

Insights From Nehemiah

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Insights From Nehemiah

by Jonathan Cooper

First Edition on 5/22/2024

Introduction

One of the ways I've been studying the Word of God is by making a list of everything that each book of the Bible teaches. This has resulted in more than a thousand pages of material. Although it's interesting and I've learned a lot from writing it, that's a lot of bullet points to read through!

The purpose of this book is to extract the most interesting insights from that massive list. This isn't intended to summarize each book of the Bible because that's what my "Chapter Summary of the Bible" is for. It's also not intended to list the major points of each book because you're probably already familiar with them. Finally, it's not intended to offer in-depth commentary because that's what my regular commentary is for. This book is simply a collection of points that I found interesting.

I hope there's some material here that you find edifying.

Jon Cooper
4/29/2024

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Nehemiah

- The events in this book began in the 20th year of the reign of Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 1:1)
- Nehemiah cared about the plight of the Jews and the city of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:2).
- Some of the Jews had returned to Judah (Nehemiah 1:2). However, there were many still living in other countries.
- The Jews who were in Judah were afflicted and living in reproach (Nehemiah 1:3).
- Before Nehemiah was told, he didn't know how bad things were in Judah (Nehemiah 1:4). He was deeply moved by their plight.
- God shows mercy to those who love Him (Nehemiah 1:5).
- Nehemiah prayed day and night on behalf of the Jews (Nehemiah 1:6).
- God used Moses to tell the Jews that if they sinned against Him then He would scatter them among the nations (Nehemiah 1:8). This means that when God scattered the Jews among the nations, He was keeping a promise He made to them.
- God promised the Jews that if they repented and kept His commandments then He would regather them back to the promised land, no matter how far they had been scattered (Nehemiah 1:9).
- God has chosen to set His name in the promised land (Nehemiah 1:9).
- God has the power to grant us favor in the sight of others. He has control over people's hearts and minds (Nehemiah

1:11).

- God has control over the actions of kings, and guides them according to His will (Nehemiah 1:11).
- When Nehemiah spoke to the king about going to Jerusalem, he didn't mention Jerusalem by name. Instead he called it the city where his ancestors were buried (Nehemiah 2:5).
- Nehemiah didn't travel alone. The king sent captains of the army and horsemen with him. This means that when Nehemiah gave the king's letters to the governors, he had a small army with him (Nehemiah 2:9).
- God cared about the Jews. He was the one who sent Nehemiah to Judah to seek their welfare (Nehemiah 2:12).
- There are times when God accomplishes His will by putting things into people's heart (Nehemiah 2:12).
- Nehemiah surveyed the damage that had been done to Jerusalem at night, when no one was around to see what he was doing (Nehemiah 2:13).
- Before Nehemiah spoke to anyone about what he planned on doing, he investigated the situation himself to see the scope of the problem (Nehemiah 2:13).
- The enemies of the Jews mocked them for trying to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2:19).
- The enemies of the Jews lied about what the Jews were doing, and falsely accused them of rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem so they could rebel against the king (Nehemiah 2:19).

- There are times when God's enemies try to stop His people by using lies and false accusations (Nehemiah 2:19).
- Nehemiah didn't ignore what his enemies were saying. Instead he responded to their false accusations and defended himself (Nehemiah 2:20).
- Nehemiah told those who opposed him that the reason the Jews were going to arise and build was because God would prosper them and give them success. Nehemiah addressed this as a religious issue (Nehemiah 2:20).
- At this time in history Israel had a high priest (Nehemiah 3:1). He worked with other priests to rebuild the sheep gate.
- The priests sanctified the wall around Jerusalem from the sheep gate to the tower of Meah (Nehemiah 3:1).
- The nobles didn't help rebuild the wall around Jerusalem (Nehemiah 3:5).
- Since rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem was something God wanted, that meant working on it was an act of service to God (Nehemiah 3:5). This means construction work can be an act of service to God.
- There were goldsmiths in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 3:8). They helped rebuild the wall.
- There were apothecaries in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 3:8). They helped rebuild the wall.
- The daughters of Shallum helped rebuild the wall around Jerusalem (Nehemiah 3:12). This means there were women who helped rebuild the wall.

