
QT Questions—for Nehemiah

(Here's a short introduction to the book of Nehemiah from my Study Bibles.)

- The book of Nehemiah is about strength under pressure—having the fortitude to follow God, no matter what. In 445 BC the king of Persia sent Nehemiah, his Jewish cupbearer, to oversee the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem. Nehemiah was accompanied by Jewish exiles—descendants of the captives who were taken to Babylon in 586 BC. When they arrived in Judah, the people already living there opposed the changes they wanted to make. But despite opposition, Nehemiah and his supporters finished the wall.
- In the face of the adversity, Nehemiah faithfully perseveres. For Nehemiah, loyalty to God and His people looks like leaving his position as the king's cupbearer—a trusted and esteemed role. Nehemiah then acts upon the plans of God placed on his heart, acting with integrity and calling others to do the same. Nehemiah continually calls the Jews' attention to their identity, as people in relationship with God. Being God's people comes with responsibilities, challenges and sacrifices. In each new generation, God's work continues, and His people carry it forward. We are called to make the world a more God-honoring place.

Neh 1 (9/2/23)

1. In 1:1-4, what did Nehemiah hear and how and why did he respond in such a way; what would be similar news today and how and why should God's people respond in that way?
 2. In 1:5-11, to whom does Nehemiah choose to bring up his problem to and why; how does he begin his prayer and what does he plead for (Deut 30:1-5); how is this applicable to you?
- After his prayer, we are told that Nehemiah was the cupbearer to the king. Here's short explanation from my study Bible. Literally it meant, "one who gives (someone) something to drink." According to the Greek historian Xenophon, one of the cupbearer's duties was to choose and taste the king's wine to make certain that it was not poisoned. Thus Nehemiah had to be a man who enjoyed the unreserved confidence of the king. The need for trustworthy court attendants is underscored by the intrigues that characterized the Achaemenid court of Persia. Xerxes, the father of Artaxerxes I, was killed in his own bed-chamber by a courtier.

Neh 2 (9/4/23)

1. In 2:1-10, how and why was Nehemiah's countenance against the court's etiquette required before the king's presence; before he answered the king's question what did he do and why; how did Nehemiah experienced God's presence; what do you learn?
 2. In 2:11-20, what were Nehemiah's first action before he called to rebuild Jerusalem's wall and why; how did he called and encouraged God's people to do the good work; in v. 19, who were these three people and why did they act the way they did; where was God in all these according to Nehemiah; how visible is God's hand in your life and can you explain how and why?
- In v. 1, we are told, "In the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes," and when we compare it with Neh 1:1, "In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year," then that means, it's about four months later. In other words, before Nehemiah spoke of his concern to the king, he waited four months before doing so. We can easily imagine, these four months were time

spent in prayer to God before he spoke to the king. In fact, in v. 4, we are told that Nehemiah “prayed to the God of heaven, and I answered the king.” Before he took any action, before he spoke with any one else, Nehemiah first spoke to his Heavenly Father. May our lives also have this priority, always first speak to our Father, before we speak to others and take action. God first, before people. Prayer first, before our action. And sometimes, before we act, we should sit awhile with our Father, before we stand and serve.

Neh 3 (9/5/23)

1. In 3, in this chapter, I counted 10 gates, can you list them; there’s one gate that is listed twice, where do you find it and why do you think that was; what do you learn?
 2. In 3, who began the work and why was that good; of all the people building, are there any types of people that catches your eye and why; how is this applicable to you?
- In vv. 5 and 27, we meet the men of Tekoa, who repaired two sections of the wall, without their nobles. This work was hard enough when everyone served together, but to have a group of people, most likely people in leadership positions, unwilling to serve together, would usually deflate the group and prevent from many serving. But, not the men of Tekoa. Even if the nobles or the leaders refused to serve, the people’s serving was not contingent on their leaders. Though it does not say why, my thought is they served because they looked up even higher than their leaders. They looked up to their God, and though their leaders did not lead by example, still they kept their focus on their God, and would live their faith, not as their leaders did, but as God would delight for them to do. How beautifully it is, when God’s people have our focus on our God and not always on other people, including on the leaders. Indeed, to have our God be the reason for our serving is truly a blessed faith to have. May our God always and truly be the reason why we serve, how we serve, even in two sections of the wall, when one is the norm.

