

The Spiritual Message in Nehemiah 3 Part 2, For March 29, 2020

The Spiritual Secrets of the Broad Wall

We face a time together where we are asked to do our part- wash our hands, keep the distance, our professionals search for a cure, build medical facilities, but if God isn't with us even that wouldn't be enough. We need Jesus.

The spiritual secrets of Nehemiah 3 are necessary for us to get, because God set up His city in such a way that the very names of the gates, walls, and towers are spiritual lessons to be understood after Jesus' death and resurrection. *Let's be really clear. The first 7 chapters of Nehemiah are about restoring what is broken and repairing boundaries that shouldn't be crossed.* It also makes it very clear that God is about rebuilding brokenness. This is also a life principle regarding our souls. C'mon let's admit it... we're all in some form of brokenness. For some of us, it starts in our body. Stuff doesn't work anymore. But for all of us, we have our walls of soul and spirit that still need rebuilding. This book of Nehemiah, especially chapters 1-7 is a physical parable with spiritual secrets of how God rebuilds our brokenness. To rebuild the wall puts the city back in place and teaches its amazing lessons!

Nehemiah Chapter 3 is a journal of an amazing feat. Nehemiah led Jews to rebuild Jerusalem's walls gates, and towers. **Today we'll just focus on one wall, the Broad Wall.** The lesson of the Broad Wall is for us in this time of a threat from a virus, but also, 1) reminds us how God was there for us in a crisis (like now) warns us that after God gives deliverance not to return to living for the flesh, even backsliding, but to keep trusting Jesus. But if we do or have backslid, we need to let God rebuild us. When we put the Lord to the side, or abandon Him, there will be destruction. That happened to the wall of Jerusalem. God gave great deliverance from Assyria, in a real threat, something like this virus, except it was a real army. When God used their wall to keep Assyria out and then He miraculously destroyed their army, Jerusalem relaxed in a bad way and pursued idols, gross immorality, sacrificing children, oppressing the poor, crime without restraint, especially upon the weak, human trafficking, and unrestrained violence. God had enough and sent Babylon. They destroyed the wall, but Nehemiah came, 95 years after Israel returned to rebuild the walls that were left in unattended brokenness. It wasn't right to be that way. *You and I have lots of unattended brokenness also, don't we?* This is about restoring what was broken. That's what God does, and wants to do for you and I. **Let's be restored!**

When Nehemiah's brother *Hanani* told him about the walls of the city, Nehemiah received, "*The burden of the Lord*" and felt the deep agony of God for the brokenness of the city. He could do nothing about it but pray and fast. 4 months past. God gave the burden, but also set a time. As the *cup bearer* for King Artaxerxes he had to maintain a steady demeanor, but his pain got the best of him and the king noticed he was sad and asked him why. He spoke of the walls, Artaxerxes gave him all he needed, time off, money, and supplies. He *arrived to Jerusalem* and made nighttime secret rounds of the city wall, confirmed what he'd heard from his brother about its brokenness. After 3 days and nights (pointing to the resurrection) he told the city why he was there and they "rose up" (again resurrection language) and began to work on the wall.

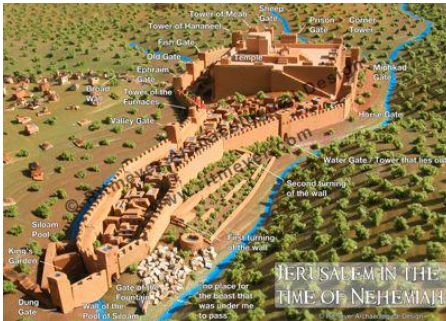
The wall rebuild project shows us about God. Today, the Holy Spirit tells the Father and Son about the brokenness in God's church. He feels deep sadness at the brokenness

of His people. He still does. *He wants to rebuild us and raises up people to be re-builders.*