- Part of Jerusalem was called the city of David (Nehemiah 3:15).
- The sepulchers of David were located in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 3:16).
- The Levites helped rebuild the wall around Jerusalem (Nehemiah 3:17).
- There was an armory in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 3:19).
- Baruch earnestly repaired the wall (the text specifically points this out) (Nehemiah 3:20).
- In Jerusalem there was a court of the prison (Nehemiah 3:25).
- There were merchants in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 3:31-32). They helped rebuild the wall.
- There are times when the wicked reveal their hatred for someone by mocking them (Nehemiah 4:1). Mocking someone can be a form of hatred.
- It's not wrong to pray that God would take vengeance upon the enemies of the saints (Nehemiah 4:4).
- It's not wrong to pray that God would turn the enemies of the saints from oppressors into prey, and that they would become the ones who were hunted (Nehemiah 4:4).
- It's not wrong to pray that God would hold the wicked accountable for the evil things they've done (Nehemiah 4:5).
- When Sanballat and Tobiah mocked the Jews for rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem, they provoked God to anger (Nehemiah 4:5). In other words, those who mock people for doing God's will are actually mocking

God, which provokes Him to anger.

- Although a remnant of Jews had returned to Judah, the land was filled with foreigners who hated them. This means the Jews not only had to deal with the fact that Jerusalem was in ruins, but also with all the people who hated them and wanted them to suffer (Nehemiah 4:7).
- The adversaries of the Jews were planning on murdering them in large numbers (Nehemiah 4:11).
- The Jews who lived near Sanballat and Tobiah gave Nehemiah ten warnings about the plan to attack them by surprise and kill them (Nehemiah 4:12).
- When Nehemiah heard about the impending surprise attack, he responded by arming people with weapons so they could defend themselves (Nehemiah 4:13-14). Although Nehemiah told the Jews to trust in the Lord and not be afraid, he still prepared the Jews to fight.
- It's not wrong to fight for your family (Nehemiah 4:14).
- The enemies of the Jews decided not to attack once they learned that the Jews had armed themselves, and they would have to fight a real battle (Nehemiah 4:15).
- Nehemiah brought servants with him to Jerusalem (Nehemiah 4:16).
- Although Nehemiah put his faith in God, he also armed his servants and prepared them for battle (Nehemiah 4:16).
- At this time there was a famine in the land (Nehemiah 5:3).
- Some people mortgaged their lands and houses to buy

food (Nehemiah 5:3).

- Some people mortgaged their property to pay the king's tax (Nehemiah 5:4).
- Some of the Jews had become in debt to other Jews (Nehemiah 5:5). The poor sold their children into slavery, to other Jews, in order to buy food.
- Those who are in positions of power don't have the right to mistreat the poor (Nehemiah 5:7).
- It's not wrong to rebuke those who are in positions of power when they do something wrong (Nehemiah 5:7).
- Nehemiah didn't confront the nobles and rulers by himself. Instead he set a large assembly against them, so that many people would hear the matter (Nehemiah 5:7).
- Rulers don't have the right to do whatever they please. God will hold them accountable for what they've done (Nehemiah 5:9).
- Under the Mosaic Law, it wasn't a sin to charge interest to foreigners. However, people couldn't charge interest to the poor, which is what the rich were doing (Nehemiah 5:10).
- Nehemiah commanded the rich to return the real estate that they had taken from the poor. (Nehemiah 5:11). Since the rich had violated the Mosaic Law by charging interest to the poor, he commanded them to restore one percent of the money and food that they had taken. He didn't seize all of their wealth, or take anything that rightfully belonged to them. Instead they were only required to restore whatever they had stolen.
- Nehemiah had a priest take an oath from the rulers and

the nobles. This means they had to make a binding promise to God that they would keep their promise (Nehemiah 5:12). The oath was also made in front of a large assembly of people, so everyone knew what they had promised to do.

