

Annie gives the devotion on “Build the altar first” from Ezra & Nehemiah

- To read Nehemiah, you must first read Ezra:
 - Ezra records the rebuilding of the altar & temple
 - Nehemiah continues the history of Israel’s return from Babylonian captivity & rebuilding the temple & the walls in Jerusalem.
- Nehemiah 1:3 “Those who survived the exile and are back ... are in great trouble & disgrace”
 - Nehemiah was not in the first group of the returnees recorded in Ezra
 - He stayed behind to serve the Babylon king.
 - Only the altar & temple was built; but lacking walls to protect, and the temple was under constant attack.
 - He was the leader for the 2nd phase
- Nehemiah 1:11 “O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this ...”
 - He is the man of response. He went to the Lord directly.
 - Besides Nehemiah, there are other like-minded Israelites who “delight in revering your name”
 - So Nehemiah’s prayer is a corporate prayer – like our prayer meetings
 - He asks God to grant him success & favor in front of the king – a bold & specific prayer
- Nehemiah 6:15-16 “So the wall was completed ... in 52 days”
 - This must be a record when they must always look out for the enemies.
 - All the surrounding nations were afraid & lost self-confidence
 - Because the work had been done with the help of God
 - Testify the partnership of men & God
- Additional insights on Ezra & Nehemiah
 - God moved the hearts :
 1. Ezra 1:1 - God moves hearts of Kings of Persia and Ezra
 - Nehemiah 1:11– God moves hearts of King & Nehemiah
 - God’s gracious hand on his people – 8 times in both books
 - God sent prophets like Ezra, teachers to instruct, encourage Ezra 5:2
 - Result: God answered prayer after prayer:
 1. strengthening the people
 2. frustrating their enemies
 3. turn destruction to blessing
 - Both books end with prayers of confession (Ezra 9; Nehemiah 9). Therefore purpose is:
 1. Build the people through the projects
 2. Consecrate the people: Separate people from their sinful practices
- Application:
 - Continue to pray that God will send people to help us.
 - God moved people and events in the last two weeks to bring a engineer forward. This is an incredible unfolding of God’s grace & mercy on us.
 - Core group has to stick together in prayers. Last few years, all the work fell on two people causing burn-out.
 - We also must shoulder our responsibilities - be diligent & honest in our dealings.
 - We must boldly confess our sins and ask for forgiveness, see Ezra 4