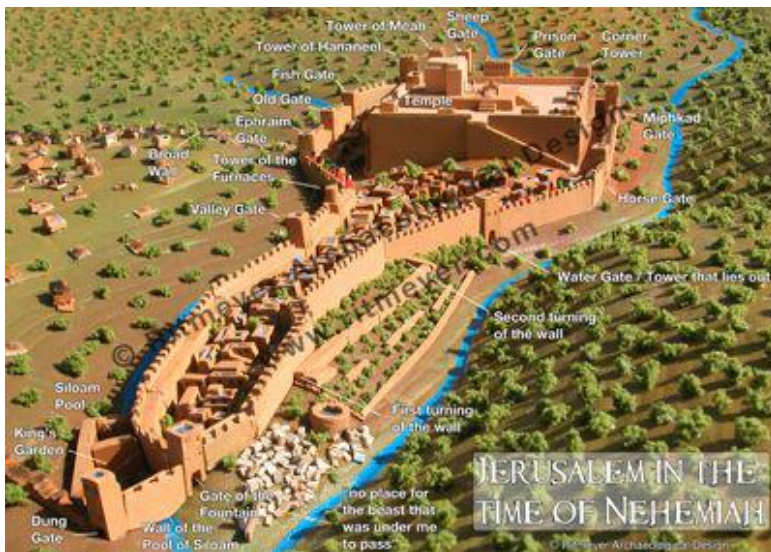


Building up What Sin Broke Down Part 1: An Exposition of Nehemiah 3, March 8, 2020

Donald Creighton said, “History is the encounter between character and circumstance.” Nehemiah, his name meaning “Deep feelings of Yahweh,” was told of the circumstance of the Jerusalem’s and the people’s “trouble and shame.” His character, deep in love for God and God’s people turned his feelings first into prayer and mourning (chapter 1), wisdom to wait for the right time (chapter 2), and then well-planned action. He led one of history’s great rebuilding projects. Nehemiah arrived as an envoy of the king. People surely wondered why he was there. He inspected broken city walls and gates by night so no one would know. After 3 days, the resurrection code, he made his purpose known. *Then I said to them, “You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision.” And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, “Let us rise up and build.” So they strengthened their hands for the good work* (2:17-18).



Nehemiah had a vision for Jerusalem. A city whose walls were up and gates were functioning. He never took his eyes off of it. The picture on the left is of the completed city. What took place was nothing short of a leadership miracle. People were despondent, in, **“great trouble and shame”** for 95 years, **“The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by**

fire” (1:3). He’d complete in 52 days what was left undone for 95 years!

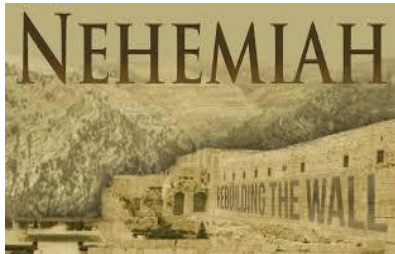
Nehemiah 3 describes work that completed 1/2 the job, described in 4:6, **“So we built the wall. And all the wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.”**

The finished wall would be approx. 2.5 miles long, 40 feet tall and 12 feet wide, including 10 gates, 4 towers, a well, and a pool. The work in chapter 3, halfway done had the width and length, at 20 feet tall! He mentioned 34 workers by name, their relatives, and volunteer groups from different parts of Israel. Even liberal scholars accept Nehemiah’s account, verified by a date (20th year of Artaxerxes), official claims from the king, not only first names but lineage a (son of...) which was like a last name, distinct places, and the archaeological record is a perfect match.



Even the opponent of the Nehemiah’s project, Sanballat the Horonite, introduced in 2:19, is in #30 of the ancient Elephantine papyri, “Moreover, all these things in a letter we sent in our name to Delaiah and Shelemiah, sons of Sanballat, governor of Samaria.”