- It's not wrong to pray that God would hold people accountable for breaking their promises (Nehemiah 5:13).
- Nehemiah was the governor of Judah for 12 years (Nehemiah 5:14).
- Nehemiah was the governor at his own expense. He didn't accept a salary for that position (Nehemiah 5:14). The reason he did this was because the people of Judah would have had to pay his salary, and he didn't want to oppress them.
- Nehemiah provided food for 150 Jews and rulers, as well as a number of pagans (Nehemiah 5:17). At his table, an ox and a sheep were prepared each day. If this continued every day for 12 years it would have been around 4,380 oxen and 26,280 sheep (Nehemiah 5:18). This means Nehemiah spent a fortune feeding people at his own expense.
- When Nehemiah was governor he put the needs of the people above his own needs. He sought to serve others, not to enrich himself (Nehemiah 5:18).
- It's not wrong for us to pray that God would think about us (Nehemiah 5:19).
- It's not wrong for us to pray that God would bless us (Nehemiah 5:19).
- It's not wrong for us to seek a reward from God for the good things we've done (Nehemiah 5:19).

- The wall around Jerusalem was rebuilt first, and then the doors were put on the gates (Nehemiah 6:1).
- The reason Sanballat and Geshem wanted to meet with Nehemiah was so they could kill him and put an end to the rebuilding project. They wanted to lure him away from Jerusalem, which was well-defended and filled with armed guards, and get him to a place where he was vulnerable so he could be attacked (Nehemiah 6:2).
- There are times when the wicked try to lure the righteous to their death through lies and deceit (Nehemiah 6:2).
- If Nehemiah left, the work would cease. The work only progressed as long as Nehemiah was there to direct it (Nehemiah 6:3).
- Even though Nehemiah knew that Sanballat intended to cause him harm, he didn't accuse Sanballat of anything. Instead he simply said that he was busy and couldn't afford to leave the work he was doing. Nehemiah responded to this threat against his life in a very diplomatic way (Nehemiah 6:3).
- Sanballat was guilty of treason for trying to stop a project the king had authorized, and for trying to kill the governor. Yet he accused Nehemiah of treason, who was wholly innocent of any wrongdoing. This means Sanballat was guilty of the very thing he was accusing Nehemiah of doing (Nehemiah 6:6). In other words, there are times when the wicked accuse the righteous of the very sins that they themselves are guilty of committing.
- There are times when the wicked try to cover up their sins by accusing the righteous of those sins (Nehemiah 6:6).

- There are times when the wicked use fear to try to stop the righteous from carrying out God's will (Nehemiah 6:7).
- The wicked want the righteous to be afraid (Nehemiah 6:9).
- Fear weakens people (Nehemiah 6:9).
- When we're afraid, we should pray to God for strength (Nehemiah 6:9).
- Nehemiah refused to do something wrong in order to defend himself from threats against his life (Nehemiah 6:11).
- There are times when the wicked use lies to try to get the righteous to sin, so they can have something to reproach the righteous (Nehemiah 6:13). In other words, there are times when the wicked lay traps for the righteous.
- Nodiah was a prophetess (Nehemiah 6:14). She was working with Tobiah and Sanballat to stop Nehemiah from rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem.
- The wall around Jerusalem was finished in 52 days (Nehemiah 6:15).
- The enemies of the Jews understood that the God of Israel was the reason why the wall around Jerusalem had been rebuilt (Nehemiah 6:16).
- The nobles of Judah (who were Jews) were allies of Tobiah, even though Tobiah was an enemy of the Jews and sought to harm them (Nehemiah 6:17).
- The reason some Jews made an alliance with someone who hated the Jews was because of pagan intermarriage.

