



Part 2 of 2

With the Temple and the city walls rebuilt, the second half of Nehemiah focuses on his efforts to address internal problems and to get the Jews who are back in Judah to follow and obey God faithfully.

In Nehemiah 8 Ezra, a priest and teacher, assembles the people and reads the Law calling them back to obedience. Realizing the exile had happened because of Israel's sin against God, the people confess their sins and worship God (chpt 9). Both the leaders and the people pledge to be faithful to God and to keep the Law. Three specific areas they pledge to be obedient: (1) they won't intermarry with pagans, (2) they will keep the Sabbath, and (3) they will support the Temple financially (10:30-39).

After Nehemiah had been governing Judah for twelve years, he returns to Persia to update the king. After about two years in Persia, Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem only to find that things rapidly deteriorated once again. All three specific areas of promised obedience to God were being violated with regularity (13:1-31).

The book of Nehemiah ends on a disturbing note... God's people don't appear to be all that different from their ancestors who had lost the land and gone into exile due to their sinful disobedience. Was the work of Ezra and Nehemiah all in vain?

Both Ezra and Nehemiah are clearly following God's will; nonetheless, they still confront numerous obstacles. A key lesson for us is that just because God leads us to do a task does not mean the task will become easy, and we may not even live long enough to see its benefit. God wants us to follow His leading, but He also expects us to plan, lead, and persevere in spite of opposition. Worth remembering!