Elephantine Papyrus #30 mentions Sanballat



Nehemiah’s personal diary and historical account of Jerusalem’s wall; undisputed historical fact. Nehemiah 3, documented journal of a real time project is also a study of leadership which used methods that inspired and motivated broken down people in a broken down city to restore their national Jewish identity, confidence, and pride to build up what their ancestor’s sin and rebellion

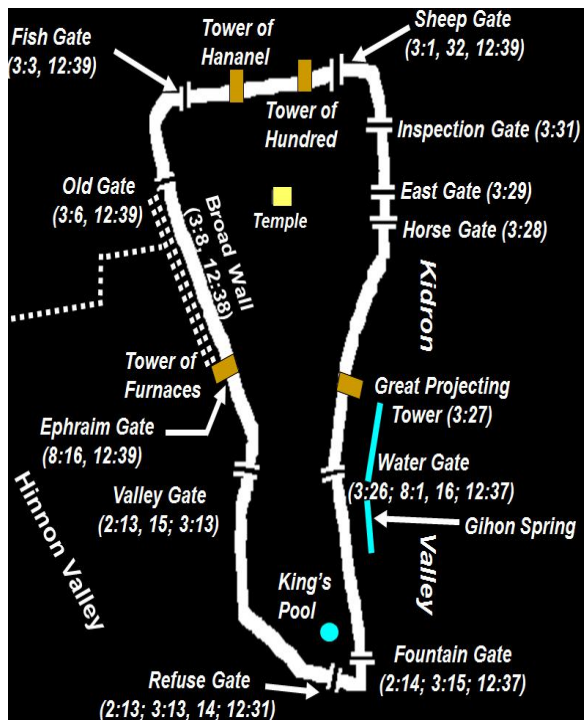
broke down. How many of us inherited family issues that made us broken people? God also has a rebuild plan for each of us!

This, part 1, will focus on the the work, part 2, Nehemiah’s leadership strategy and planning, or how to motivate broken people, 3, the prophetic and spiritual analogy of the city layout. Nehemiah went to rebuild a wall. God rebuilds what sin destroyed. The real time process of the who did what and where, is important to get. Then the application is that God is building us up, and we are part of that process to build each other up.

LET’S BUILD

When I’d get ready to start a project around the house, my grandson used to tell me, “Papa, let’s build!” Friends, brothers and sisters, we all have broken walls and boundaries, “Let’s build!”

1 . How Nehemiah and the Jews rebuilt the wall.



He did it the Jewish way, going counter clockwise. Notice the text begins with, “Rose up,” the prophetic resurrection code. Then the word, “consecrated” applies only to the Sheep Gate, for it was there the sacrifice animals came in, and it points prophetically to Jesus’ sacrifice. *Nehemiah 3:1 Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brothers the*

THE RESURRECTION CODE

3 Days*

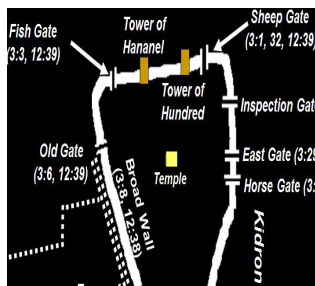
THE WORDS,
“ROSE UP”
or
“ARISE”
or
RISE

priests, and they built the Sheep Gate. They consecrated it and set its doors.

They consecrated it as far as the Tower of the Hundred, as far as the Tower of Hananel. 2 And next to him the men of Jericho built. And next to them Zaccur

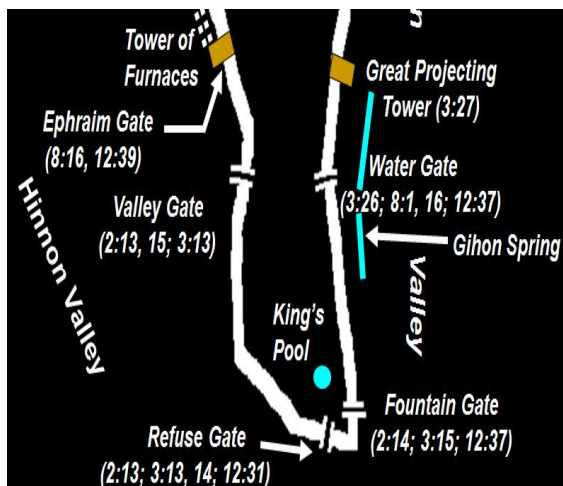
the son of Imri built. 3 The sons of Hassenaah built the Fish Gate. They laid its beams and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. 4 And next to them Meremoth the son of Uriah, son of Hakkoz repaired. And next to them Meshullam the son of Berechiah, son of Meshezabel repaired. And next to them Zadok the son of Baana repaired. 5 And next to them the Tekoites repaired, but their nobles would not stoop to serve their Lord. 6 Joiada the son of Paseah and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah repaired the Gate of Yeshanah. They laid its beams and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. 7 And next to them repaired Melatiah the Gibeonite and Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon and of Mizpah, the seat of the governor of the province Beyond the River. 8 Next to them Uzziel the son of Harhaiah, goldsmiths, repaired. Next to him Hananiah, one of the perfumers, repaired, and they restored Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall. 9 Next to them Rephaiah the son of Hur, ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, repaired.