When the Jews married pagans, that led to alliances with wicked people who wanted to destroy them (Nehemiah 6:18).

- The nobles reported to Tobiah what Nehemiah had been doing. They were the reason the enemies of the Jews knew what was happening (Nehemiah 6:19). In other words, the nobles acted as spies.
- After the wall around Jerusalem had been rebuilt, the gates had been rebuilt, and the porters and singers and Levites for the temple had been appointed, Nehemiah put his brother Hanani in charge of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 7:2).
- God put it into the heart of Nehemiah to put together a genealogy (Nehemiah 7:5).
- Mordecai returned to Judah (Nehemiah 7:7). This may be the same Mordecai who's mentioned in the book of Esther.
- Nehemiah separated those who could prove that they were Jews from those who couldn't (Nehemiah 7:61).
- There were some people who claimed to be of the priestly line, but who couldn't prove that they were descendants of Aaron (Nehemiah 7:64). For this reason they were removed from the priesthood.
- The Tirshatha (the governor) said that the priests weren't allowed to eat the holy things until the Urim and Thummim confirmed their priesthood (Nehemiah 7:65). This seems to be the last time the Urim and the Thummim are mentioned in the Bible.
- The Urim and the Thummim were still in use in the second temple. At that time people still knew what they

were and used them (Nehemiah 7:65).

- Part of the job of the priests was to eat the holy things (Nehemiah 7:65).
- Everyone in Jerusalem gathered as a group and asked Ezra read the law of Moses to them (Nehemiah 8:1-3). This took from the morning until the midday.
- The people listened carefully to the words of the law. Since they wanted to hear and understand it, they paid close attention to it (Nehemiah 8:3).
- 13 people stood beside Ezra when he read the law to the people (Nehemiah 8:4).
- Ezra read the Mosaic Law from a pulpit, which elevated him above the crowd (Nehemiah 8:5).
- It's good to stand when the law of God is opened (Nehemiah 8:5).
- Ezra and those who were with him explained what the law meant, and caused the people to understand what it said (Nehemiah 8:8).
- When the people heard the law of God they wept, because they knew they hadn't been keeping it (Nehemiah 8:9).
- That day (the first day of the seventh month) was a holy day to the Lord. Since that day was holy, the people weren't supposed to weep (Nehemiah 8:9).
- The joy of the Lord is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10).
- In the day of feasting we must remember the poor (Nehemiah 8:10).

- Drinking sweet things can bring joy (Nehemiah 8:10).
- There are times when grief isn't appropriate (Nehemiah 8:11).
- It's not wrong to make merry (Nehemiah 8:12).
- In the past, the law of Moses hadn't been taught to the people, the priests, the Levites, or the leaders (Nehemiah 8:13-14).
- The Israelites hadn't celebrated the feast of booths (tabernacles) since the days of Joshua (Nehemiah 8:17).
- First the Jews heard the law of God. Then they confessed their sins, and after that they worshiped the Lord (Nehemiah 9:3). This is because you must first hear the law of God before you can repent, and you must repent before you can worship the Lord. (After all, how can you repent if you don't know your sins, and how can you have fellowship with God while you're still unrepentant and unclean?)
- God preserves all the things He has made. He preserves the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, and the earth, and the things that are in the earth and the seas (Nehemiah 9:6).
- The host of heaven (the angels) worship God (Nehemiah 9:6).
- God keeps His promises (Nehemiah 9:8).
- The reason God keeps His promises is because He is righteous (Nehemiah 9:8).
- Pharaoh afflicted the Hebrews out of pride (Nehemiah 9:10).

