

Nehemiah 3
October 17, 2021

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: When a city gets destroyed, what does it take to successfully rebuild it? [Let people engage]

Transition: Not too long ago, I stumbled across the existence of online book clubs through Fable, who offers suggested reads. There was a suggested book that grabbed my interest, and it's called *Disasterology*, written by Dr. Samantha Montano, who has first-hand experience in emergency management starting with Katrina. She has her M.S. and Ph.D. in Emergency Management from North Dakota State University. She is currently an assistant professor of emergency management at Massachusetts Maritime Academy and conducts and engages her students in disaster research by going to disaster sites and observing how people come together to rebuild their cities.

Her book is an eye-opening journey through some of our worst disasters, helping us make sense of what really happened from an emergency management perspective. She explains why we aren't doing enough to prevent or prepare for disasters, the critical role of media, and how our approach to recovery was not designed to serve marginalized communities.

With temperatures rising and the risk of disasters growing, our world is increasingly vulnerable. Most people see disasters as freak, natural events that are unpredictable and unpreventable. But that simply isn't the case – disasters are avoidable, but when they do strike, there are strategic ways to manage the fallout.

Pivot: The spiritual leaders of the Jews living in Jerusalem, especially Nehemiah, had a strategy. He understood the need to get organized and direct the rebuilding of the walls.

God noted each worker and put their names in the book. Each one had a specified area of responsibility. No one can do everything, but every person can do something. Of course, you will never have 100 percent cooperation, and in v. 5 we find some of the nobles refusing to get involved.

Let's begin by sharing the challenging exercise of reading today's text! We can share the load of butchering most of these names, so let's get four volunteers. [4 readers tackle 8 verses each]

BOOK:

Builders of the Wall

3 Eliashib the high priest and his fellow priests went to work and rebuilt the Sheep Gate. They dedicated it and set its doors in place, building as far as the Tower of the Hundred, which

they dedicated, and as far as the Tower of Hananel. ²The men of Jericho built the adjoining section, and Zaccur son of Imri built next to them.

³The Fish Gate was rebuilt by the sons of Hassenaah. They laid its beams and put its doors and bolts and bars in place. ⁴Meremoth son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz, repaired the next section. Next to him Meshullam son of Berekiah, the son of Meshezabel, made repairs, and next to him Zadok son of Baana also made repairs. ⁵The next section was repaired by the men of Tekoa, but their nobles would not put their shoulders to the work under their supervisors.

⁶The Jeshanah (Old) Gate was repaired by Joiada son of Paseah and Meshullam son of Besodeiah. They laid its beams and put its doors and bolts and bars in place. ⁷Next to them, repairs were made by men from Gibeon and Mizpah—Melatiah of Gibeon and Jadon of Meronoth—places under the authority of the governor of Trans-Euphrates. ⁸Uzziel son of Harhaiah, one of the goldsmiths, repaired the next section; and Hananiah, one of the perfume-makers, made repairs next to that. They restored Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall. ⁹Rephaiah son of Hur, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, repaired the next section. ¹⁰Adjoining this, Jediah son of Harumaph made repairs opposite his house, and Hattush son of Hashabneiah made repairs next to him. ¹¹Malkijah son of Harim and Hasshub son of Pahath-Moab repaired another section and the Tower of the Ovens. ¹²Shallum son of Hallohesh, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, repaired the next section with the help of his daughters.

¹³The Valley Gate was repaired by Hanun and the residents of Zanoah. They rebuilt it and put its doors and bolts and bars in place. They also repaired five hundred yards of the wall as far as the Dung Gate.

¹⁴The Dung Gate was repaired by Malkijah son of Recab, ruler of the district of Beth Hakkerem. He rebuilt it and put its doors and bolts and bars in place.

¹⁵The Fountain Gate was repaired by Shallun son of Col-Hozeh, ruler of the district of Mizpah. He rebuilt it, roofing it over and putting its doors and bolts and bars in place. He also repaired the wall of the Pool of Siloam, by the King's Garden, as far as the steps going down from the City of David. ¹⁶Beyond him, Nehemiah son of Azbuk, ruler of a half-district of Beth Zur, made repairs up to a point opposite the tombs of David, as far as the artificial pool and the House of the Heroes.

