 486-465 B.C. He famously invaded Greece with a large army. King Leonidas and his famous 300 Spartans delayed his progress at Thermopylae and then the Persians were soundly defeated by Themistocles at Salamis. Esther was famously chosen to be his queen sometime after he returned home.

Artaxerxes I reigned from 465-424 BC.

Xerxes II briefly reigned in 424 BC. for 45 days until he was assassinated by his half-brother, Sogdianus.

Sogdianus reigned from 424-423 BC. until he was murdered by Darius II six months later.

Darius II reigned from 423-404 BC

Artaxerxes II was the son of Darius II. He reigned from 404-358 BC.