



The Spiritual Message in Nehemiah 3 Part 1, For March 22, 2020

From Nehemiah chapter 3, the layout of Jerusalem's gates and towers is a picture of the spiritual journey of a follower of Jesus the Messiah. To list the spiritual points of the gates, walls, and towers of Nehemiah's project I will borrow much from my mother's study of Nehemiah from years ago. My mom did a great work of spiritual insight from the names of the 10 gates of Jerusalem's walls. This message will look to the gates, towers, named walls, and waters to receive a deep spiritual insight from Nehemiah's Jerusalem, the Old City of David.

The Real Time Accomplishment to Build the Wall to 1/2 Height

But first of all, Nehemiah chapter 3 is a real-time description of how citizens and outside volunteers rebuilt Jerusalem's wall and gates. It follows a clear *who, what, where, when, why, and how* pattern that is an indicator: this really happened.

The names and even lineage of the leaders of the working groups answers the **"WHO?"** question.

The **"WHAT?"** question addressed the situation of the city, with walls broken down and gates burned by fire. It is also in the "doing words" that appear 41 times; **"built"** 5x, **"rebuilt"** 3x, **"repaired"** 32x, and **"restored"** 1x.

"WHERE?" For Nehemiah it was from out of Susa, capital of Persia, to Jerusalem. Volunteers came from Jericho, Gibeon, Mizpah, Zama, Beth-Haccherem, Beth Zur, and Keilah. Those from Jerusalem worked at the place on the wall where they lived, **"opposite his house,"** starting with the priests, then Rephaiah and Shallum, each ruled 1/2 **"the district of Jerusalem."**

"WHEN?" beginning in the month of Nisan, Nehemiah received the emotional burden for the city, 4 months later, Chisleu, the king asked why he was depressed. Nehemiah told his troubles, the king sent him off on an almost 3 month journey of 764.5 miles. After arriving, he spent "3 days" (a resurrection prophetic sign post) observing the city walls by night. The night excursions were to hide his purposes until it was time to make it public. After 3 days, the people came to life and united to rebuild the wall completely in what would be 52 days. Chapter 3 of Nehemiah recounts how the workers accomplished building the wall all the way around, the proper width, to half its height.

"WHY?" Nehemiah went because he was moved by deep feelings of sorrow and grief because according to his brother Hanani, the people were in great trouble and shame. The people lacked the motivation to rebuild their walls and gates. Those gates and towers were there long before Nehemiah's time, many going back to King David and the old gate maybe even before he conquered Jerusalem.

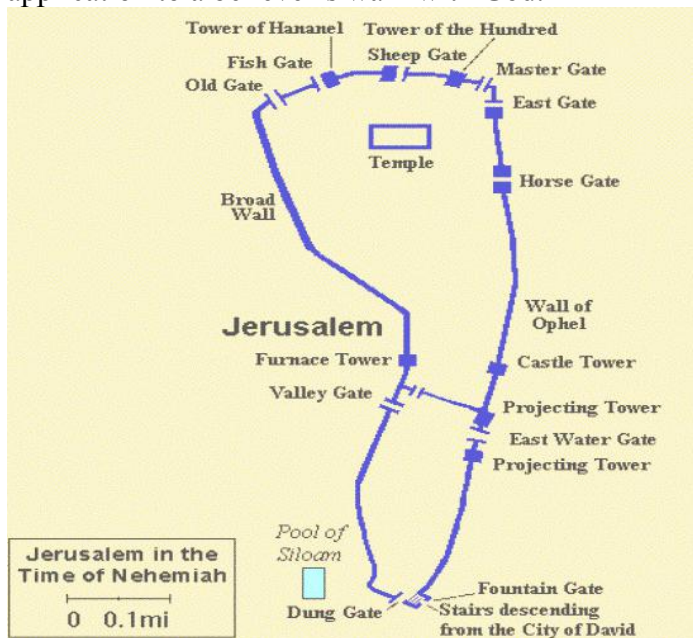
Another answer to **"WHY?"** is because God has a special place in his heart for Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the capital for Jewish people since c.1010 BC. King David captured the City from the Jebusites, the part known today as *Old City Jerusalem*—where Nehemiah rebuilt, was destroyed twice, besieged 23 times, attacked 52 times, captured and recaptured 44 times. Jesus called it "The City of the Great King" (Matthew 5:35). God loves it, does things "for the sake of Zion" (Isaiah 62:1). Zion is the temple mount in Jerusalem. God said, "I have chosen Jerusalem that my name might be there" (2 Chronicles 6:6) and "My eyes and heart will be there at all times" (2 Chronicles 7:16).