¹⁷Next to him, the repairs were made by the Levites under Rehum son of Bani. Beside him, Hashabiah, ruler of half the district of Keilah, carried out repairs for his district. ¹⁸Next to him, the repairs were made by their countrymen under Binnui son of Henadad, ruler of the other half-district of Keilah. ¹⁹Next to him, Ezer son of Jeshua, ruler of Mizpah, repaired another section, from a point facing the ascent to the armory as far as the angle. ²⁰Next to him, Baruch son of Zabbai zealously repaired another section, from the angle to the entrance of the house of Eliashib the high priest. ²¹Next to him, Meremoth son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz, repaired another section, from the entrance of Eliashib's house to the end of it.

²²The repairs next to him were made by the priests from the surrounding region. ²³Beyond them, Benjamin and Hasshub made repairs in front of their house; and next to them, Azariah son of Maaseiah, the son of Ananiah, made repairs beside his house. ²⁴Next to him, Binnui son of Henadad repaired another section, from Azariah's house to the angle and the corner, ²⁵and Palal son of Uzai worked opposite the angle and the tower projecting from the upper palace near the court of the guard. Next to him, Pedaiah son of Parosh ²⁶and the temple servants living on the

hill of Ophel made repairs up to a point opposite the Water Gate toward the east and the projecting tower. ²⁷ Next to them, the men of Tekoa repaired another section, from the great projecting tower to the wall of Ophel.

²⁸ Above the Horse Gate, the priests made repairs, each in front of his own house. ²⁹ Next to them, Zadok son of Immer made repairs opposite his house. Next to him, Shemaiah son of Shecaniah, the guard at the East Gate, made repairs. ³⁰ Next to him, Hananiah son of Shelemiah, and Hanun, the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired another section. Next to them, Meshullam son of Berekiah made repairs opposite his living quarters. ³¹ Next to him, Malkijah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs as far as the house of the temple servants and the merchants, opposite the Inspection Gate, and as far as the room above the corner; ³² and between the room above the corner and the Sheep Gate the goldsmiths and merchants made repairs.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

Some 40 different sections of wall are mentioned in the chapter, each assigned to a different group. To work effectively and quickly, the wall builders displayed a sense of common purpose and commitment. A common sense of purpose is also important today if Christians are to work together in God's kingdom. That sense of common purpose can unite us, even when we differ in convictions or doctrine.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (Ne 3). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

III. Nehemiah Prospers in the Work (3)

A. The pattern.

The work was organized and directed, with the spiritual leaders taking the lead (v. 1) and the people cooperating. God noted each worker and put their names in the book. Each one had a specified area of responsibility. No one can do everything, but every person can do something. Of course, you will never have 100 percent cooperation; in v. 5 we find some of the nobles refusing to get involved. There were forty-two groups of workers.

B. The people.

What a variety of workers—priests (v. 1), rulers (vv. 12–19), women (v. 12), craftsmen (vv. 8, 32), and even Jews from other cities (vv. 2, 5, 7). Note that some were willing to do extra work (vv. 11, 19, 21, 24, 27, 30). Some did their work at home (vv. 10, 23, 28–30), and this is where Christian service ought to begin. Some workers were the only ones from their families (v. 30), and some workers were more zealous than others (v. 20). Compare v. 11 with Ezra 10:31 and you will see that even some former backsliders joined in the work.

C. The places.

There is a definite spiritual lesson in each of these gates. *The sheep gate* (v. 1) reminds us of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross (John 10). This was the first gate repaired, for without the sacrifice, there is no salvation. Note that the sheep gate had no locks or bars, for the door of salvation is ever open to the sinner. This is the only gate that was sanctified, setting it apart as a special gate. *The fish gate* (v. 3) reminds us of soul-winning, being “fishers of men” (Mark 1:17). *The old gate* (v. 6) speaks of the old paths and the old truths of the Word of God (Jer. 6:16 and 18:15). The people of the world are forever looking for “some new thing” (Acts 17:21), and they refuse to go back to the basic truths that really work.

The *valley gate* (v. 13) reminds us of humility before the Lord. In Phil. 2 we see Christ descending from the glories of heaven into the valley of human limitation and even death.

We do not enjoy the valley, but often God must take us there to bring a blessing to our lives.