Walls are boundaries that keep out what shouldn't be in and keep in what shouldn't be out. *Gates* are a way for who and what comes in to be vetted. When *a virus* destroys a body it's because it penetrated the cell walls. *Traumas, sin, bad choices, believing lies, and often abuse and addiction* penetrate the soul walls and break down emotional, spiritual, and physical boundary walls in our lives. How is your soul? Any brokenness to restore? Yesssssss... I know I have brokenness. The *invasions and occupations of our souls have created distress and pain from our brokenness* just as the coronavirus has caused sickness and death for over 1,000 Americans. Nehemiah was a repairer, re-builder, and restorer of the Jerusalem wall, our doctors, industries, leaders, and each and every one of us repair, re-build, and restore what this virus has done and is doing, but *Jesus is a repairer, re-builder, and restorer of the broken soul.*

Nehemiah did his rebuilding the Jewish way, going counter clockwise. Jews write from right to left, not like we do, left to right. We use clockwise to tighten bolts, play

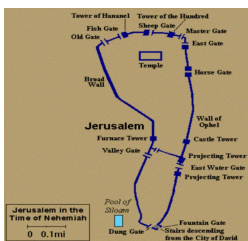
board games, etc. Jews go the opposite direction. But we need to *look at the vision* Nehemiah had for the return of the beautiful city. Nehemiah, the volunteers, and those who lived in Jerusalem were rebuilding. From Nehemiah chapter 3, the layout of Jerusalem's gates and towers is a picture of the spiritual journey of a follower of Jesus the Messiah. *Long before Nehemiah*, long before Jerusalem was conquered and destroyed by Babylonia, the gates, towers, walls, and waters around the wall had their names. Jerusalem, the Hebrew capital since 1010



Nehemiah's Vision for Broken Down Jerusalem BC. King David captured it, *Old City Jerusalem*— where Nehemiah rebuilt; *as of today*, it's been destroyed twice, besieged 23 times, attacked 52 times, captured and recaptured 44 times.

God Loves Jerusalem with a Special Affection.

God loves it, does things ***“for the sake of Zion”*** (Isaiah 62:1), a nickname for Jerusalem.



Jesus called it ***“The City of the Great King”*** (Matthew 5:35). 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). God loves Jerusalem, but *He also loves you and me with the same passion. Jerusalem abandoned God and was broken down. But God wants to rebuild, as He does with you and I.* Nothing could tell me other than the layout

of the walls, gates, and towers have their origins in God's heart with a spiritual meaning and message for all God's people, Jew and Gentile.

The spiritual secrets are open information for us now that Jesus the Messiah went to the cross and rose from the dead.

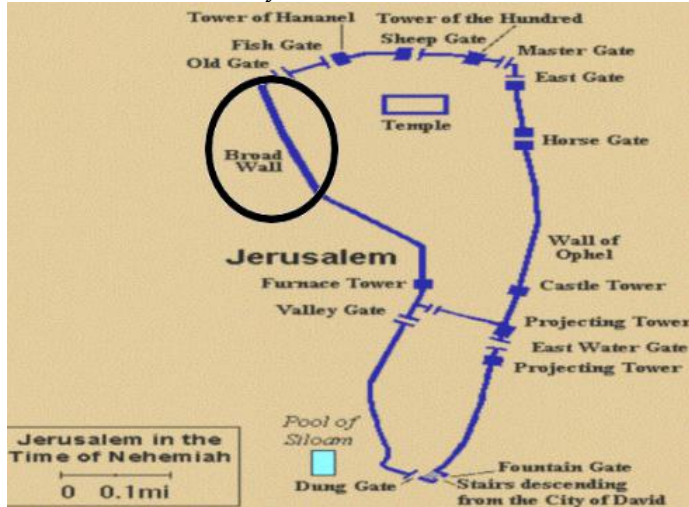
Looking at Jerusalem's layout, one member of our church pointed out that it makes one think of a footprint. During the time of this virus crisis, we'd do well to remember the beautiful “footprints” story.

Footprints

One night I dreamed a dream.

As I was walking along the beach with my Lord. Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life. For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand, One belonging to me and one to my Lord. After the last scene of my life flashed before me, I looked back at the footprints in the sand. I noticed that at many times along the path of my life, especially at the very lowest and saddest times, there was only one set of footprints. This really troubled me, so I asked the Lord about it. "Lord, you said once I decided to follow you, You'd walk with me all the way. But I noticed that during the saddest and most troublesome times of my life, there was only one set of footprints. I don't understand why, when I needed You the most, You would leave me." He whispered,

"My precious child, I love you and will never leave you Never, ever, during your trials and testings. When you saw only one set of footprints, It was then that I carried you."