- The signs and wonders that God poured out upon Pharaoh made Him known among the nations (Nehemiah 9:10). In fact, the nations of Nehemiah's time still hadn't forgotten those events.
- The fact that God didn't forsake the Israelites when they rebelled against Him after He saved them from Egypt is proof that He is gracious, merciful, slow to anger, and kind (Nehemiah 9:17).
- God sustained the Israelites in the wilderness for 40 years. He took care of them and provided for their needs (Nehemiah 9:21).
- The reason the prophets of God testified against the Israelites was to turn them back to God. The purpose was to get Israel to repent so the nation would be saved (Nehemiah 9:26). However, Israel didn't repent. Instead they killed God's prophets.
- God delivered Israel from their enemies many times (Nehemiah 9:28).
- Although God saved Israel many times, Israel refused to obey His law (Nehemiah 9:29).
- God's grace and mercy can be seen from the fact that He didn't utterly destroy or forsake Israel, in spite of their centuries of rebellion against Him (Nehemiah 9:31).
- The Jews weren't able to enjoy the bounty of the promised land because they were servants instead of its rulers (Nehemiah 9:36-37). That bounty was now going to the kings who ruled over the Jews.
- The reason pagan kings ruled over the Jews was because of Israel's sins. God was punishing them for their

wickedness (Nehemiah 9:37).

- The Jews made a covenant with God (Nehemiah 9:38). The reason they did this was because of all the things that had happened to them. They had sinned and were in great distress.
- 22 priests sealed the covenant (Nehemiah 10:8).
- 17 Levites sealed the covenant (Nehemiah 10:13).
- 44 of the leaders of the Jews sealed the covenant (Nehemiah 10:27).
- The people bound themselves to obey all of God's commandments with an oath and a curse (Nehemiah 10:29).
- The people swore an oath not to intermarry with pagans (Nehemiah 10:30).
- The people swore an oath not to buy anything from the pagans of the land on the Sabbath or on holy days (Nehemiah 10:31).
- The people swore an oath to rest on the seventh year (the Sabbatical year), and not till the ground on those years (Nehemiah 10:31).
- The people swore an oath to forgive debts on the seventh year (the Sabbatical year) (Nehemiah 10:31).
- The people made an ordinance to pay the yearly temple tax (Nehemiah 10:32). This was a third of a shekel and was charged to every individual. It provided funding for the temple.
- Lots were cast among the priests, the Levites, and the people to decide who would bring the wood offering to

the temple (Nehemiah 10:34). The wood was used to burn sacrifices, and someone had to supply it. The lots decided which families would bring wood to the temple at which times of the year.

- The people made an ordinance to bring the firstfruits of their crops to the temple each year (Nehemiah 10:35).
- The people made an ordinance to bring their firstborn sons to the temple each year (Nehemiah 10:36).
- The people made an ordinance to bring the firstborn of their livestock to the temple each year (Nehemiah 10:36).
- Large quantities of food and wine were stored at the temple. The temple was a storehouse (Nehemiah 10:37).
- The people made an ordinance to bring their tithes of their crops to the Levites (Nehemiah 10:37). The tithe consisted of crops and wasn't a monetary amount. It was given to the Levites, not to the priests.
- The Levites were to give the priests a tithe of the tithe (Nehemiah 10:38). This means they were to give the priests a tenth of the crops that they received.
- The treasure house of the temple was filled with food for the priests. This is because that's where the tithe was stored, and the tithe consisted of crops (Nehemiah 10:38).
- Wine was stored in the temple chambers (Nehemiah 10:39).
- The Jews made a promise to not forsake the house of God (the temple). They promised to continue to fund it through the temple tax, and to pay their tithe so the Levites and priests would have food to eat (Nehemiah

10:39).