Verse 14 introduces *the dung gate*. Apparently, this is the gate through which the waste and refuse of the city were taken. Imagine how difficult it would be to repair a gate in such a place! Certainly, this speaks to us of the cleansing of our lives (2 Cor. 7:1; Isa. 1:16–17). Later some of the Jews were to complain about the rubbish; see 4:10. *The gate of the fountain* (v. 15) illustrates the ministry of the Holy Spirit; see John 7:37–39. It is interesting to note the order of these gates: first, there is humility (the valley gate), then cleansing (the dung gate), and then the filling of the Spirit (the fountain gate). *The water gate* (v. 26) speaks of the Word of God, which cleanses the believer (Eph. 5:26; Ps. 119:9). Note that this is the seventh gate mentioned, and seven is the

Bible number for perfection—the perfect Word of God. Note too that this gate needed no repairs! “Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in heaven” (Ps. 119:89 NKJV).

The horse gate (v. 28) introduces the idea of warfare. Certainly, there are battles in the Christian life, and we must be ready to fight. See 2 Tim. 2:1–4. *The east gate* (v. 29) makes us think of the second coming of Jesus Christ (Matt. 24:27). In Ezek. 10:16–22, the prophet saw God’s glory depart from the temple by the east gate; see also 11:22–25. But later (43:1–5) he saw God’s glory return “from the way of the east.” *The gate Miphkad* (v. 31) speaks of God’s judgment. The Hebrew word *miphkad* means “appointment, account, census, mustering.” It carries the idea of troops showing up for review. Certainly, God is going to call all souls up for judgment one day.

As you review these gates and their order, you can see the suggestion of the full picture of the Christian life, from the sheep gate (salvation) to the final judgment. Praise God the Christian shall never face judgment because of his sins! See John 5:24, Rom. 8:1–2.

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *Be Determined* (pp. 36-47). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Wall to Wall Workers

Nehemiah faced a great challenge and had great faith in a great God, but he would have accomplished very little had there not been great dedication on the part of the people who helped him rebuild the wall. With the kind of humility that befits a godly leader, Nehemiah gave all the credit to the people when he wrote, “So built we the wall ... for the people had a mind to work” (Neh. 4:6).

British humorist Jerome K. Jerome said, “I like work, it fascinates me. I can sit and look at it for hours.” When it comes to the work of the Lord, there is no place for spectators or self-appointed advisors and critics; but there is always room for workers. As you study this chapter, you will discover principles that apply to all human labor, especially the work of building the church.

1. The purpose of the work

Nehemiah was concerned about only one thing, the glory of God. “Let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach” (2:17; and see 1:3; 4:4; 5:9). The Gentiles delighted in mocking their Jewish neighbors by pointing out the dilapidated condition of Jerusalem. After all, the Jews claimed that their capital city was “beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth” (Ps. 48:2). They said that God loved “the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob” (87:2). If God loved Jerusalem so much, why were the walls in ruin and the gates burned? Why was the “holy city” a reproach? Why didn’t the Jews do something?

For the most part, the world today ignores the church. If it does pay any attention to the church, it is usually to condemn or mock. “If you are the people of God,” unbelievers ask, “why are there so many scandals in the church? If God is so powerful, why is the church so weak?” Whether Christians like it or not, we are living in a day of reproach when “the glory has departed” (1 Sam. 4:21).

The purpose of all ministry is the glory of God and not the aggrandizement of religious leaders or organizations (1 Cor. 10:31; 2 Cor. 4:5). The words of Jesus in His high priestly prayer ought to be the motivating force in all Christian ministry: “I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do” (John 17:4). God has a special task for each of His children (Eph. 2:10); and in the humble, faithful doing of that task, we glorify His name.

Of course, the rebuilding of the walls and the setting of the gates also meant protection and security for the people. Jerusalem was surrounded by enemies, and it seemed foolish for the residents to improve their property when nothing was safe from invasion and plunder. Over the years, the citizens had become accustomed to their plight. Like too many believers in the church today, they were content to live with the status quo. Then Nehemiah arrived on the scene and challenged them to rebuild the city to the glory of God.

2. The pattern of the work

Nehemiah was a leader who planned his work and worked his plan, and the way he did it is an example for us to follow. Thirty-eight individual workers are named in this chapter, and forty-two different groups are identified. There were also many workers whom Nehemiah did not name whose labors were important; and each worker—named and anonymous—was assigned a place and a task.

“A great many people have got a false idea about the church,” said evangelist D.L. Moody. “They have got an idea that the church is a place to rest in ... to get into a nicely cushioned pew, and contribute to the charities, listen to the minister, and do their share to keep the church out of bankruptcy, is all they want. The idea of work for them—actual work in the church—never enters their minds.”

