

Nehemiah 2:9-3:32 Building Together

The city of Jerusalem lies in Ruins – 150 years earlier – Babylon under King Nebuchadnezzar – Ransacked – 605 BC

A) Tore down temple and the Walls of the city – Carted off 10's of 1,000's Israel's population.

B) Now the Persians are in Power – under Persia there has been a resurgence

1) King Cyrus – allows a man named Zerubbabel to return with 50,000 Jewish people to rebuild the temple. 538BC

C) It takes quite a while and several hiccups and setbacks along the way but they get it done.

Then in 458 BC Ezra the priest leads another return of approx. 3000 people

A) His purpose is to instruct the people in temple worship and the laws of God.

B) But there is still this glaring Problem – The walls are still down

1) Walls of a city Provided separation and Protection -

2) Like Windows and Front door of your house.

C) 12 years go by – sort of a stand still – the morale is down – and things are just not moving in Israel

Back in Persia there is a man by the name of Nehemiah who is **servicing as the cupbearer** to the most powerful man in the world – King Artaxerxes

A) Nehemiah is visited by his brother who has just returned from Jerusalem.

B) Nehemiah has never been there – he was born in captivity but he has a heart for his homeland and his people.

1) **ME ITALY - MY PEOPLE!** { JERUSALEM IS SPECIAL - Nehemiah knows

C) He hears this from his brother – the people are in distress and reproach

1) Things are not good – walls are still down.

Nehemiah's heart breaks – he gets a burden – praying for 4 months

A) Until one day – King asked him – Why the sad face?

B) Nehemiah shares his heart – The King who respected Nehemiah says what do you want to do? –

1) I want to go back – help rebuild the wall. – Make things right

C) The King says ok – Let me help – you just have to promise to come back

1) The King sets him up with an escort, supplies and authority

That is where we left things last week: ⁹ Then I went to the governors *in the region beyond the River, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me.* ¹⁰ When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard *of it, they were deeply disturbed that a man had come to seek the well-being of the children of Israel.*

A) Note that Sandballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official – hear of this and they are bummed

B) **they were deeply disturbed that a man had come to seek the well-being of the children of Israel.**

C) That is how the enemy operates: **He knows what is broken down in your life – your family – your world**

1) But the minute you or someone comes along seeking the well being of you, your family – **THE ENEMY PERKS UP. – GETS DISTURBED.**

People start praying for Revival – He gets Disturbed

A) People want to see God do something special in Vista or North County – he gets disturbed – he wants to squash that – discourage that.

B) Here in the book of Nehemiah we see a wide array of his tactics – but this is where it starts

C) If you are content to settle in mediocrity – status quo – He is fine – But if you want to grow – see God do something – **Rebuild what is BROKEN – He gets bummed**

That is what Nehemiah is up against – Daunting task.

A) **Figure out – Where to begin? Where to start?**

B) **Figure out How do you motivate people** who are discouraged and who don't think things will ever change?

C) While - Constantly battle avoiding getting sidetracked by the enemy.

1) **THIS WOULD BE HIS CHALLENGE!**

¹¹ So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days. ¹² Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me; I told no one what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem; nor was there any animal with me, except the one on which I rode. ¹³ And I went out by night through the Valley Gate to the Serpent Well and the Refuse Gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were burned with fire. ¹⁴ Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but *there was* no room for the animal under me to pass. ¹⁵ So I went up in the night by the valley, and viewed the wall; then I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned. ¹⁶ And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, or the others who did the work.

The first thing we see that Nehemiah does is he INVESTIGATES before HE INITIATES.

A) He has someone who obviously knew the city take him on a little tour. Initiates

B) Helps him get an idea of what they were facing!

C) Do your **walking before you do your talking**

Listen mom, dad, grandma, grandpa – We had better be surveying the land that God has us building in.

A) We are living in a culture where we have political leaders and people in the media who are openly endorsing SINFUL LIFESTYLES

B) When that happens it trickles down into the **blood stream** of a culture and a society.

1) It infiltrates our mindset and subtly indoctrinates a culture to the point of infection.

2) **WE ARE THERE – INFECTED.**

C) Our country is in need of major surgery – Politicians want to put Band-Aids on things – 1) Need surgery – WE NEED A REVIVAL. – Radical move of the spirit of God.