Neh 4 (9/6/23)

1. In 4, why would Sanballat and his friends be angry at the rebuilding of Jerusalem’s wall and how did they attack God’s people; what would that look like today, you think; how did God’s people respond to the threat?
 2. In 4, for God’s people, how did their prayer and their actions align; why did the man who sounded the trumpet always stayed at Nehemiah’s side; what do you learn?
- In v. 23, we are told that they did not take off their clothes. From 6:15, we know it took 52 days to complete the wall. So, it’s possible, they didn’t change their clothes for nearly two months. Plus, whenever they were washing themselves, they did so with a weapon in one hand. They were probably getting very good doing their work with one hand, because the other hand always needed to hold their weapon. What dedication, what attitudes they had. Despite all that was wrong and uncomfortable and ultra vigilant they needed to be at any time of day and night, not knowing when and where the enemies might strike and the willingness to drop everything immediately, to go wherever the trumpet would sound, to fight and protect and sacrifice. Under such condition, to complete the rebuilding of the wall in 52 was a miracle, which God gladly used the hands of His people to accomplish. In almost all the miracles, people would contribute nothing. But here, God used the sacrifices, the hard work, the dedication of the people, to display His miracle. Wow, God’s miracle through the committed hard work of His people. How awesomely proud they must have felt, how humbly thankful they must have been, to see God’s work done through them, in such a miraculous way. PTL!

Neh 5 (9/7/23)

1. In 5:1-13, what was the outcry of the people about; how did Nehemiah respond and why; in v. 13, what visual message did he give and why; how would God see this situation (Ex 22:25-27); how is this applicable to you?
 2. In 5:14-19, how long was Nehemiah's governorship and what do you think about that; in what ways did he set a good example for the people to imitate and why live in such a way; how was his relationship with God; what do you learn?
- In v. 19, Nehemiah's prayed, for God to remember him for all the good he has done for the people. We can read that prayer and think that Nehemiah did his good work in order to gather favor from God. It wouldn't be all wrong, because God does teach us, "that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him" (Heb 11:6). And it is clear that Nehemiah did this good "out of reverence for God" (Neh 5:15). But, I believe Nehemiah's prayer to God to remember him is more than just a desire to get blessings from God. Remember, he was constantly battling enemies and foes and now, even fellow countrymen, who lived contrary to God's ways. And the reason why he left the elegant and prestigious life in the palace of Persia for this constant attacks and pressures and burdens of the life in ruined Judah, was not for his personal wellbeing, but to restore God's glory and rebuild God's people, by rebuilding God's city. The ceaseless battles from attacks and discouragements and the present humble reality of life there, would wear anyone out, and when we are down, that's where we are supposed to find our hope and encouragement, by looking to God and know, that He remembers us, that we are not left on our own, that this life, this present struggles are not our end, for our God has stored up something better for His people. So, to cry out to God to remember him, Nehemiah is simply acting in faith, that this world is not home, that our inheritance is in God's everlasting kingdom, so he can hear our God say to His people, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your Master's happiness!" (Matt 25:21). Yes, that's what we all want, "To share in our Master's happiness!"

Neh 6 (9/8/23)

1. In 6, Nehemiah faced many oppositions—who and how often did the Gentile opponents tried to stop the rebuilding; who and how did some of the Jews tried to make trouble for Nehemiah (Numb 18:7); what do you learn?
 2. In 6, troubles from the outside and from within, how was Nehemiah able to continue the good work; in what ways was it miraculous for the wall to be completed in 52 days; in what ways was God present here and how are God's people to live when we also have to face such overwhelming oppositions?
- The opposition Nehemiah faced was overwhelming, both from the enemies and from the people who should be friends and co-workers. Besides the constant threats, intimidations, the discredits, the many terrible schemes to cause Nehemiah to fall, could have discouraged him so greatly. The sense of betrayal, abandonment and disappointment could have derailed his desire to want to continue to serve. So many things were working against him. Yet, he didn't stop. In 52 days, they miraculously completed the rebuilding of the wall, with literally one hand, because they were all needing to be ready with the other hand to hold to on to their weapons and at a moment's notice, leave the work and go fight alongside their brothers and sisters. The enemies saw the completion of this work was also nothing short of a miracle, which is why, they "were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized that this

work had been done with the help of our God” (v. 16). What began as an opportunity to take away the confidence of God’s people, now was realized in the loss of the confidence of God’s enemies. When God’s people persevere, the opponents lose their confidence. And God’s people can only persevere because our God preserves us. Indeed, it is not in our own strength that we conquer, but when our God preserves us, we can persevere. Yes, the perseverance of the saints is truly God’s preserving His people. PTL!