In 1 Corinthians 12 and 14, Paul compared individual Christians to members of the human body: Each member is important, and each has a special function to perform. I recall the relief that came to my own heart when I realized that God didn’t expect me to do everything in the church, but rather to use the gifts He gave me in the tasks that He assigned. When I started doing that, I discovered I was helping others discover and develop their own gifts; and all of us accomplished more for the Lord.

The people finished this difficult task because they obeyed the same leader, kept their eyes on the same goal, and worked together for the glory of God. Neither the enemy outside the city nor the difficulties inside the city distracted them from their God-given task. Like Paul, they said, “This one thing I do” (Phil. 3:13).

The word *built* is used six times in Nehemiah 3 and means “rebuilt.” George Morrison reminds us “that for this restoration no *new* material was needed. In the debris of the ruined masonry lay all the material required ... and it seems to me that is always so when the walls of Zion are rebuilt” (*Morning Sermons*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1931, p. 249). It is not by inventing clever new things that we take away the church’s reproach, but by going back to the old truths that made the church great in ages past. They lie like stones in the dust, waiting for some burdened Nehemiah to recover them and use them.

The word *repair* is used thirty-five times; it means “to make strong and firm.” Nehemiah wasn’t interested in a “quick fix,” a whitewashed wall that would soon crumble (Ezek. 13:1–16; 22:28). They were building to the glory of God, and therefore they did their best.

The gates of Jerusalem had been destroyed by fire (Neh. 1:3; Jer. 17:27; Lam. 1:4), so Nehemiah requisitioned timber from the king’s forest and had new gates constructed (Neh. 2:8)

and put into place (6:1; 7:1). The gates were important to the safety of the people and the control of who went in and out of the city (7:3; 13:15–22). If the Lord loves the gates of Zion (Ps. 87:2), then His people ought to love them too.

Locks and bars are mentioned five times (Neh. 3:3, 6, 13–15). *Locks* refer to the sockets into which the bars were fitted, thus making it difficult for anyone outside to open the gates. It isn't enough that we simply do the work of God; we must also make sure that what we do is protected from the enemy. "Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully" (2 John 8, NIV).

3. The people in the work

As you get acquainted with the various people mentioned in Nehemiah 3, you will find yourself saying, "This is just like the church today!" Circumstances change but human nature remains pretty much the same.

God uses all kinds of people. The chapter mentions rulers and priests (vv. 1, 12–19), men and women (v. 12), professional craftsmen (vv. 8, 32), and even people from outside the city (vv. 2, 5, 7). There was a place for everyone, and a job for everyone to do.

Leaders must set the example (Neh. 3:1). If anybody in the city should have been busy in the work, it was the priests, for the glory of the Lord was involved in the project. That the high priest used his consecrated hands to do manual labor shows that he considered the work on the wall to be a ministry to the Lord. "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31, NKJV). Eliashib enlisted the other priests to work at the sheep gate in the northeast corner of the city. Since the sacrifices came into the city that way, the priests would be especially interested in that part of the project.

Sad to say, Eliashib did not remain true to his calling; for later he allied with the enemy and created serious problems for Nehemiah (Neh. 13:4–9). Some people who enthusiastically begin their work may drop out or turn against it for one reason or another. Eliashib's grandson married a daughter of Sanballat (v. 28), and this alliance no doubt influenced the high priest.

Some people will not work (Neh. 3:5). Tekoa was a town about eleven miles from Jerusalem, and some of their people traveled to Jerusalem to assist in the work. What a contrast between these people and their nobles! The Tekoites built in *two* places on the wall (vv. 5 and 27), while their nobles refused to bend the neck and work in even *one* place. Were these "aristocrats" so important in their own eyes that they could not perform manual labor? Yet Paul was a tentmaker (Acts 18:3), and Jesus was a carpenter (Mark 6:3).

The Tekoites were not the only "outsiders" to go to Jerusalem to work on the wall; for men also came from Jericho (Neh. 3:2), Gibeon, and Mizpah (v. 7). Their loyalty to their nation and their Lord was greater than their local interests. They were certainly safer back in their own communities, but they risked their lives to do the work of the Lord (Acts 15:25–26).

