

January Teaching Theme: The Book of Nehemiah

讲员 Speaker: Pastor Tian

题目 Topic: 身在宫中，心系耶城

Living in the citadel of Susa, but the heart connects with Jerusalem

经文 Scripture: Nehemiah 1

Monthly Theme: As we enter a new year, we will spend some time walking through the book of Nehemiah over the next 9 weeks. Although Nehemiah is its own book in our English Bibles, the whole book is actually Ezra-Nehemiah together. So as we approach Nehemiah, we have to keep in mind that we are coming into the story 3/4th of the way through. If we go back to the beginning of the story in Ezra, we are told that God moved King Cyrus' heart to let the Israelites return to their land to fulfill the prophecy spoken by Jeremiah (Ezra 1). The hope that exile will not be forever should trigger the reader to pick up all the other prophetic hopes of return, including hope for the Messianic King, God's presence in the Temple, and God's Kingdom to be established. We must keep these hopes in mind as we read to the story to properly understand both the ups and downs. Most characters in the Biblical narrative, including Nehemiah, are deeply flawed individuals who have a mix of successes and failures - just like you and me. And this mix of success and failure we will keep confronting as we move through the story of Nehemiah. Let's see what we can learn from Nehemiah's story.

一月 January: 尼希米記 Nehemiah

January 2nd – 尼希米記: 尼希米的祈禱 The Prayer (尼希米記一章 Nehemiah 1)

January 9th - 尼希米記: 城牆工程 The Project (尼希米記二至三章 Nehemiah 2-3)

January 16th - 尼希米記: 敵黨擾阻 The Opposition (尼希米記四章 Nehemiah 4)

January 23rd – 尼希米記: 民生貧苦 The Poor (尼希米記五章 Nehemiah 5)

January 30th - 尼希米記: 敵黨陰謀 The Adversary (尼希米記六章 Nehemiah 6)

Resources:

[Sermon Video](#)

[Sermon Slides](#)

[Overview: Ezra-Nehemiah \(Bible Project\)](#) [English]

[Overview: Ezra-Nehemiah \(Bible Project\)](#) [Mandarin]

Discussion Questions (Pastor William R. Horne / Pastor Linghui Peter Tian):

- (1) Read Nehemiah 1 together. What observations do you make, and what stands out to you? How would you summarize the passage?
- (2) 透过1：6；1；11节的经文，尼希米有哪些身份？联想到今天我们在美国的生活，在哪些身份上你与尼希米认同？Through the verses of 1:6; 1; 11, what identity did Nehemiah have? Reminiscent of our life in the United States today, in what identities do you identify with Nehemiah?
- (3) 生活在皇宫的尼希米，他每天挂心的是什么？这对我们有什么启发？Nehemiah, who lives in the palace, what does he worry about every day? What does this enlighten us?

- (4) 思考当下的信仰生活，在哪一方面（内心、家庭、婚姻、人际关系等等）失去了属灵城墙的保护，在2022年，你将做出如何的改变？Thinking about the current faith life, in which aspect (inner heart, family, marriage, interpersonal relationship, etc.) the protection of the spiritual wall has been lost, how will you change in 2022?
- (5) 透过尼1章，尼希米在哪些方面给我们树立了美好的榜样，从中你学到了什么？Through Nehemiah 1, in what ways did Nehemiah set us a good example, and what have you learned from it?

Important Notes (Pastor William R. Horne):

Notes on Q1: As you read through this chapter, make sure you recall the context from both the [Monthly Theme](#) section and the [Bible Project video](#). Context is key to understanding the movements of the story.

Notes on Q2: Nehemiah's identity is an exile in Babylon whose heart was back in Jerusalem. We, too, as the people of God, live as a people "in exile" in this world as members of the Kingdom of God. As we have spoken about before, the Babylonian Exile event for Israel becomes a Biblical image used to describe the state of humanity as a whole. Similarly, the notion of Babylon in the Bible becomes a descriptor for all oppressive empires throughout history (this is how the book of Daniel and Revelation use the image). The nations become like beasts when they exalt their power and economic security as a false god and then demand allegiance (this has happened throughout history and continues to happen). We, however, must live with our allegiance to the one true King - Jesus the Christ. The prophet Jeremiah tells us that living as Kingdom exiles in this world calls us not violently to revolt against "Babylon-like" nations nor give in to their ideals. We are to instead "seek the cities welfare" while living as a witness and by the ethics of the Kingdom of God (Jeremiah 29). This is Nehemiah's position as an Israelite exile in Babylon. (Similarly, many in our church body may experience this tension of "exile" at a greater capacity within the immigrant experience - holding pieces of home in China and the United States. This immigrant experience should equip our congregation well to embrace the identity of "Kingdom exiles" who are "in this world, but not of it" as the Apostle Paul writes.)

Notes on Q4&5: As we examine Nehemiah 1, he sets out a helpful pattern for change. Notice the process that Nehemiah goes through:

- (1) First, Nehemiah mourns and laments the ways in which God (YHWH) has not been honored (seen in the destruction of Jerusalem) and the ways in which God's people (Nehemiah included) have acted in ways against God's purposes (sin, evil, iniquity).
- (2) Second, Nehemiah fasts and prays before God concerning these things. He laments that things are not right is brought before God, trusting God as the only one who can fix this mess.
- (3) Third, out of lament, fasting, and prayer, Nehemiah confessed his sin (and his communities sin), repenting (turning away from) his evil actions.
- (4) Fourth, out of this confession and repentance, Nehemiah "returns to God" and is spurred on towards action in chapter 2. God's grace and favor empower Nehemiah for change

and grant him the grace he needs before Artaxerxes to return to Jerusalem to make things right.

Change cannot happen without proper lament, prayer, and repentance, allowing God's Spirit to empower us for transformation in our lives.