

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 9/22/10

Series: *“Facing the Past, Moving Ahead for God’s Honor: Nehemiah”*

Current study: Nehemiah 3 “The Rebuilding of the Wall”

Facing the past, moving ahead for God’s honor. That’s what’s happening in the book we’re studying on Wednesday evenings, the book of Nehemiah. The past was not pleasant—destruction, deportation, debris. That was the past (a past with present implications for 5th century Israel) But God in His mercy raised up a leader to help His people move ahead.

This evening in our study of Nehemiah, we’re going to see the action begin. The anticipated project of rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem takes place in chapter 3. Let’s review what has already happened to this point...

The Context:

- God chose the nation of Israel to be His covenant people (Gen 12, 15; Exodus 20).
- God’s people violated their covenant responsibilities and experienced the predicted consequences. God sent them into captivity in Babylon (586 B.C.).
- Jerusalem was destroyed by the invading army of Nebuchadnezzar, and remained in shambles for decades.
- Around 445 B.C. Nehemiah found out about the conditions in Jerusalem. He knew that God’s reputation was being tainted because of the situation. So...
 - ⇒Nehemiah prayed about the problem (ch 1).
 - ⇒God answered Nehemiah’s prayer (ch 2a).
 - ⇒Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem intending to rebuild the city (2:9).
 - ⇒Nehemiah inspected the city wall, and then mobilized God’s people to rebuild the wall (ch 2b).
 - ⇒The people responded (2:18), “Let us start rebuilding.’ So they began this good work.”

Then we come to chapter 3. It’s quite a chapter. Scan chapter 3. Look down through the 32 verses. What do you see? A bunch of names. We see the names of people who participated in the building project. We also see the names of the places where they worked.

Discuss: What’s your first impression as you look at this list of names and places?

Preliminary Observations:

- Some 48 specific individuals or groups are named.
- Ten gates are mentioned, as well as a host of other landmarks and structures (such as towers, pools, and houses).
- The flow of the narrative takes us in a counter-clockwise direction around the city of Jerusalem, starting (1) and finishing (32) at the Sheep Gate.

Let’s observe the text by walking through the chapter. Then let’s seek to answer the question, “Why did God preserve this chapter in His Word? What does He want us to learn from it?”

An Examination of Chapter Three

I. They worked on the section from the Sheep Gate to the Fish Gate (1-2).

⇒Eliashib & the priests

Lesson: You never finish a project unless you start it. And notice who’s mentioned first in this list of workers—the high priest and his fellow workers. The priests set the example. The “men of the cloth” rolled up their sleeves and worked on the Sheep Gate.

Discuss: Why is that significant?

⇒Men of Jericho

⇒Zaccur
II. They worked on the section from the Fish Gate to the Jeshanah Gate (3-5).

- ⇒Sons of Hassenaah
- ⇒Meremoth
- ⇒Meshullam
- ⇒Zadok
- ⇒Men of Tekoa

III. They worked on the section from the Jeshanah Gate to the Valley Gate (6-12).

- ⇒Joiada & Meshullam
- ⇒Men from Gibeon & Mizpah (Melatiah & Jadon)
- ⇒Uzziel
- ⇒Hananiah

Q: What was his occupation? A “perfume maker”

To do: Scan the text. The people working on the wall came from a variety of backgrounds professionally. What are some of the different occupations mentioned? High priest (1), goldsmith (8, 31), perfume maker (8), ruler (9), priests (1, 22, 28), temple servants (26, 31), guard (29), merchants (31, 32).

Q: What does that indicate about the people? They were willing to serve, in some cases, in ways they were not accustomed to. They laid aside personal preferences in order to get this job done for the Lord’s honor.

- ⇒Rephaiah
- ⇒Jedaiah

Note: Where did he work? Verse 1—“he made repairs opposite his house.” Don’t miss that. Several times we’re told that people worked on the section of the wall closest to where they lived (see verses 22, 23, 28, 30).

Discuss: Why is that significant?

- ⇒Hattush
- ⇒Malkijah & Hasshub
- ⇒Shallum & his daughters

Note: This was a family project! Why are we told that his daughters got involved?

IV. They worked on the section from the Valley Gate to the Dung Gate (13).

- ⇒Hanun & the residents of Zanaoh

V. They worked on the section from the Dung Gate to the Fountain Gate (14).

- ⇒Malkijah

VI. They worked on the section from the Fountain Gate to the Water Gate (15-26).

- ⇒Shallun
- ⇒Nehemiah son of Azbuk
- ⇒The Levites under Rehum
- ⇒Hashabiah
- ⇒Binnui and the countrymen
- ⇒Ezer
- ⇒Baruch
- ⇒Meremoth
- ⇒The priests from the region
- ⇒Benjamin & Hasshub
- ⇒Azariah
- ⇒Binnui
- ⇒Palal

- ⇒Pedaiah and the temple servants
- VII. They worked on the section from the Water Gate to the Horse Gate (27).
 - ⇒Men of Tekoa
- VIII. They worked on the section from the Horse Gate to the East Gate (28-29).
 - ⇒The priests
 - ⇒Zadok
 - ⇒Shemaiah
- IX. They worked on the section from the East Gate to the Inspection Gate (30).
 - ⇒Hananiah & Hanun
 - ⇒Meshullam
- X. They worked on the section from the Inspection Gate to the Sheep Gate (31-32).
 - ⇒Malkijah
 - ⇒Goldsmiths and merchants

The Implications of Chapter Three

Why did God preserve this chapter in His Word? It illustrates a couple of truths...

1. *God keeps His promises.*

Discuss: What do we learn about God from chapter 3?

2. *God is honored when His people work together to do something for His honor.*

What do we learn about God's plan for His people in chapter 3? There are several lessons we can learn...

⇒Work is good.

⇒We can honor God by swinging a hammer as well as by teaching His Word.

Every part of the Lord's service is vital.

To do: Scan the text, and answer this. How many different kinds of jobs are mentioned that contributed to the overall task of rebuilding the wall?

Some rebuilt gates (1), some set doors (1), others rebuilt sections between the gates (2). Some laid beams (3), others put on doors, bolts, and bars (3).

⇒Everyone who knows the Lord can serve the Lord.

But not everyone does so, at least not at the same level of quality.

Q: What was true one team of workers according to verse 13? They repaired 500 yards of wall.

Q: What was true of another set of workers mentioned in verse 5? The "nobles" of Tekoa "would not put their shoulders to the work under their supervisors." Who were these "nobles," and what was their problem? [See the *NIVsb* footnote]

Note: Please realize that not all the people from Tekoa were like this. Who do we see mentioned again in verse 27? The "men of Tekoa." The common people of Tekoa did double duty, repairing a second section of wall, whereas the nobles shirked their responsibility.

⇒When you tackle a big project, it's wise to break it into smaller portions.

⇒It's good to give credit to whom credit is due.

In part, that's what chapter 3 does. It mentions a host of names, the names of people who contributed to this project.

Discuss: What does Nehemiah 3 teach us about Christ?