As we wait out this pandemic let's reflect that because we are broken people, often in the times where our boundaries were devastated and we were in the worst of danger, it was *the Lord that carried us.*

So as we continue our tour of the

foot shaped city, *we can review where we've been.* We started at the Sheep Gate above the temple, where lambs were brought for sacrifice that pointed us to Jesus, the Lamb of God. Everything starts with Jesus. We also looked at two towers. The "Tower of 100," being 13 stories tall, makes one think of heaven. The Hananel, "Tower of God's Grace" reminds us the Lamb's sacrifice was because of God's grace, not works. Then the fish gate and Jesus' promise to his 1st 4 followers that they'd become fishers of men, also able to bring others to the Lord. The churchy word is evangelism. In simplicity, because we love Jesus we help others to follow and love the Lord also. Then the Old Gate with some mystery, pre-historic Jerusalem, called Salem, Melchizedek as King. He was probably Jesus. It points us to God, the Ancient One then warns us to not return to our old life in the flesh. We're a new creation in Jesus.



Now we've come to the Broad Wall This part of the wall tells us 3 things. When Israel trusted God, it was a good wall and a protector. When Israel gave up on God it got devastated. When Israel came back to God it was rebuilt. **The Broad Wall: A reminder of when Jerusalem was strong and trusted God: and when they fell away. Applies to backsliding believers who decide they want to return to the Lord.**

The bombs fell on Jerusalem in the 1967 6-day war and clearing more recent structures, exposed the 23 foot thick Broad Wall, a bonanza for archaeologists. The wall went up,

the wall fell down, then went back up again. King Hezekiah built the Broad Wall to stop Sennacherib of Assyria in 701 BC. But 3 generations later in 605 BC, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon destroyed it. Nehemiah rebuilt it.

Called the Broad Wall because it's 1000 cubits long (1500ft.), built to stand up to a world superpower, Assyria and her King, Sennacherib. *3 biblical accounts* (2 Kings 18:13-19:37, 2 Chronicles 32:1-23, Isaiah 36:1-37:38) show how he arrived to Jerusalem to annihilate it, trash talking all the way. *The wall kept the people from panic, but eventually wouldn't stop the 185,000 soldiers* and their war machines once they started a siege. But when *Jerusalem was faithful*, taking care of what they could (people gave up their homes to strengthen the wall-- the foundations are still there) joining together and looking to God, *the miracle came*. We can do our part, we are now, giving up even jobs to stop this virus but we need an act of God to really come out on top. God's in control. Let's do our part, trusting Him. Overnight God put to death the whole Assyrian army. Sennacherib fled home and there his sons assassinated him.

The Broad Wall was built in times when Jerusalem faced danger, did something, but more than anything else, trusted in God. We face a similar situation today with the coronavirus. Like Jerusalem did its part, we do ours; hand washing, keeping social distance, self quarantine if necessary, helping others, putting gatherings on hold, *but with all of that knowing God is in control*. Do our part then trust the Lord.

He is there. But just so you know! God doesn't go by the governor's nor president's rules. He will violate the quarantine, He won't keep His distance, He won't stop working, but will come close to all who call and do His mighty work. He wants to save souls, now! He doesn't need sanitizer to cleanse the soul. Sanitizer is only temporary but the cleansing of sin from the blood of Jesus lasts eternally! His secret is that He's a healer and coming to Him will not make one sick!

Jerusalem had great success in her fight against Assyria, by The Broad Wall to keep them out and a miracle of God to wipe them out. But sadly within 3 generations Jerusalem turned corrupt and abandoned faith in Yahweh. Jerusalem backslid. Babylon invaded and that time, there was no faith, unity, nor looking to God, and of course, no miracle and the city and the Broad Wall was destroyed. Someone can come to Christ, taste heaven and grace, even lead others to Jesus, yet lose their way. We can backslide in a big way or look good but the heart can fall away. The wall that protected Jerusalem from Sennacherib and Assyria, built from sacrifice was a speed bump for Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon, a sign that Jerusalem needs a walk with God more than a wall. They turned to idols, lived in sin, and stopped trusting God. They thought God would do a miracle anyway, and He did not. But Nehemiah's project to rebuild said they'd finally returned to God. The backslider, though having had great times in the past may have fallen away to a life of shame and trouble, but like the wall can be rebuilt, become strong once again like the days of faithful living, and be an impenetrable wall for the Lord. God can restore what was once strong in our lives, what we left behind in our backsliding.