D) Starts in our own lives: Do a little inventory – do a little surveying

1) What is broken down – what needs repair? Marriage relationship?

E) Where are there holes in your theology.

1) Or what you believe and the way that you LIVE

So A good leader doesn't rush into his work but patiently gathers the facts firsthand and then plans his strategy

A) Before Nehemiah began, he was determined to know the worst. So he makes a careful probing examination of the whole situation

B) **While others slept, Nehemiah was wide awake,** burdened, conscious of desperate need and shame and ruin all around him.

C) He diagnosed the situation, surveyed the ruined walls, and thought about the magnitude of the task to which God had called him.

Nehemiah faces his greatest Challenge – Rallying the troops.

A) His greatest challenge would be to convince the people to tackle this project & to stick with it – **when the going got tough**

B) Toughest Challenge for any leader – whether you are trying to rebuild your family / your business / a ministry.

C) There will always be 3 types of people who will be a Challenge to rebuilding

1) **#1 Those who are content with the Status quo** – I am sure there were those in Israel who would deny the need for the wall to be built

D) Might have said *“You know, we have gotten along without those walls for a hundred years now! After all, we already have the temple!”*

#2 Those who are skeptical.

A) Those who will say: That is never going to work – we already tried that - it didn't work last time and it won't this time either

B) Those who will say: **Too big / too hard / never happen / never be done**

1) Those type of people are always a challenge

C) Now it is Important to learn from History but just because something didn't work the first time doesn't mean that it wasn't God

1) It could be an issue of Timing - **God's timing is everything**

D) When Ezra attempted this same Project years before – the reason why it failed was that the people became self-absorbed – Stalled the process

3 Those who are Self-absorbed

A) So caught up in their own lives – their own problems

B) They don't have time for this.

C) How is Nehemiah going to motivate them?

Answer it is going to have to be a God thing.

A) Love about Nehemiah's approach – it is VERY SIMPLE. – not a lot of hype.

B) I am learning – if God is into something – there doesn't have to be a lot of hype – just Clear direction

C) See two things that Nehemiah does

1ST The Problem is stated Clearly: V.16-17

17 Then I said to them, (Seems to be a reference to V.16 – them being the officials and the nobles)

17 Then I said to them, “You see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach.”

Notice how Nehemiah owns the problem – the distress we are in, - Not pointing the finger – **YOU GUYS MESSED UP!**

A) He takes ownership – The city is in distress and reproach – walls are burned with Fire.

B) So #1 The Problem must be clearly defined

2ND The Lord must be clearly seen.

18 And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king's words that he had spoken to me.

A) He told them everything that God did.

B) Here is where His past faithfulness was seen. – He lays it out

C) Burden – King's reaction – Help – the escort – the support in materials

This is why I say it has to be a God thing – What Nehemiah does here is pretty simple. – Note the reaction.

So they said, “Let us rise up and build.” Then they set their hands to *this good work*.

A) TODAY: Big Presentations – Fancy Dinners – Persuasive speakers – THAT works

B) THE ONLY QUESTION – DID GOD DO IT OR WAS IT **THE RESULT OF ALL THE HYPE.**

C) I have a friend {Rich Chafin} He does the opposite – So great. – See how God works

D) So the people respond – Let's build – Let's do this – Let's go for it!

19 But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they laughed at us and despised us, and said, "What is this thing that you are doing? Will you rebel against the king?"

A) As soon as the people say let's rise up and build – the enemy says let's rise up and oppose – **ALWAYS THE CASE**

B) The first form of opposition here is Mockery & Slander

1) They laughed at us – accused us of rebelling against the king

C) 2 Cor. 5:18 – **Given to us the ministry of Reconciliation** –

1) When you set about to be used by the Lord in the work of REBUILDING broken lives, the enemy will FIRST LAUGH at you

D) **“YOU witness to your boss?”- “YOU lead a Bible study?”**

1) The enemy LAUGHS at us hoping that we will back away out of fear of looking foolish

Nehemiah says 2 important things to the opposition:

#1 We can count on God - 20 So I answered them, and said to them, "The God of heaven Himself will prosper us

A) Nehemiah understood – that if God was in it – if He was behind it there was nothing they could do to stop the work {God's work would succeed

B) #2 God can count on us ! V.20b therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem."

C)This is going to be up to God – but God can count on us to do our part.

This is such a great thing for us as believers to consider in our day and age.