Some people do more work than others (Neh. 3:11, 19, 21, 24, 27, 30). Most workers are glad to lay down their tools when their job is finished, but these people asked for additional assignments. It isn't enough for us to say that we have done as much as others; we must do as *much as we can* as long as the Lord enables us. Jesus asked, "What do you do more than others?" (Matt. 5:47, NKJV)

Some do their work at home (Neh. 3:10, 23, 28–30). At least six different workers, plus an unknown number of priests, repaired the portions of the wall that were nearest to their own houses. If all of us would follow this example, our neighborhoods and cities would be in much better shape! Of course, there is a spiritual lesson here: Christian service begins at home. A

Chinese proverb says, “Better to be kind at home than to burn incense in a far place”; and Paul wrote, “Let them learn first to shew piety at home” (1 Tim. 5:4).

Some people work harder than others (Neh. 3:20). Baruch is the only worker of whom it is said that the work was done “earnestly” (“zealously,” NIV). The Hebrew word means “to burn or glow” and suggests that Baruch burned a lot of energy! “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might” (Ecc. 9:10, NIV). Paul admonished the slaves to work hard for their masters because they were really working for Christ (Eph. 6:5–8). Lazy workers not only rob themselves and the Lord, but they also rob their fellow workers. “He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster” (Prov. 18:9).

4. The places of the work

Nehemiah began his list of the “work stations” with the Sheep Gate in the northeast corner of the city (Neh. 3:1). Then he moved counterclockwise around the walls to the Gate Hammiphkad (“the Muster Gate”), which was adjacent to the Sheep Gate and just above the East Gate (v. 29). In his record, he names ten gates and several towers and other landmarks. He describes the work on the north wall first (vv. 1–7), then the western wall (vv. 8–13), then the southern point of the city (v. 14), and finally the eastern wall (vv. 15–32).

His primary purpose was to document for posterity and the official records the names and accomplishments of the people who worked on the wall. Without straining the text, however, we can glean from this chapter some spiritual illustrations to encourage us in our own personal lives and ministries.

The Sheep Gate (Neh. 3:1, 32). This was the gate through which the animals were brought into the city, including the temple sacrifices. The gate was near the temple area, so it was logical that the priests make this their special project. This is the only gate of which it is recorded that it was “sanctified,” that is, dedicated to God in a special way.

This gate reminds us of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who died for the sins of the world (John 1:29; 5:2). Nehemiah could have begun his record with any of the gates, but he chose to start and end the report with the Sheep Gate. Jesus is the “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending” (Rev. 1:8). Apart from Him and His sacrifice, we would have nothing eternal and satisfying. Nothing is said about the gate’s “locks and bars,” for the way is never closed to the lost sinner who wants to come to the Savior.

The Fish Gate (Neh. 3:3). This was located to the west of the Sheep Gate, and between the two stood the Tower of Hammeah (“the hundred”) and the Tower of Hananeel (v. 1). These two towers were a part of the city’s defense system and were close to the citadel, where the soldiers guarded the temple and protected the northern approach to the city which was especially vulnerable. Merchants used this gate when they brought fish from the Mediterranean Sea, and there may have been a fish market near the gate. In any event, it was a key entrance to the city.

The Old Gate (Neh. 3:6) is probably the Corner Gate (2 Kings 14:13; Jer. 31:38), located at the northwest corner of the city. Some students identify this with the “Mishneh Gate”; the Hebrew word means “second quarter” or “new quarter” (Zeph. 1:10, NIV). In Nehemiah’s day, the northwest section of the city was “the mishneh” or “new quarter”; and this gate led into it. What a paradox: the old gate leads into the new quarter! But it is from the old that we derive the new; and if we abandon the old, there can be nothing new (see Jer. 6:16 and Matt. 13:52).

The Valley Gate (Neh. 3:13) is where Nehemiah began his nocturnal investigation of the ruins of the city (2:13). It was located at the southwest corner of the city walls, about 500 yards from the Dung Gate; and both opened into the Valley of Hinnom. The workers here not only

restored the gate, but they also repaired the section of the wall between the two gates. It is likely that this long section of the wall—over 1,700 feet—was not as severely damaged as the other sections.

Every Christian needs a “valley gate,” for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble (1 Peter 5:5–6). It is only as we yield to Christ and serve others that we can truly enter into the fullness of the life He has for us (Phil. 2:1–11).

The Dung Gate (Neh. 3:14) was located at the southernmost tip of the city, near the Pool of Siloam. It was a main exit to the Valley of Hinnom, where the city disposed of its garbage. The word *gehenna* means “valley of Hinnom” and identified this area that Jesus used as a picture of hell, “where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:44). King Manasseh had sacrificed children to idols in that valley (2 Chron. 33:6), and King Josiah had desecrated the place by turning it into a rubbish heap (2 Kings 23:10).

