

“Broken”

Nehemiah 1:1-4

The words of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah:

In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem.

They said to me, “Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire.”

When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.

# The Setting

- Mid-November to Mid-December
- During the 20<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of King Artaxerxes
- At the King's winter palace, 150 miles north of the Persian Gulf, modern-day Iran
- Cyrus, Nebuchadnezzar, and Hammurabi also reigned here at one time

# About Nehemiah

- A Jew, born in Persia, in touch with his roots
- He's never been to Jerusalem
- He's a very important official in the King's service
- Cupbearer was a position of high trust
- Especially true in Nehemiah's case, as they were racially different

# Cupbearer

- They tasted whatever the King was to eat or drink (and not for taste's sake!)
- History tells us that these "officials" were often trusted more than member of the King's own family
- He was loyal, faithful, and always on duty
- They were diplomats, having the finest manners, and great language skills

# How did Nehemiah get to this place?

- He's 1,000 miles from the home of his ancestors, he loves God and His Word.
- About 80 years before this, Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians
- Daniel and his companions...
- Then Babylon fell to the Persians, which worked out better for the captives.

# How did Nehemiah get to this place?

- The Jews were allowed by the Persians to maintain the history of their ancestors, and they knew of the greatness of Jerusalem
- From “Ezra” we know of Zerubbabel, who went back to build the temple in Jerusalem
- Then there was a Jewish girl named Esther
- Then Ezra, a contemporary of Nehemiah goes back to rebuild Jerusalem

# None of us live in a historical vacuum!

- It was true of Nehemiah
- It is true of the history of Christianity here in Japan and Hiroshima
- The church didn't begin with us and it won't end with us!



# Josephus' account of Chapter 1:1-4

- Nehemiah was in the Persian palace when he overheard the Hebrew language being spoken
- It was his relative Hanani who with others had just returned from Jerusalem
- Nehemiah finds out that his image of Jerusalem and what the reality is is shocking to him
- A divine interruption...

# Divine Interruptions

- Scripture is filled with times when God moves in a person's life and it causes a 180-degree change.
  - Moses and the burning bush
  - David being anointed king
  - Peter, Andrew, James, and John
  - Matthew and Simon the Zealot
  - Saul/Paul, Paul on a missionary journey
- My call to ministry

Nehemiah gets the bad news  
that Jerusalem is a mess.  
The walls are down, the gates  
are burned.

When Nehemiah hears the news of the desperate condition of Jerusalem, it breaks his heart.

He went into mourning for  
**FOUR MONTHS.**

# Nehemiah is BROKEN by the news

- Anger
- Frustration
- Sadness
- He goes to God in prayer
- And he came out with a plan for change

Nehemiah's vision was  
birthed in brokenness.

# Nehemiah responded with PASSION (vs. 4)

- He sat down
- He cried
- He mourned
- He fasted
- He prayed

King David wrote  
in psalm 30,  
“...weeping may remain  
for a night, but rejoicing  
comes in the morning.”



# How will we respond to the spiritual challenges?

- God breaks things before He uses them.
- Are we willing to have our hearts broken over:
  - The spiritual condition of your home country? Or even of churches there?
  - The spiritual condition of Japan?
  - The spiritual condition of those around you at work, or in your own home?

“God, break my heart for  
the things that break your  
heart.”