A)See This world is coming to an end. – Probably going to happen in our lifetime.

B)The economy of this world is going to go through a paradigm shift that it has never seen before.

C)The stage is being set for a major paradigm shift in the way countries do battle.

1)Did you know that one Trident submarine carries 40 times the destructive power of all the armies combined in WWII –

D)More than England, France, Germany, the US and Japan

1)ONE SUB - 40 TIMES THE DETONATING POWER

That is will be world war III – If that happens – the weapons of World War IV will be Rocks

A)Don't know how much time we have – GOD KNOWS

B)WE CAN COUNT ON HIM

C)And He needs to be able to count on us – Do our part in the mean time

1)That is all that he asks.

Quickly look at Chapter 3 – Where we see that Doing our part takes Dedicated Leaders and Willing Workers

A)Not going to read all the verses and names – I'll Butcher them

B)Point out that there are **38 names listed** in this Chapter – every builder is mentioned –

1)there are **42 groups of builders mentioned**

C)Reminds us that **PEOPLE ARE IMPORTANT TO GOD** – and that **PEOPLE ARE A PART OF THE PROCESS.**

Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests and built the Sheep Gate; they consecrated it and hung its doors. They built as far as the Tower of the Hundred, and consecrated it, then as far as the Tower of Hananel. ²Next to Eliashib the men of Jericho built.

A)So the Priests join in the Process – probably out of their comfort zones

B)They didn't learn – construction in priest school

C)Love that – for any work of God to happen – there needs to be a willingness amongst God's people to work outside of their comfort zones

1)Again that is often times when you see God flourish the most – He is using people in areas where they are not necessarily the most gifted.

V. 2 tells us that Next to the Priest – the men of Jericho built.

A)That phrase NEXT TO is going to be repeated 29 times in this chapter

B)Again that is how things happen – you work together – you work NEXT TO someone - - shoulder to shoulder

C)Beauty of the Body of Christ – where you have all these different personalities – backgrounds – giftings

1)JESUS IS THE CENTER – WE WORK TOGETHER!

D)Sinners saved by Grace – Blood bought – serving our Master together

ONE guy that stands out to me is in V.14 Malchijah the son of Rechab, leader of the district of Beth Haccerem, repaired the Refuse Gate; he built it and hung its doors with its bolts and bars

A) Here is what I like about this dude – he is the leader of a whole district and he picks the worse Job – REFUSE GATE.

B) Trash – Sewage – Garbage - That is so cool – to see that –

1) I learned from Pastor Chuck – watching him pick up trash around Calvary Costa Mesa.

C) Toilet backed up - not calling the Janitor – He knew how to do that and just took care of it.

1) GREAT EXAMPLE – this guy – I’LL take the refuse gate

Here is another interesting thing to note:

A) We are told in V.10, V.23, V.28,29,30 – these particular people were placed to work on the Wall closest to their own HOMES

B) It is true that people need to be willing at times to serve in areas that don’t interest them – but it is also true the Lord gets the most productivity out of us from the areas we are the most interested in.

That is why the Lord often strategically seeks to place us in areas where we are going to thrive.

A) I am learning this Key to leadership – trying to get people into areas where they are gifted in and let them go for it.

B) We can often make the mistake of trying to fit a person into a box they weren’t made to fit into.

1) Experience, age, maturity -

C) Different gifts – let them go for it with their gifts

D) I love the things that happen around here people using their gifts & passions

1) Tom and Lynette Mangione – Every Halloween

One last thing I want us to see before we go tonight – THIS TO ME IS AWESOME.

A) Recently interviewed for the San Diego Reader Magazine – came out a few weeks ago.

B) Anyway – the reporter – Joseph Obrien asked me – what was my Favorite thing to preach on?

1) Not to sound Cliché – I said Jesus - let me explain – this whole book is about a person

C) I love to point out how the scriptures point to Him

We have a wonderful picture of that here in Ch.3 – The redemptive work of Christ in a person’s life.

A) The Gates are mentioned in a particular order – mentioned counterclockwise

B) The way they are laid out paints a wonderful picture.

We saw in V.1 that the Priests were working on the Sheep gate – appropriate place for them

A) Through that gate the lambs would be brought to go to the temple for Sacrifice.

B) That is an appropriate place for God to start because – Jesus was the LAMB OF GOD!