The sanitary disposal of waste materials is essential to the health of a city. This gate did not have a beautiful name, but it did perform an important service! It reminds us that, like the city, each of us individually must get rid of whatever defiles us, or it may destroy us (2 Cor. 7:1; 1 John 1:9).

The Fountain Gate (Neh. 3:15) was on the east wall, just north of the Dung Gate, in a very strategic location near the Pool of Siloam, the old City of David and the water tunnel built by King Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:20). The Gihon Spring that fed the water system was an important source of water in the city.

In the Bible, water for drinking is a picture of the Holy Spirit of God (John 7:37–39), while water for washing is a picture of the Word of God (Eph. 5:26; John 15:3). Spiritually speaking, we have moved from the Valley Gate (humility) to the Dung Gate (cleansing) to the Fountain Gate (fullness of the Spirit).

The Water Gate (Neh. 3:26) led from the old City of David to the Gihon Spring, located adjacent to the Kidron Valley. Jerusalem was one of the few great cities of antiquity that was not built near a great river, and the city depended on reservoirs and springs for its water. The text does not say that this gate was repaired, but only that the workers repaired the walls adjacent to it. The “Nethinims” (“those who are given”) were probably temple servants, descendants of the Gibeonites who were made drawers of water (Josh. 9:23). They would naturally want to live near the most important source of water for the city.

If the Fountain Gate reminds us of the Spirit of God, the Water Gate reminds us of the Word of God. In fact, it was at the Water Gate that Ezra and the priests conducted a great “Bible conference” and explained the Scriptures to the people (8:1 ff). That this gate is not said to have been repaired, as were the others, suggests that the Word of God stands forever and will not fail (Ps. 119:89; Matt. 24:35). The Bible does not need to be repaired or improved.

“The Ophel” (Neh. 3:26–27) was a hill south of the temple area, between the Horse Gate and the Water Gate. It was especially fortified and had a tower. The temple servants lived in that area because it was close to the water supply.

The Horse Gate (Neh. 3:28) stood north of the Water Gate, adjacent to the temple area. It was here that wicked Athaliah was executed (2 Chron. 23:15). God warned His people not to trust in horses and chariots (Deut. 17:14–20), but Solomon imported them from Egypt (1 Kings 10:26–29), and they became an important part of the nation’s defense system (Isa. 2:7). The Horse Gate reminds us that there is warfare in the Christian life (2 Tim. 2:1–4) and that we must always be ready to do battle (Eph. 6:10–18). It is significant that the priests repaired this gate as well as the Sheep Gate. Both were near the temple area.

The East Gate (Neh. 3:29) led directly to the temple and is probably what we know today as the Golden Gate. Tradition says that Jesus entered the temple on Palm Sunday through this gate. In the sixteenth century, the gate was sealed up with blocks of stone by the Turkish sultan, Sulayman the Magnificent. Jewish and Christian tradition both connect the Golden Gate with the coming of the Messiah to Jerusalem, and Muslims associate it with the future judgment.

Ezekiel saw the glory of the Lord depart from the temple at the East Gate (Ezek. 10:16–22; 11:22–25), and the Lord will return to the city the same way (43:1–5). So, we have every reason to associate this gate with the coming of the Lord and to remind ourselves to “abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming” (1 John 2:28).

The Gate Hammiphkad (Neh. 3:31) was located at the northeast corner of the city. The Hebrew word has a military connotation and refers to the mustering of the troops for numbering and inspection. The NIV and NASB both translate it “the Inspection Gate.” This is where the army was reviewed and registered. The north side of Jerusalem was the most vulnerable to attack, so this was a logical place to locate the army. When our Lord returns, He will gather His people together and review their works in preparation for giving out rewards for faithful service (1 Cor. 3:10–15; 2 Cor. 5:9–10; Rom. 14:10–12).

In this report, Nehemiah does not mention the Gate of Ephraim (Neh. 8:16; 12:39) or the Gate of the Guard (12:39). The former may have been on the north wall, looking toward the area of Ephraim; and the latter may have been associated in some way with “The Inspection Gate.” Some translate it “The Prison Gate.” It may have been the “court of the guard” named in 3:25.

