

We have learned that Zerubbabel led the first group back to Jerusalem. Then Ezra returned with a group to do good work. There was another man who worked with Ezra. He did not go to Jerusalem with Ezra. He went later and Ezra was still there. His name was Nehemiah.

Nehemiah had been a cupbearer for the king of Persia. This was a very important position. The king had to have a lot of trust in a man before he made him cupbearer. The cupbearer would taste all food and drink before it was given to the king. He would make sure it had not been poisoned and was safe for the king.

Nehemiah was a very faithful servant to King Artaxerxes in the city of Shushan. People went to Shushan and told Nehemiah what was happening in Jerusalem. Nehemiah's brother, Hanani, traveled to Shushan. He told Nehemiah the walls of Jerusalem were still torn down.

Nehemiah was very sad. Nehemiah prayed for God to help him. Nehemiah told God that he knew the people had been captured by Babylon because they had not kept God's commandments. He knew their sins had caused Jerusalem to be destroyed. Nehemiah wanted to do something about the walls of Jerusalem. He prayed for God's help because he knew he would need permission from King Artaxerxes. He was afraid the king would say no.

King Artaxerxes could see that Nehemiah was unhappy. The king asked Nehemiah what was wrong. Nehemiah told King Artaxerxes what was making him so sad. He asked the king for permission to go to Jerusalem to rebuild the wall.

King Artaxerxes gave Nehemiah permission to go. The king gave him papers to show everyone that he had permission from the king. King Artaxerxes helped Nehemiah by giving him timber from his forest to rebuild the gates and do other work that was needed. Some of the king's soldiers led Nehemiah from Shushan to Jerusalem.

Some of the men who lived outside the city of Jerusalem were not happy when they heard the walls were going to be rebuilt. Three men who wanted to stop Nehemiah were Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem. Sanballat was the governor of Samaria. Tobiah was Sanballat's chief assistant. Geshem was a chief of an Arabian tribe.

Nehemiah knew there were going to be problems. So, he started working at night. Nehemiah took only a few men with him and did not let others know what he was doing. Nehemiah went out at night to inspect the walls of Jerusalem. He saw the terrible condition it was in and knew it was going to take a lot of work. He knew he would need a lot of help.

Nehemiah called a meeting of the people. He told them they needed to work together to rebuild the wall. The people were excited about Nehemiah's plan to rebuild the wall. The people said, "Let us rise up and build". (Neh. 2:18) The people worked together and worked very hard on the rebuilding of the wall.

Sanballat tried to make people believe that Nehemiah was going against the king's orders. Nehemiah continued to trust God. Sanballat and his friends continued to try and stop the work on the wall. (Neh. 4:1-3) He tried to get an army together to attack Jerusalem. Nehemiah continued to pray, and they continued to work on the wall. Nehemiah had half of his men working on the wall, and the others were behind the walls with spears, shields, and bows. They were making sure no one could stop the work they were doing. (Neh. 4:13)

Sanballat tried many things to stop Nehemiah's work. But Nehemiah did not allow anything to discourage him. Sanballat sent a message to Nehemiah that he wanted to talk. Nehemiah sent a message back saying the work he was doing was important and he could not stop the work to come to see him. (Neh. 6:3)

The people continued to work on the wall until it was finished. The work on the wall was finished in 52 days. (Neh. 6:15) God had heard their prayers and helped them to complete their task. Ezra gathered the people together and read the Book of the Law of Moses to them. (Neh. 8:1) Ezra explained it to them so they would understand.

The people cried when they heard the word of God. Ezra told them not to cry. (Neh. 8:9) They did what God told them to do. The people changed the things they were doing wrong. They confessed their sins and worshipped God. (Neh. 9:3)

Nehemiah was governor of Judah for 12 years. He had told Artaxerxes that he would return to him, and he did. Nehemiah was away for 5 years and then went back to Jerusalem. He was sad to find the people had turned away from their covenant with God. They had gone back to their sinful ways. But Nehemiah did not give up. Once again, he made sure changes were made so the people were following the Law of God. Nehemiah was a faithful servant of God.