Conclusion

This concludes our tour for this week, as we discover the spiritual secrets around the wall of Jerusalem. The broad wall reminds believers who've lost passion for the Lord or have even backslidden that God will rebuild and strengthen the rubble of what was once strong faith. Nehemiah 3 is all about rebuilding and restoring. God is

doing that for us now, let's not waste this crisis! Let this time restore our simple faith that we can trust God, we don't have to backslide to . fear, panic, and self preservation. I do have to say this. Doing our part isn't just washing hands, keeping distance,

The secrets of the names of gates, walls, and towers is for us to know how God uses an ancient city to tell us how He works with us, and how we are with Him.

We face a unique time today. We'll do our part and trust Jesus. What if you've never trusted Him? He'll forgive all of your sins. He'll replace fear and panic with confidence that He is in control, no matter what happens. He reminds us He's no stranger to dying, He died on the cross and all of us will face death someday. But what He did was make death not a problem because He rose from the dead. Now He'll forgive sins and promise eternal life, yes death is only a blessing till He comes back and we'll live forever. That's a promise. Rather than a little virus controlling you and I, can we give it all to Jesus?

The Furnace Tower or Better, Tower of the Ovens. The tower that overlooked the city's bakeries. The aroma of baking bread (I wonder if they slapped it with butter!) must have made it one of the most pleasant places in the city. Towers gave vision to an ancient city. It gives a vision of Jesus, the bread of life. In John chapter 6, Jesus had fed 5,000 by a miracle of multiplying bread and fish. The crowd wanted to follow Jesus, free bread! "Jesus answered them, ***Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you***" (John 6:26-27). ***Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst"*** (John 6:35). God rained manna from heaven for Israel when they wandered in the desert. But He sent Jesus as the bread of heaven to satisfy the hunger of the soul. This sounds like some spiritual talk but really, there is a hunger we try to fill in so many ways other than Jesus and it just doesn't satisfy.

Conclusion

This concludes our tour for this week, as we discover the spiritual secrets around the wall of Jerusalem with a little help from my mom. The broad wall reminds believers who've lost passion for the Lord or have even backslidden that God will rebuild and strengthen the rubble of what was once strong faith. The tower of the ovens reminds us that Jesus is the bread of life and the only one that satisfies. The Valley Gate reminds us that even in the Valley of Death like Hinnom was, God is there with us, and speaks louder. It is there that we find the power of His presence through Jesus' blood to break Satan's hold. Jesus is bread, our defense against the worst of troubles, He's bread, and He brings us through the Valley. Tour of the Old City of Jerusalem to be continued...

Next...

The Valley Gate: We all hit low points, valleys in our lives. Today's Jaffa Gate seems to have taken the place of the ancient Valley Gate, overlooks the valley of Gehenna; (Hinnom). My mom did a great work of spiritual insight from the names of the 10 gates of Jerusalem's



walls. “This gate opened out to the valley of Hinnom, where many unpleasant events had taken place, In this valley, altars were built to false gods and later destroyed by King Josiah” (It was a valley of death). She put this scripture toward it, **“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me”** (Psalm 23:4). She also referred to Ezekiel 3:22, **“Go into the valley, and there I will speak with you.”** C.S Lewis said, God whispers in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts in our pains.” In the valleys of life we often can hear God more clearly. Mom continued, “During our conversion from darkness to light, we are carried by God’s saving faith and begin to see the effects of Jesus’ presence in our lives. Filled with God’s Grace, we are in a state of well-being, but the time will come when God will show us that we need to grow in our faith and trust in God. We may go through trials that allow us to identify the things in us that are distracting us from keeping our focus on our spiritual lives: really getting to know God’s attributes, holding on to them, and understanding what the REDEMPTION Jesus offers really means. We must seek God in prayer and contemplate the fact that Jesus’ precious blood has ransomed us from every hold that Satan may have had on us.”