1) Salvation begins with his work on the Cross.

C) After the sheep gate V.3 the FISH GATE

Once saved you naturally want to tell others what Jesus has done for you.

A) Christ calls us to be fishers of men.

After the fish gate – V. 6 the OLD GATE

A) The old gate speaks of the timeless truths of the word of God. – DOCTRINE – Know what – Why...

B) Often follows witnessing – people ask you questions you don’t know how to answer – time to dig

1) Time to find out what you believe and why

1 Peter 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you.

D) The old gate speaks of our need to be grounded in the word of God !!!

1) Lives built on the foundation of the word.

After the old gate V. 13 VALLEY GATE

A) The Valley gate speaks of trials

B) Times of testing / times of temptations / times of difficulties

1) Times where you wonder – what is going on –

C) But those times of trials are necessary – They Produce SPIRITUAL Muscle development

1) Faith becomes purified.

After the Valley gate comes the V.13 Refuse Gate

A) Interesting that the largest stretch in the wall between two gates is between Valley Gate – Refuse

B) Refuse Gate – waste or that which stinks the garbage gate

C) This is fitting – because the valleys reveal what we are really made of. –

1) When times get tough – the refuse / the dung comes out of us.

After the Refuse gate comes v.15 The fountain gate

A) This is the shortest point between the two gates

B) We see the refuse and we realize that we need cleansing.

1) We need to be washed and cleansed – Not saved again – but cleansed

C) Fountain Gate - for Cleansing

John 7:38 Jesus *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. 38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers [fountains] of living water."*

After the Fountain Gate we come to Richard Nixon's favorite Gate V.26

THE WATER GATE = Refreshment from the Word

One of the things that often happens in the life of a Believer after they have been filled with the Spirit – greater thirst for the Word

A) Where the Old Gate spoke of the Doctrinal side of the Word of the God –

B) **The Water Gate speaks of the Devotional side of the Word**

1) The need that we all have is to sit and allow the Word to touch us in the deepest parts of our hearts

C) It is one thing to study **the WORD** to become equipped – that is important

1) But it is an entirely different thing to have the **Lord's word** speak to and Refresh your heart

Psalm 119:25 **My soul clings to the dust; Revive me according to Your word.**

D) The Old gate speaks to us of the **Worth of the Word** – the Water Gate speaks to us of the **Word that works**

1) It refreshes us – it sustains us – it is that treasure that keeps us moving in the Lord

After the Water gate comes the Horse Gate in V.28 also called the Eastern Gate in V.29

A) What is interesting about this gate is we are told in **Zechariah 14:4**

"And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, Which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, From east to west, Making a very large valley; Half of the mountain shall move toward the north And half of it toward the south."

B) Then, according to Ezekiel 44:2, Jesus will enter into the city of Jerusalem through the East Gate.

C) This speaks really of our Motivation in SERVING – Jesus is going to return for his Church – Rapture.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words. {Believers comfort – No Tribulation {All believers accept 144,000 Jewish men – Special mission

1 Corinthians 15:51-53

51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

7 year wedding Feast – 7 year Tribulation –

- A) Then he is going to Return with His Church
- B) 1,000 year reign of Christ

B) Upon His return, Jesus will enter the EAST GATE with His glory, and with authority.

1) When the Turks had heard this, around the year 1100 AD they said: *“If that is the gate that the Messiah of Israel is to enter upon His return, then we will seal it up so that He can not re-enter it.”*

C) But in so doing, they fulfilled the very prophecy of Ezekiel 44 which said that the EAST GATE will be sealed before He comes.

1) If you go there today, you can see that gate sealed up with brick.

D) But Jesus will return, the gate will be opened, He will rule the earth for 1,000 years, and we will be with Him.

After wards – the Final Judgment –

V.31 The GATE OF MIPHKAD

Miphkad = Judgment or inspection

B) JUDGMENT SEAT is the Greek word “Bema”.

It was the place where awards were given in athletic events.

1) It was NOT a judicial place where sentences were handed down. It was a place of rewards.

Rev 20 – Most of the Chapter deals with this Judgement – God is going to gather everyone throughout history small & great

B) They are going to be judged on the basis of rejecting His Son

C) Simple Test: Is there name written in the Lambs’ Book of Life

1) Not in that book – they are going to be thrown into the Lake of fire