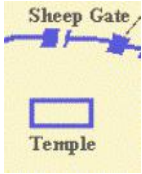
So it's more than reasonable to accept that the layout of the Old City walls, gates, and towers, that Nehemiah rebuilt have their origins in God's sovereign design from deep in His heart with a spiritual meaning and message for all of God's people, Jew and Gentile. A casual observer may think that God forgot Jerusalem and Nehemiah's prayer woke Him up; that God responded to Nehemiah. But it's the contrary. Even his father's name, *Hacaliah*, means, "Yahweh enlightens." God enlightened his father to name his son after what would guide him: *Nacham-Yah*, in Hebrew, in English, Nehemiah, meaning "deep feelings of Yahweh." God placed those feelings in Nehemiah on the report of Jerusalem's 95 years of misery and moved the emperor and the people to rebuild the city's brokenness. When a person prays to God in deep agony, compassion, and burden, it's usually because God put it there and wants his praying servant to share His heart.

The "**How?**" is in the text. The people came to unity. Their job didn't demand much skill but much will. They worked in a counterclockwise direction. They put rocks in place and set up gates with wood provided by the king. The prophetic meaning is already clear. People enter the place where God's temple is through gates. The gates are of wood, a picture of the cross. The walls are of stone, 1 Corinthians 10:4, "...*the rock was Christ.*" Entry through the cross, protection and boundaries in a relationship with Christ. **To come to God requires little skill, but the will to come to God in God's way, through the cross and to live for Jesus the rock of ages surrounding our existence.**

Take the Journey

Let's go on a counterclockwise journey of the city walls, gates, and towers that Nehemiah came to restore to see the message of the gospel and the Christian life embedded in the design of the Old City, the site of the temple. Note that the meanings in the 10 gates seem to have a clear and divine allegory to the gospel and Christian life. The meanings in the towers, walls, and water have some assumed meanings. Some are very strong like the *Hananel*, or "grace of God" tower and others lean toward a spiritual application to a believer's walk with God.





Sheep Gate-- where animals entered for temple sacrifice: It represents accepting Christ as our Savior for sin.

My mom said, "Sacrificial animals such as lambs, goats, bulls, and birds were brought in through this gate. Sacrifices had to be spotless, perfect animals; after they were slaughtered, their blood was sprinkled on the altar.

For the Sin offering, blood was also sprinkled in front of the veil in the Sanctuary. **This gate represents Jesus, the sacrificial Lamb of God.** God loved us so much that, to save us from eternal woe, he ransomed us from our sin with the precious blood of Christ, who was sacrificed as the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. God also raised Jesus our Christ from the dead and gave Him glory so that our faith and hope can be placed in God. Jesus is the only one who could fulfill the requirements of God as a sin sacrifice because He himself was without sin. When we embrace the fact that Jesus has cleansed us from our sin, we can confidently approach God the Father. Jesus is the First and the Last.

Everything starts with Jesus." References to this spiritual meaning are John 1:29, where

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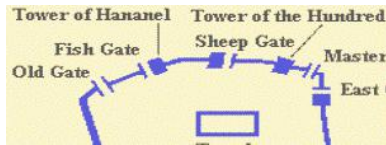


named, "The Lamb of God," 10:7-9 where Jesus claims, "I am the door of the sheep," and "if anyone enters by me he will be saved." Corinthians 5:7, 1 Peter 2:24 and 14 times in Revelation called "The Lamb."

Sheep Gate is known as the Lion's Gate and entrance to the Arab Quarter near

Today, the
is the

Bethesda. <http://tentstakeministries.net/2016/10/the-gates-and-walls-of-nehemiah/>



Meah Tower or, Tower of 100: A high tower next to the Sheep Gate. The Hananel Tower: Literally, "Grace of God Tower," also next to the Sheep Gate.

Next to this gate was the "Meah Tower" or "Tower of 100, most likely because it was 100 cubits high (150 ft. Or about 13 stories). *It could have* a spiritual application. Those who come to Christ are now seated on high, in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6). The next tower is *Hananel*, which means, *chanan--* grace, *El--* of God. This is unmistakable. To come to Christ the Lamb, the Door, one comes by God's grace. "For by grace you have been saved, through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God. Not a result of works, that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Fish Gate-- where fishermen brought their fish to sell: It represents becoming fishers of men; evangelism.

