

THE STORY

THE BIBLE AS ONE CONTINUING STORY OF GOD AND HIS PEOPLE

CHAPTER 21 – REBUILDING THE WALLS

DISCUSSION OF GENERAL QUESTIONS

- ❶ What is God saying?
- ❷ For what does this section lead me to give thanks? (See God's grace and promises!)
- ❸ What sins does this section lead me to confess? (See God's expectations for his people)
- ❹ For what does this section lead me to pray? (As you ponder the Word, what needs of heart and life for yourself and others come to mind? Consider every word you read as an invitation to turn it into a prayer you speak back to your Lord!)

Key Events: the ministries of Ezra and Nehemiah, rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, prophecies of Malachi

DIGGING IN

Note about Ezra

Ezra the priest traveled with a group of returning exiles from Babylon (Persia) to Jerusalem in 458 B.C., about 60 years after the temple was rebuilt (516). Ezra led the Jews in an effort to learn and follow God's law.

- 1) What qualifications did Ezra have as a leader of the Lord's people? Why is it important for Christian leaders and teachers today to be well-versed in God's word?

Note about Nehemiah

Nehemiah was Persian King Artaxerxes' cupbearer. In 445 B.C., Nehemiah received permission from the king to go to Jerusalem to inspect and rebuild the walls of the city. He continued to serve as governor in Judah until 433, when he was called back to Persia. After discovering that the Jews disobeyed God's law during his absence, Nehemiah later returned to straighten things out and served another term as governor in Judah.

- 2) What was Nehemiah's response when he heard the report from Jerusalem? (pg 295) Why was he so distraught? What should our response be when we hear "bad news" from other parts of Christendom?

- 3) The walls of Jerusalem were incomplete and the city was vulnerable to attack. Nehemiah prayed for protection, but he also posted guards. Does this show a lack of faith on Nehemiah's part?

- 4) Nehemiah's enemies tried to use the false prophet Shemaiah to deceive him into committing a sin. (pg 299) Read Nehemiah 6:10-13. How do we determine if a person's message is from God or not?

- 5) After the walls had been completed the people assembled and Ezra read to them from the Book of the Law. (300-301) Explain why the people reacted the way they did when they heard the Word of God spoken to them.

Note about Malachi

God called the prophet Malachi into service most likely after governor Nehemiah returned to Persia in 433 B.C. (when the Jews disobeyed God's law). Malachi was the last prophet of the Old Testament era. For more information about the 400-year inter-testamental period between Malachi's prophecies and Jesus, please read page 307 in *The Story*.

- 6) Shortly after the walls had been rebuilt, the prophet Malachi was sent to correct the priests and the people. (pgs 302-304) What were they doing that dishonored God? What good news did Malachi have to share with the people? (pg 304)

Chapter 22: The Birth of the King

Bible Reference: Matthew 1-2; Luke 1-2; John 1