

Return and Rebuilding

Rebuilding Walls

Foundation

Bible passage : Nehemiah 2.10-4.23

Powerpoint: ExileAndReturn-14. Showing first no wall, and then partially rebuilt walls.

Hush hush: When Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem he did not tell anyone his intentions until he has made sure of the extent of the task. In the ancient world towns and cities were vulnerable to attack without some solid defences. But a well defended city might be seen as a threat to others. Therefore, he began by inspecting the walls by night (2.12). Despite the goodwill of King Artaxerxes, Nehemiah was expecting opposition, and it wasn't long in arising.

How long?: We don't know for certain how long the wall was in those days. The later wall was more than 2 miles long (about the same size as the largely extant city wall in York) but that seems to have been extended. The Bible says that it took 52 days to rebuild the wall and some think this is far too short a time. However, the wall had not been completely destroyed, the gate towers seem to have been largely intact and there were a lot of people involved is separate work parties

“Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome”

which were well organised. Also it seems that the walls had been broken down and whereas the stone of old building is often carried away to make new buildings that had not happened.

Working together: When Nehemiah finally told people what he intended to do and how the



Part of the old city wall rebuilt in Nehemiah's time.

Lord had opened the way they quickly agreed to help (2.8). Chapter 3 describes the rebuilding and the many different groups involved, including some from other towns.

The first opposition (2.19) was simply an attempt to discourage people by pointing out how great the task was. Then they tried to pour scorn on the quality of the work (4.3). Nehemiah's response, as elsewhere was to pray (4.4). The work continued and soon it was complete around the whole city to half its height.

Building opposition: The opposition then turned nasty (4.8). Having failed to stop the work by discouragement the opponents then threatened violence and this time it worked. The people become dispirited because of how hard the work was (4.10) and fearful of the opposition (4.11). But Nehemiah was undaunted. He split his workforce to provide continuing security as well as workers and encouraged the leaders to remember the Lord (4.14). It was a proper mix of practical action and faithful trust in God.

So the work continued, but the troubles were not over.



Nehemiah knew God was with him but acted, carefully, wisely and prayerfully as each obstacle arose.