- Since people didn't want to live in Jerusalem, they cast lots to see who would have to live there (Nehemiah 11:1). Lots were cast in order to move a tenth of the Jews to Jerusalem.
- Some people willingly offered to live in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 11:2).
- Many of the people who worked in the temple at Jerusalem didn't live in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 11:3).
- 822 people worked in the temple (Nehemiah 11:12).
- The temple had a prayer leader (Nehemiah 11:17).
- 284 Levites lived in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 11:18). The rest of the priests and Levites lived in their home cities throughout Judah (Nehemiah 11:20).
- The singers were in charge of the business of the temple (Nehemiah 11:22). This means they had a position of authority in the temple.
- The singers were paid (Nehemiah 11:23).
- 22 of the chief priests went with Zerubbabel and Jeshua from Babylon to Jerusalem (Nehemiah 12:7).
- In the temple, there was a person who was in charge of giving thanks to God (Nehemiah 12:8).
- Ezra was one of the chief priests (Nehemiah 12:12-13).
- The job of Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua in the temple was to praise God and give Him thanks (Nehemiah 12:24).
- David was the one who commanded that there should be

people in the temple who were dedicated to giving thanks (Nehemiah 12:24).

- There were multiple wards (divisions) in the temple (Nehemiah 12:24). Each ward had someone in charge of giving thanks to God.
- There was a dedication ceremony for the wall around Jerusalem (Nehemiah 12:27).
- David created musical instruments for the priests and Levites to use in the temple, to praise God (Nehemiah 12:36).
- Trumpets were used in the temple to give thanks to God (Nehemiah 12:41).
- It's good to sing loudly to God (Nehemiah 12:42).
- When the wall around Jerusalem was dedicated, the people rejoiced and offered great sacrifices (Nehemiah 12:43).
- God cursed Moabites and the Ammonites with an eternal curse (Nehemiah 13:2). The reason He did that was because they didn't give the Israelites bread and water when they were in the wilderness, and because they hired Balaam to curse Israel.
- There are times when God curses nations for trying to curse the Jews (Nehemiah 13:2).
- Even though the people had sworn an oath to keep the Mosaic Law, they didn't keep that oath. Some of the people began violating it as soon as Nehemiah left and was no longer around to enforce it (Nehemiah 13:8-10).
- When Nehemiah returned to Judah after being gone for

several years, he discovered that the Levites weren't working in the temple. They had gone back to their fields because they weren't being given the tithe (Nehemiah 13:10). They had to work the fields to get food.

- The temple couldn't function without the tithe, because the tithe funded its operation and allowed people to work in the temple instead of in the field (Nehemiah 13:10).
- Although the people had sworn an oath to keep the law of Moses, they had allowed the temple to be forsaken and had done nothing about it (Nehemiah 13:11).
- The job of the temple treasurer was to distribute the tithes to the Levites and priests (Nehemiah 13:13).
- It's good for us to pray that God would remember the good things we've done in this life (Nehemiah 13:14).
- The people didn't keep their oath to obey the Mosaic Law. They sinned by working, buying, and selling goods on the Sabbath (Nehemiah 13:15).
- The people didn't have a heart to keep the Mosaic Law (Nehemiah 13:15).
- The nobles of Judah weren't interested in keeping the law of Moses. They had no heart to obey God's commands (Nehemiah 13:17). The nobles should have put a stop to the evil that the people were doing, but instead they did nothing.
- One of the reasons God poured out His judgments upon the Jews was because they profaned the Sabbath day (Nehemiah 13:18).
- There was a simple way for the nobles to stop people

from profaning the Sabbath (close the gates of the city on that day), and yet they hadn't done it (Nehemiah 13:19).

- Nehemiah didn't trust the nobles to keep the gates of Jerusalem closed for the Sabbath. In order to make sure they stayed closed, he put his servants into position to force them to remain closed (Nehemiah 13:19).
- Solomon sinned by marrying pagan women (Nehemiah 13:26).
- Even Solomon, who was beloved of God, was led into sin by pagan women (Nehemiah 13:26).
- The priesthood was defiled by sin (Nehemiah 13:29).
- It seems the high priest didn't care about the temple. Nehemiah was the one who put things in order (Nehemiah 13:30).