The people built the wall from gate to gate, and towers. As they built one part of the wall, everyone would help with the next part, like a snowball effect.



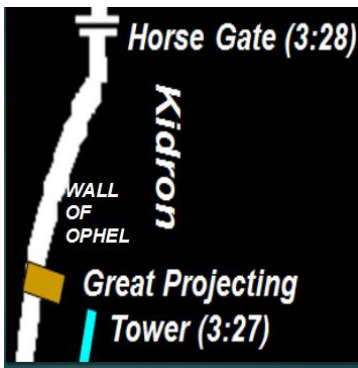
The top part, the temple area, was the most important part of the city. The Sheep gate was for bringing the sacrifices, the tower of the hundred and the tower of Hananel were for its protection. The fish gate is where fisherman brought their products in. The “Old Gate” went way back in time. The Broad Wall was a 1,500 ft. Section of the wall

10 Next to them Jedaiah the son of Harumaph repaired opposite his house. And next to him Hattush the son of Hashabneiah repaired. 11 Malchijah the son of Harim and Hasshub the son of Pahath-moab repaired another section and the Tower of the Ovens. 12 Next to him Shallum the son of Hallohesh, ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, repaired, he and his daughters. 13 Hanun and the inhabitants of Zanoah repaired the Valley Gate. They rebuilt it and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars, and repaired a thousand cubits of the wall, as far as the Dung Gate. 14 Malchijah the son of Rechab, ruler of the district of Beth-haccherem, repaired the Dung Gate. He rebuilt it and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. 15 And Shallum the son of Col-hozeh, ruler of the district of Mizpah, repaired the Fountain Gate. He rebuilt it and covered it and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. And he built the wall of the Pool of Shelah of the king's garden, as far as the stairs that go down from the city of David. 16 After him Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, ruler of half the district of Beth-zur, repaired to a point opposite the tombs of David, as far as the artificial pool, and as far as the house of the mighty men.



The Tower of the Ovens, or Furnaces overlooked the bakeries. When the bakeries were functioning the smell of fresh bread must have been a pleasant stomach growling experience! The Valley gate opened to the valley on the west. Below that was the Pool of Siloam (also in John 9:7; where Jesus healed the man born blind), once a secret water source from a tunnel (Psalm 46) to provide water in a

siege (2 Kings 18:17). The spiritual lesson is that we need the Spirit, to drink from Jesus, (John 7:37) when we're in troubled times. The Dung or Refuse Gate was the garbage dump, also for carcasses and sewage. A slow fire was always simmering, keeping the stench under control. The carcasses and often bodies of people who were despised criminals or had no family, money, or tombs were disposed of there. Because of the carcasses and bodies maggots feasted. Jesus referred to that when He said, **“where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched”** (Mark 9:48). The Fountain Gate and Watergate (that's where the famous Watergate Hotel got its name) were protected by 2 towers, part of the water system with the pool of Siloam, all fed from the Gihon Spring. This was the city water works and left unprotected and unwalled, would make the city vulnerable to enemies who could pollute the waters or cut them off.



