

Concepts of Nehemiah - Part 1

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I. Introduction.

- A. The concepts of a person make up his philosophy of life.
- B. A philosophy is a constellation of concepts.

II. Nehemiah in the context of history.

- A. He was born in the 5th century BC.
- B. Contemporaries: Plato, Socrates, Herodotus, Confucius.
- C. He was the last of the Old Testament heroes under the secular kings.
- D. In the context of Jewish history.
 - 1. The Jews were the descendents of Abraham through Isaac.
 - 2. God had something in mind for the descendents of Abraham: through them all families of the earth would be blessed. (Genesis 12:3)
 - 3. The seed as Paul pointed out, was the descendent Jesus Christ, the savior of the world.
 - 4. The Jews were also to evangelize the whole world.
 - a. God was going to use Moses to place the fear of Himself on all the people on earth. (Deuteronomy 2:5)
 - b. God had in mind that the whole world would become aware of His great power. (Joshua 9:9)
 - c. All the people of the earth through Joshua were to see God's power. (Joshua 4:24)
 - d. God's power through David was to be seen by all the people of the earth. (I Samuel 17:46)
 - e. So it was with Solomon. (I Kings 8:60)
 - f. With Hezekiah it was the same. (II Kings 19:19)
 - g. Jeremiah had the whole earth on his heart. (Jeremiah 32:29)
 - 5. Many estimate that the population of the earth around the time of the Old Testament was 250 million.

6. God raised up the Jew to 1) be the ancestors of Jesus and to 2) evangelize the world. Nehemiah knew that the mission of the Jews was to evangelize the world.

7. Chronology review: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Judges (Deborah, Gideon, Samuel), Kings Saul, David and Solomon, the split in the kingdom, Rehoboam (Southern Kingdom lasting to 588 BC) and Jeroboam (Northern Kingdom lasting to 722 BC), Nebuchadnezzar's invasion of Judah, the captivity until 588 BC, Cyrus's release from captivity, and the entrance of Nehemiah when the temple was incomplete and the walls were broken down.

E. Nehemiah was the king's cupbearer - one of the highest positions in the court.

III. Nehemiah's concept of the person of God.

A. Sixty-six times in the book of Nehemiah the name of God was mentioned.

1. The English translation of the name of God does not say much.

2. The word that is translated God is pronounced Yahweh.

a. Whenever one of the scribes was copying the Old Testament he selected a pen unused, went through a ceremonial cleansing, and wrote the name.

b. It was not a word though - it means the unpronounceable name of God. The name of God was treated that reverently among the Jews.

c. The name conveys the idea of continuous activity and becoming. This name testifies to the fact that the name of God is in relation to a continual state of living activity.

3. Nehemiah was preoccupied with the Person of God. Modern Jews had such a high view of God that they could never reconcile God being in human form - but they do not understand.

B. Application. Who is God like? (Isaiah 40)

1. He tells the number of the stars and He calls them by name. (Psalm 147)

2. He inhabits eternity and the heart that wants Him. (Isaiah 57:15)

3. God is closer than a brother.

4. God is closer than a mother (Isaiah 49:15)

5. Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven, we do not have to be afraid, and Jesus has overcome the world. God enters into the universe closer than all those closest to us. (Deuteronomy 24:5; Matthew 9:2; 14:27; John 16:33)

Application questions.

1. What two significant purposes of the Jews comes out of a survey of Jewish history? How does this bring light to Nehemiah's situation?

2. Why do you think Nehemiah had a preoccupation with God? What does Jesus reveal about God that makes Him so compelling?

3. Is God unique to you? What place does He take in your life? How does this show itself?
