

WEEK THIRTY-NINE INTRODUCTION

This week is our last full week in the Old Testament. These readings teach much, but a consistent theme in these late stages of the Old Testament is God's sovereign providence. He consistently steers the flow of history toward His good ends revealed in His promises. Despite all that God's people have done, He continues being Himself, the faithful, merciful, covenant-keeping God. God's consistency brings words and works of comfort and blessing. He is immutable, meaning He does not change. God is not arbitrary or capricious. He does not say one thing and do another. He remains the same. As the Psalmist proclaims in Psalm 102:27 of God, *But You are the same, and Your years will not come to an end.*

KEY SCRIPTURE

Nevertheless, in Your great compassion You did not make an end of them or forsake them, for You are a gracious and compassionate God.

—Nehemiah 9:31 NASB95

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How does the theme of “reversal” appear in the story of Esther? How does this theme point ahead to the greater victory of God in Jesus Christ?

What feast is established in Esther 9:20-28? What is it called *Purim*? Read Proverbs 16:33. What application can you draw about God's work in the world?

Who is the *messenger* of Malachi 3:1? Who is the One who *will suddenly come to His temple*? What will He do on that day?

What is God's indictment and promise in Malachi 3:8-12?

How do Ezra and his group exercise faith in Ezra 8:21-23? How must you exercise faith today?

In Nehemiah 1, what news so upsets Nehemiah? How does he respond? How does Nehemiah follow prayer with action? How do your prayers lead you to action?

What does Nehemiah do in response to the fear he sees in his people in chapter 4:14? How does he rally their courage? Meditate on the courage needed in your own life. Will you find courage in the same realities as Nehemiah and his people?

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

“So I sent messengers to them, saying, ‘I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?’”

-Nehemiah 6:3 NASB95

What do you need to say *No* to in order to focus on the great work the Lord has given you in His kingdom? What is distracting you? What is draining your strength in following Jesus? What is eroding your courage and confidence? Ask the Lord and act!