My mom wrote, "Fisherman brought their catch of fish through this gate to be sold. After we have experienced the GRACE of God (*Hananel*) and have been turned from darkness to light, we are full of saving faith, and we share the Good News about Jesus: He saved us from living in the darkness under the power of Satan (where we were doomed for eternal judgment and suffering), to the power of God (where we receive forgiveness for sins, eternal life in the Kingdom of God, and a more peaceful life here on earth). As we follow Jesus, we can become fishers of men." Jesus said, "Follow Me and I

will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19) to fishermen (Peter, Andrew, James, John) who became his first followers. After coming to Him, it’s natural to lead others to Jesus.

Jeshanah or Old Gate-- the name means “Old”: it could have a three meanings. 1) That which is of old, and good. 2) The nearby town of Jeshanah once belonged to the sinful northern kingdom of Israel but was restored to Judah (2 Chronicles 13:19) which was faithful to Yahweh, 3) However, it also could refer to the need of the believer to do away with the old creation (old ways of living in sin) and replace with the new life in Jesus.

Three times in Daniel 7:9, 13, and 22, God is, “The Ancient of Days.” Some have guessed that the gate was the old entrance to the more ancient “Salem” where Melchizedek was king (Genesis 14:18). When Israel was ready to be judged, God told them to go back to the old way of faithfulness, “Thus says the LORD: “Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your soul” (Jeremiah 6:16). Then “Old” connects to the coming of Messiah, “But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth-- *is from of old, from ancient days*” (Micah 5:2). In these sentiments, the Old Gate may point toward God’s ancient predetermined righteousness where His unchanging nature is steady in the midst of change. Even the newness and transformation of the converted person is a return to the original and ancient way of righteousness. Those who are saved have been predestined from before the foundation of the world, the cross was from before the foundation of the world, mentioned in Matthew 13:35, 25:34, Ephesians 1:4, Hebrews 9:26, and Revelation 13:8, and 17:8. The Old Gate may be pointing us in that direction as well as the next two possibilities to apply it to the life of the believer.

My mom wrote, “This gate was also called the Jeshanah Gate. Jeshanah was a town that once belonged to Israel and was taken over by Judah. The symbolism of this gate may be linked to the fact that the LORD chose the tribe of Judah to shepherd Israel.

Alternatively, it could also be a reference to the Old Covenant, under which Israel was subject to the 10 Commandments rather than the New Covenant with Jesus. This gate may represent Jesus, who was born in Bethlehem in the Land of Judah and was also called the LION OF THE TRIBE OF JUDAH (Revelation 5:5). The Old Covenant had faults, but the Lord established a new covenant through Jesus, our High Priest (Hebrews 8:6-8). Jesus mediates the New Covenant, which was enacted on better promises. Since Jesus ransomed us from our sins, and we have been turned from darkness to light, we are to walk as the NEW CREATION, leaving the old, familiar ways of worldly living behind (2 Corinthians 5:17). God has given us His Holy Spirit to enable us to identify the things that keep us tied to this world (living with wrong thinking, self-defensiveness, and



dwelling on our hurts), and then to give all our concerns to Him in prayer. When we are serious about leaving our worldly ways behind and offering our bodies to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, we demonstrate it by going through the ritual of water baptism, which signifies that our old way of life is buried and that we have been raised in our newness of life with Christ.”

The Old Gate was known as the *Sha'ar Yahshana* meaning 'ancient entrance/pathway.' This 'ancient' gate was located on the north side of Jerusalem and may have been what is known today as the Damascus Gate. The Damascus Gate leads out to the Nablus Road and, in ancient days, led directly to Damascus, Syria <http://tentstakeministries.net/2016/10/the-gates-and-walls-of-nehemiah/>

Conclusion for This Week

So we will close for this week, and continue our journey next week around the walls of Jerusalem. The journey showed us from the Sheep Gate that everything starts with the Lamb of God, Jesus. The tower of 100 takes us to be seated in heaven with the Lord though we are physically upon earth. The Hananel tower reminds us that we're saved by grace, meaning God cares about us, not because we're good. The Fish Gate is a picture of helping others to come to Christ, being fishers of men instead of fisher-men! The Old Gate, Jeshanah, reminds us that God is our Ancient of Days, showing us the ancient and holy ways. He calls us to leave our old life behind and follow Jesus. He points to a place that was in the midst of a rebellious nation and was captured for God and rescued from destruction. Like Jerusalem with broken boundaries, the heart of God is longing to restore what was broken down, and build up what seemed impossible to restore!