17 After him the Levites repaired: Rehum the son of Bani. Next to him Hashabiah, ruler of half the district of Keilah, repaired for his district. 18 After him their brothers repaired: Bavvai the son of Henadad, ruler of half the district of Keilah. 19 Next to him Ezer the son of Jeshua, ruler of Mizpah, repaired another section opposite the ascent to the armory at the buttress. 20 After him Baruch the son of Zabbai repaired another section from the buttress to the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest. 21 After him Meremoth the son of Uriah, son of Hakkoz repaired another section from the door of the

house of Eliashib to the end of the house of Eliashib. 22 After him the priests, the men of the surrounding area, repaired. 23 After them Benjamin and Hasshub repaired opposite their house. After them Azariah the son of Maaseiah, son of Ananiah repaired beside his own house. 24 After him Binnui the son of Henadad repaired another section, from the house of Azariah to the buttress 25 and to the corner. Palal the son of Uzai repaired opposite the buttress and the tower projecting from the upper house of the king at the court of the guard. After him Pedaiah the son of Parosh 26 and the temple servants living on Ophel repaired to a point opposite the Water Gate on the east and the projecting tower.

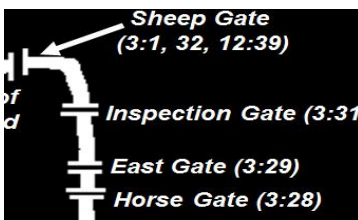
They built to the wall of Ophel, (it means swelling, because it was on a wide earthen mound like it was swelled up. Their marker was the great projecting tower. The systematic, motivated and organized hard work must have amazed any outsiders as they'd seen nothing for 95 years. Nehemiah, though a high official whose own situation was a very good one had something inside of him that made the situation of his own people more important than his own comfort. When he heard, before he'd seen it of their distress he had a sorrow that wouldn't be consoled. Because he knew God, he had the moment where he caught the burden of the Lord, feeling the Lord's great sorrow for Jerusalem. The Lord Jesus felt such agony over the city, weeping for it also, **“And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it”** (Luke 19:41). Nehemiah turned his sorrow into prayer, but refused to force himself to action until God made it clear it was time. After 4 months, the king asked what was his trouble, he told the king about the wall, and the king gave him leave and asked, **“when will you return?”** (2:6). When he arrived, after assessing the site by night he developed a clear, simple, and effective action plan to rebuild the wall counterclockwise, gate by gate, tower by tower to the last, The Great

Projecting Tower, they were able to move to finish where they started at the Sheep Gate. Building material wasn't scarce. They re-used old stones that were thrown down and



when stone was needed, the terrain was very rocky. They built the outside of the wall with larger, squarer stones and filled between them with rubble. The strategic use of old stones and fashioning new ones was part of the job. Archaeologists in Jerusalem have uncovered much of what hasn't been changed because of later additions

A section of Nehemiah's wall and modifications to Nehemiah's wall. Israeli archaeologist Eilat Mazar did the breakthrough excavation on Nehemiah's wall in 2005. She became known in 1997 when she identified David's palace.



27 After him the Tekoites repaired another section opposite the great projecting tower as far as the wall of Ophel. 28 Above the Horse Gate the priests repaired, each one opposite his own house. 29 After them Zadok the son of Immer repaired opposite his own house. After him Shemaiah the son of Shecaniah, the keeper of the East Gate, repaired. 30 After him Hananiah the son of

Shelemiah and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph repaired another section. After him Meshullam the son of Berechiah repaired opposite his chamber. 31 After him Malchijah, one of the goldsmiths, repaired as far as the house of the temple servants and of the merchants, opposite the Muster Gate, and to the upper chamber of the corner. 32 And between the upper chamber of the corner and the Sheep Gate the goldsmiths and the merchants repaired.

The East Gate and the inspection gate were the last 2 before returning to the Sheep Gate (v.27-32). Because of motivated people working together in an organized fashion, snowballing upon their labor as it progressed, Jerusalem had become protected by a half wall, 20 ft. tall all the way around!

KEY WORDS THAT ALSO REVEALS HOW JESUS RESTORES BROKEN BOUNDARIES

Looking at the "doing words" in chapter 3 there are, **"built"** 5x, **"rebuilt"** 3x, **"repaired"** 32x, and **"restored"** 1x. Other repeated phrases are "after him/them" and "next to him/them." Great togetherness in the work.



A seminary colleague named Jean told the story of her son, Stephen. When he was 3 years old they needed to board a plane. At that time, (1960's) the concourse didn't come up to the plane, passengers had to walk onto the tarmac and go up a mobile staircase into the plane.