Nehemiah’s record ends with the Sheep Gate (v. 32), the place where he began (v. 1). Because they have rejected their Messiah, the people of Israel today have no sacrifice, no temple, and no priesthood (Hosea 3:4). Thank the Lord, here and there, individual Jews are trusting Christ; but the nation as a whole is blinded in unbelief (Rom. 11:25ff). When they see their Messiah, they will believe and be saved (Zech. 12:10–13:1).

No one person could have accomplished the work of repairing the walls and restoring the gates. It took leadership on Nehemiah’s part and cooperation on the part of the people. Each had a place to fill and a job to do. So it is with the church today: We must work together if we are to finish the work to the glory of God.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58, NKJV).

Getz, G. A. (1985). Nahum. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 678-680) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

D. Nehemiah’s delegation of the work (chap. 3)

A task so enormous as rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, especially under adverse conditions, called for unusual organizational effort. The uniqueness of Nehemiah’s plan is evident in this chapter. Several aspects of his delegation of the work are evident.

He assigned everyone a specific place to work. This coordination stands out in the phrases “next to him,” “next to them,” “next to that,” “the next section,” “beside him,” and “beyond them,” which occur 28 times in this chapter.

Assignments were made near people’s houses (vv. 21, 23–24, 26, 28–30). Reasons for this plan are obvious. First, people who were assigned to sections of the wall near their homes would

be more personally involved and consequently more highly motivated. Second, they would not have to travel to another part of the city to do the job, wasting valuable time. Third, in case of attack they would not be tempted to leave their posts, but would stay and protect their families. Fourth, the whole task would be a family effort, utilizing all available talent.

Commuters also had a part. Men whose homes were outside of Jerusalem—in Jericho (v. 2), Tekoa (vv. 5, 27), Gibeon (v. 7), and Mizpah (v. 7)—were assigned to sections of the wall where there were few homes. Those workers were asked to complete tasks that would not be as conveniently handled by the permanent residents in Jerusalem.

Assignments were also made by vocation. For example, the high priest and his fellow priests were assigned to rebuild the Sheep Gate (v. 1). This was of particular interest to them, because animals were brought through that gate to the temple for sacrifice. Other priests are mentioned in verses 22, 28. Other workers whose vocations are listed include goldsmiths (vv. 8, 31–32), perfume-makers (v. 8), district and half-district rulers (vv. 9–12, 14–19), Levites (v. 17), and merchants (vv. 31–32). Even one man's daughters were involved (v. 12).

1. WORKERS ON THE NORTH WALL (3:1–5)

The map “Jerusalem in the Time of Nehemiah” shows the 11 gates and four towers mentioned in this chapter. Of the 11 gates, 6 were repaired (vv. 1, 3, 6, 13–15).

3:1–2. Nehemiah's account of the repairs begins with **the Sheep Gate** at the northeast of the wall, and proceeds counterclockwise. The Sheep Gate is known to have been in that location because it was near the Pool of Bethesda (John 5:2), which archeologists have located in that area.

Eliashib the high priest (cf. Neh. 13:4) was a grandson of Jeshua (12:10), the high priest in Zerubbabel's day (Ezra 3:2). Eliashib and other **priests** (cf. Neh. 3:22) repaired and **dedicated** the Sheep Gate and then repaired the walls to **the Tower of the Hundred** and **the Tower of Hananel** (also mentioned in 12:39; Jer. 31:38; Zech. 14:10). The exact locations of these two towers are not known, but they were between the Sheep Gate and the Fish Gate.

3:3–5. **The Fish Gate** may have been the gate through which the people of Tyre brought fish they sold (13:16). **Meremoth**, a priest's son (cf. Ezra 8:33), also worked on a second **section** (Neh. 3:21), as did **Meshullam** (v. 30), whose daughter was married to Tobiah's son (6:18). **The men of Tekoa**, Amos' hometown (Amos 1:1) about 12 miles south of Jerusalem, **repaired** a **section**. Though the **nobles** of Tekoa did **not** help in the project, others from Tekoa took on another section, on the east wall (Neh. 3:27).

2. WORKERS ON THE WEST WALL (3:6–12)

3:6–12. Between **the Jeshanah** (or “Old”; cf. NIV) **Gate** (v. 6) and **the Broad Wall** (v. 8) was the Gate of Ephraim (cf. 12:39). **Gibeon and Mizpah** were a few miles northwest of Jerusalem. (Meremoth's site is unknown.) Somewhat surprisingly, those towns were **under ... the governor of Trans-Euphrates** (cf. 2:9). The exact sites of those gates and of **the Tower of the Ovens** (3:11) is not known, but the tower may have been near the ovens in the street of the bakers (Jer. 37:21). A goldsmith and a perfume-maker (Neh. 3:8) took on a different line of work when they went into construction labor. Even rulers of Jerusalem's districts and half-districts (vv. 9, 12; cf. vv. 14–15) took up tools for the building project.