Neh 7 (9/9/23)

1. In 7:1-3, do you recognize who Hanani is (1:2) and how would you describe this man; how is Hananiah described and how would that look like in your life; why would the gates not open until the sun is hot; what do you learn?
 2. In 7:4-73, what was the situation and what did Nehemiah want; why was this list made; who were excluded from serving and why; what do you learn?
- The attitude of Nehemiah and the leaders is precious. Though the numbers of the people are few, and therefore, they could have used anyone and everyone who were willing to serve, yet, their present need did not determine their decision. They were willing to obey God in the best way possible, not as their needs warranted but as God’s word commanded. It was God’s word over their present reality, and if they were shorthanded, then they would wait and see to it to make it right, in order to follow God’s word properly. They were not willing to follow God, as best as they could under the circumstances, but to follow God in the way God had prescribed His people to follow. So, they were not going to conform God’s word to fit their situation, but to work on their situation so that they would follow God in the way God had commanded and not any other. Let God be true, and every person or situation be a liar, whenever it should contradict God’s word. God centered is Nehemiah’s way, and my prayer is, that will also be our way as well—God centered, for God’s glory alone. PTL!

Neh 8 (9/11/23)

1. In 8:1-12, what is it that everyone in this passage were thirsting after and why and how is this reflected in your life; who exactly desired this and what do you learn from this?
 2. In 8:13-18, what did they learn from God’s word and how did they apply it in their lives; when you learn God’s truth, how quickly and completely do you apply it in your life; will you examine where God is desiring you to quickly and completely obey His word in your life?
- In v. 10, the command to God’s people was, “Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.” This does not mean, we should never grieve. Surely, we are to grieve because of our sins. God grieves for our sins and He delights when His people grieve for our sins. But, the reason why we are not to remain in our grieving, is not because we must not be miserable for our sins. Yes, we should be. But, after awhile, our grieving must turn to joy, because we see how our God cleansed us and has forgiven us of our sins. Yes, on Friday and Saturday, we should grieve, for our Lord was crucified and remained in the grave for us. But, Sunday followed. And on Sunday, the Lord rose from the dead, He came out of the grave. His payment for our sins was complete. Sunday is like drying off after the hot shower. The cleansing is complete. It’s now time to enjoy the clean, the forgiven, the newness that our God has brought, which is why, there’s joy, because He cleansed us. His work for us is the reason for our joy. And in joy, there’s strength, His strength, because our joy comes from His work.

Neh 9 (9/12/23)

1. In 9:1-5, why were the people gathered and how did they do that; how is this applicable to you?
 2. In 9:5-37, in this praise and prayer, if you were asked to summarize it briefly, what will you say; which part of the prayer stirs your heart most; is there anything else about this prayer that moves you?
- I am struck by the way this praise and prayer is directed directly to “You.” The people were speaking directly to the living God, to the Jehovah Shammah, the God who is there, and to the God Immanuel. Noticing how many times God is referred to as You and Your, I counted them in this chapter, and I counted 91 times. To believe the living God is there, and to speak to Him as You, that’s what an intimate relationship is. To believe the almighty God is there and listening, gives His children the freedom and confidence to speak from their hearts. To call on their God as You 91 times is simply amazing. If our prayers are becoming dry and God appears distant, may we repeatedly return to this chapter and learn from our ancestors how to pray to our God intimately, for He is here, He is Immanuel, He is the Jehovah Shammah. Let’s remember, He is You. You are here, listening to us, so we are able to speak to “You” directly.

Neh 10 (9/13/23)

1. In 9:38–10:29, what did all the people agree to do and how; in vv. 28-29, why did they do what they did and how far were they willing to follow; how is this applicable to you?
 2. In 10:30-39, will you list what the people are promising before God; which from the list are you most challenged; what do you learn?
- This chapter ends with a promise from the people, “We will not neglect the house of our God.” Who would have thought that after experiencing God’s miracle of rebuilding the city’s wall in 52 days, that they would not have joyfully and fully commit to live their lives after God’s way? But, somehow, even after tasting God’s miracle, they didn’t continue to walk in God’s word. What a frightening lesson this is. That, even after experiencing God’s miracle, it is so easy to not continue to walk with our God. We, the people, have a difficult time being faithful and consistent in our walk with our God. Because He knew our nature well, instead of showering His people with a weekly or monthly or yearly worth of food at a time, He gave His manna daily, so we could daily seek Him, and find Him daily sufficient. Do you daily receive His manna to sustain you? Let’s not rely on yesterday’s grace to keep us, but daily go to Him, and open wide our mouths to be fed with His truth. Food, both the physical and the spiritual, is meant to be fed daily. May we daily eat and digest His word well.