When Stephen saw the scary staircase he said, "Mommy I can't!" He repeated it several times. She kept holding his hand and walked with him up the stairs. When they made it into the plane, he said, "Mommy

I can't! But together I can!" They did one part and snowballed to the other, speeding it up. "No one was working alone. The volunteers came from Jericho, Gibeon, Mizpah, Zamah, Beth-Haccherem, Beth Zur, and Keilah. Also, some served because where they worked was the place they lived, starting with the priests, Rephaiah and Shallum, who

each ruled 1/2 *“the district of Jerusalem,”* Jedaiah (v.10), *“opposite his house,”* also Benjamin, Hashub, Azariah, the Tekoites, but sadly, *“their nobles would not stoop to serve,”* (it would be interesting to know if their agenda was pride or a compromise with enemies), and Meshullam.

Those who worked where they lived, they wanted their space covered! This is a secret to building others up from brokenness. When a person works on his or her own brokenness, they help everyone by fixing the boundary wall in their lives where the enemy can enter and affect everyone. Those who know they need help and do what helps them help everyone. But there also has to be a mix of outside people who come contribute.

How the Lord builds up His church, that’s us!

The constant work is a picture of what God does for our brokenness. He builds up, rebuilds, repairs, and restores. He starts with Jesus (the Sheep Gate) till the completion at the Inspection Gate. That completed work compares to Philippians 1:6, *“He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ”*

THE RIGHT TOOLS

These 7 NT Nehemiah factors serve as biblical building tools. *“Building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying...”* (Jude 1:20). *“The work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ”* (Ephesians 4:12). *“Love builds up”* (1 Corinthians 8:1), *“Authority, which the Lord gave me for building you up”* (2 Corinthians 10:8, 13:10), *“We pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another”* (Romans 14:19). *“Let all things be done for building up”* (1 Corinthians 14:26). *“Built up in Him”* (Colossians 2:7). Effective tools for building up broken lives are prayer, ministry, love, authority in Christ, peace, all things good and godly, and the Lord Jesus Himself build up others and ourselves.



Conclusion to Part 1



There are 3 types of people- Do nothing people, Wreckers, and Builders when it comes to dealing with human brokenness. There are those who do nothing for themselves nor for others like the Israelites who lived in a broken city for 95 years, and all they got was *“trouble and shame.”* Then there are wreckers. They cause brokenness. Just as hurt people hurt people, broken people break people. Then there are builders, who work on their own brokenness and wisely help others whose boundaries of life were demolished. Where do you fit? This anonymous poem focuses on the wreckers and the builders.

As I watched them tear a building down/A gang of men in a busy town/With a ho-heave-ho, and a gusto yell/They swung a beam and the side wall fell/I asked the foreman, "Are these men skilled,/And the men you'd hire if you wanted to build?"/He gave a laugh and said, "No, indeed,/Just common labor is all I need."/I can easily wreck in a day or two,/What builders have taken years to do."/And I thought to myself, as I went my way/Which of these roles have I tried to play?/Am I a builder who works with care,/Measuring life by rule and square?/Am I shaping my work to a well-made plan/Patiently doing the best I can?/Or am I a wrecker who walks to town/Content with the

labor of tearing down?/"O Lord let my life and my labors be/That which will build for eternity!"

For those who've joined in the reconstruction project, ***"Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit"***



Colossians 1:17 says that in Him, speaking of Jesus, all things hold together. In Jesus Christ, there is no more destructive breaking down with bad intentions. He holds us together. But if He does have to do some tearing down, it is only to rebuild with something better and more durable.



Jesus was also broken for us who have been broken like the Jerusalem wall, as a victim or at times we've broken others down. ***"Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you"*** (1 Corinthians 11:23-24). Jesus broke the bread to show how His body would be broken open, from which His blood spilled. The brokenness that spilled his blood guaranteed forgiveness and *the ability to forgive*. Being forgiven and forgiving begins the rebuilding process in our broken lives. His resurrection un-broke all of His brokenness and does so for those who come to Him. To believe in Jesus Christ is the beginning. But continued believing continues the rebuilding of our broken boundary walls. Nehemiah was a 5th century broken down wall re-builder. But Jesus the once broken master re-builder rebuilds even the most broken down people for the present and for all of eternity.