3. WORKERS ON THE SOUTH WALL (3:13–14)

3:13–14. **The Valley Gate** was where Nehemiah’s nighttime inspection tour began and ended (2:13, 15). **The Dung Gate** was so named because it led to the Hinnom Valley south of the city where refuse was dumped.

4. WORKERS ON THE SOUTHEAST WALL (3:15–27)

3:15–16. **The Fountain Gate** was on the east wall, north of the Dung Gate. **The Pool of Siloam** was near **the King’s Garden**, near which Zedekiah, Judah’s last king, had gone in his attempt to escape from Jerusalem while the Babylonians were conquering the city (Jer. 39:4).

The tombs of David refer to those of David and his descendants, the kings of Judah. David was buried in this area, “the city of David” (1 Kings 2:10). **The artificial pool** may be the King’s Pool (Neh. 2:14) or perhaps the “lower pool” (Isa. 22:9). **The House of the Heroes** may have been the barracks of David’s select soldiers, or “mighty men” (2 Sam. 23:8).

3:17–27. **Binnui** (v. 18) also **repaired another section** (v. 24). **The armory** (v. 19) is another point near the eastern wall. **The angle** was apparently some turn in the wall. Another **angle** is mentioned in verses 24–25.

Private houses were some of the points of reference: **the house of Eliashib the high priest** (vv. 20–21; cf. v. 1), **Benjamin** and Hasshub’s **house** (v. 23), and **Azariah’s house** (vv. 23–24). Other houses were mentioned later including the priests’ houses (v. 28), Zadok’s house (v. 29), Meshullam’s house (v. 30), and “the house of the temple servants and the merchants” (v. 31).

Meremoth (v. 21) **repaired** two sections (cf. v. 4), as did the Tekoites (vv. 5, 27). **Priests** (v. 22; cf. v. 1) and **Levites** (v. 17) were involved in the repair work, closer to the temple than to other parts of the wall. The **tower** (v. 25) was near the **palace**, presumably the palace built by Solomon (1 Kings 7:1–8). **The court of the guard** may have been part of Solomon’s great courtyard near his palace (1 Kings 7:9–12). **The hill of Ophel** (Neh. 3:26) was the area between the city of David and the temple mount. Understandably **the temple servants** lived near the temple area.

5. WORKERS ON THE NORTHEAST WALL (3:28–32)

3:28–32. **The Horse Gate** (v. 28) on the east wall may have been where horses entered the palace area. **The East Gate** (v. 29) was directly east of the temple area. **Malkijah** (v. 31) is the third man by this name in this chapter (see vv. 11, 14). His wall **repairs** extended south to **the house of the temple servants**, who are mentioned in verse 26 as living on the hill of Ophel. **Merchants** also lived in that area near the temple servants. **The Inspection Gate** was at the northeast corner of the wall (cf. **the corner** in v. 24). **The room above the corner** was a room on the wall whose purpose is not known. **The Sheep Gate** brings the reader back to the starting point (cf. v. 1).

Mathews, K. A. (1998). The Historical Books. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), Holman Concise Bible Commentary (p. 185). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Restoring Gates and Walls (3:1–32). The high priest Eliashib (12:10, 22; 13:4) led the work by reconstructing the Sheep Gate. The Fish Gate and wall followed. Workers on the Jeshanah (“Old”) Gate and wall included rulers, perfume makers, and women. The Valley Gate and

Dung Gate, leading to the city's dumpsite, were next. The restorers of the Fountain Gate and wall included nobility and Levites. Temple servants worked at the Water Gate and wall, and the priests repaired the Horse Gate. The residents near the East Gate and wall repaired it. Among those laboring at and nearby the Inspection Gate were a goldsmith and merchants. People of all occupations participated, including whole families. Despite opposition, they cooperated in their common goal to do the Lord's work.

Richards, L. O. (1991). The Bible reader's companion (electronic ed., p. 316). Wheaton: Victor Books.

See Transition Notes

Brooks, K. (2009). Summarized Bible: Complete Summary of the Old Testament (p. 96). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

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