Neh 11 (9/14/23)

1. In 11:1-9, who and why were the people needing to resettled in Jerusalem; why are only two tribes named in this resettlement; what do you learn?
 2. In 11:10-36, who receives the majority of the attention here and why; how is God’s presence felt in this chapter; how is this applicable to you?
- Israel’s tribes had dwindled to two tribes, Judah and Benjamin. The other ten tribes were taken captive by the Assyrians in 722 BC and scattered all over that kingdom. About 136 years later, in 586 BC, the Babylonians captured and took these two tribes to Babylon. And amazingly, the Persians who conquered the Babylonians, encouraged the Israelites in their kingdom to return to Jerusalem and rebuild. And the Israelites returning were made up from

these two tribes, and a few from the other ten tribes might have trickled in, but the great majority were from these two tribes. So, even though Israel was getting rebuilt, it came from two rather than twelve. But, even with so few, even with most of the tribes missing, still, God would rebuild, God would restore His people. In fact, God began His people through one pagan worshiping family, Abram's. In fact, the whole human race began with one family, Adam's. So, we remember, God does not need many to start. He works and multiplies greatly through one. In fact, the salvation of all of His people began with one sacrifice from His Son, Christ Jesus. Though we may be few and small, let's not think that our God cannot do His amazing work in us and through us, because He has shown us, through One many will be saved.

Neh 12 (9/15/23)

1. In 12:1-21, why do you think it was important to list all these names; who are the people in the past and the present who blesses you to draw nearer to our God?
 2. In 12:22-47, who were the leaders that led the two groups and why were they divided, to do what and how do you picture this scenario; why do you think the musicians built villages for themselves around Jerusalem (v. 29); what do you learn?
- Here's a short note on purification (12:30). How did the priests and Levites purify themselves? While it's not exactly clear what they did, purification rites typically included fasting, sexual abstinence and the washing of garments. These outward acts were to be accompanied by inward acts of self-examination, repentance and recommitment to God.
 - For your further study, I added this additional notes on, How did the priests and Levites were consecrated?
 - For the priestly consecration and ordination:
 1. Priests washed their bodies.
 2. Dressed in the ceremonial garments prescribed for priestly service.
 3. Then the high priest anointed them with oil.
 4. Sacrificed a sin offering and a burnt offering for them.
 5. Put blood on each man's right ear lobe, thumb and big toe.
 6. Sprinkled each man with blood and with oil.
 7. This was repeated for seven consecutive days, without the priests leaving the place of consecration (Ex 29:1-46; Lev 8:1-9:24).
 - The Levites who were not priests were consecrated to carry the ark and to do the work of pitching the tent for the ark.
 1. For their consecration, the high priest sprinkled them with the water of cleansing.
 2. Then the Levites shaved their entire bodies and washed their clothes.
 3. The whole assembly gathered to lay their hands on them.
 4. The high priests presented the Levites to the Lord as a wave offering from the Israelites.
 - This symbolized the substitution of the Levites for all the firstborn of the rest of Israel.
 5. Finally, the high priest offered a sin offering and a burnt offering on the Levites' behalf (Num 8:5-22).

Neh 13 (9/16/23)

1. In 13:1-14, what did they learn as they read God's word and how did they respond; in vv. 3-14, what was the sin God's people were committing; how did God bless to right this wrong; what do you learn?

2. In 13:15-31, in vv. 15-22, what is the sin God's people were struggling with and how did God bless this wrong to make it right; in vv. 23-31, what is the sin God's people were committing here and why would they; how are all the sins forgiven, for these people and for you?
- In v. 1, when God's people learned that "no Ammonite or Moabite should ever be admitted into the assembly of God (Deut 23:3)," they take action to obey God's word. But, in v. 3, "they excluded from all who were of foreign descent." God's word spoke of those two nations, and not all foreign descent. We, people, often do that. We often go overboard, that is, we go too far, more than what God has spoken, and that too is a sin. The point of separating from surrounding nations was not racial. It was to prevent God's people from falling into idolatry (Deut 7:1-6). Those foreigners who worshiped the God of Israel were welcome to become part of Israel, as Ruth the Moabite and Rahab were (Ruth 1:16-17; Matt 1:5).