

NEHEMIAH

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Nehemiah chapter 1 as we continue our study through the Word of God. Now as we move into the book of Nehemiah keep in mind that we are continuing with the Jews returning home from Exile and you will see that it picks up where the book of Ezra ends. It's a continuation of the story of the Jews returning home from their captivity. As we have seen in our study of Ezra, the first return took place under the leadership of Zerubbabel, who led just under 50,000 people back to Jerusalem with him. And Zerubbabel was a political leader whose main focus was to restore the place of worship, to re-build the Temple of God which was destroyed in 586 B. C. by king Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians. So in 538 B. C. he led the people back to Jerusalem and the foundation of the Temple was laid in 536 B. C. Because of opposition to the work by the enemy, the work was put on hold by order of the king of Persia for some 15 years. And then the work began again, with the Temple being completed in 515 B. C., some 21 years after it was first begun. That covers chapters 1 through 6 of the book of Ezra.

The second return took place under the leadership of Ezra, who was a priest and a scribe. And Ezra led less than 2,000 back from Babylon with him; some 80 years after Zerubbabel lead the first return. Ezra, being a priest, was the spiritual leader whose focus was to see the people get right with God. To see them restore their lives back to God. And Ezra does this by having them put away their foreign wives and separate themselves unto God. So in 457 B. C. Ezra led a second return back to Jerusalem to restore the spiritual condition of the people, which we covered in chapters 7 through 10 of the book of Ezra.

Now, as we move into the book of Nehemiah we will see that Nehemiah is going to lead the third and final return back to Jerusalem, this time from Persia. And Nehemiah is a layman, a common person, a cupbearer to the king, who has a burden for the city of Jerusalem. Thus, in 445 B. C. he leads a final group of people back home. Nehemiah's primary focus is to re-build the walls of the city, for without walls the city was defenseless. To put this in perspective time wise, this occurred around 90 years after Zerubbabel lead the first return and about 12 years after Ezra lead the second return.

Now understand that as the book of Nehemiah closes, so does the history of the Old Testament in terms of God speaking to the people. From around 431 B. C. to 29 A. D. God is silent. There are no prophets speaking for Him until John the Baptist comes on the scene calling for the people to get right with God. Some 400 years of silence, but now John is preparing the people to receive the Messiah. Also during the time of Nehemiah, Malachi is prophesying.

As you will see as you read through the book of Nehemiah, the first 7 chapters of Nehemiah deal with the re-building of the walls of the city and then in chapters 8 through 13, the focus is revival and reform. Again we will see a call to get right with God.

The name, “**Nehemiah**” means, “The LORD is comfort.” And this man Nehemiah is going to get the people to look to the only one who can truly give them comfort in the dangerous times they were living in, and that was the Lord!

And I truly believe that the Lord is speaking to us through this, that He has lessons for us to learn. You see, Paul put it this way in II Corinthians 1:3-4 when he said **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”** Yes times will get tough but God will always provide a way out and bring comfort to our lives as we are going through these times!

As we will see, Nehemiah, by his example, will lead and comfort the people as they see that their strength is not found in the world, but in the Lord. Even when the enemy is surrounding Nehemiah, taunting him, he looks up, encouraging the people to do the same.

Also, a little side note here. This Artaxerxes is the step-son of Queen Esther. We will look more at this woman Esther when we come to the book of Esther in a few weeks. But just keep that in mind, that we are just after the time of Esther here in Nehemiah.

One other point before we dig into the Scriptures this evening. Nehemiah was born in Persia, and has never seen Jerusalem, and yet, as we shall see, God has put a burden upon him that causes him to yearn not only for the city, but for his people. When God places something on your heart, don't try to run away from it, but follow Him as Nehemiah is going to do! With that as our background, let's begin reading in Nehemiah chapter 1, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

NEHEMIAH 1

VERSES 1-3

1. We know that Artaxerxes took the throne in Persia in 465 B. C., and so the twentieth year of his reign would bring us to 445 B. C. in the month of Chislev, which corresponds to our November/December. And Nehemiah was in Shushan or Susa, which was the king's winter palace, the capitol being Ecbatana, or modern day Hamadan in Iran. Now Nehemiah had an important job as we will see because he was living in this citadel or fortified palace of the King of Persia.

2. According to Nehemiah 7:2, Hanani is the brother of Nehemiah. And as Hanani and this group return from Jerusalem, Nehemiah wants to know what is going on in Jerusalem. How are the people doing? Their response to this question was simple, “Not well!” You see, the walls remained in ruin and thus, they had no way to protect themselves from the enemy. And the enemy was coming against the people, trying to discourage them. Now keep in mind that Nehemiah has never been to Jerusalem and yet, as we are going to see, he had a passion for the land and the people. And just picture what is going on here as Nehemiah is taking this all in. That is important to do because what he is hearing is going to lead to the response we find in verse 4.

VERSE 4

1. Why was Nehemiah, a man who has never seen Jerusalem, so grieved over what was taking place in that city? It seems that God has stamped on the heart of Nehemiah and the hearts of the Jews in general, a love for Jerusalem, the holy city. I worked with a Jewish woman many years ago whose hearts desire was to live in Jerusalem, and she didn't know why. God has placed a love for His city in her heart and in the hearts of His people.

It is as Psalm 137:1-6 says regarding their time in captivity. It says, **“By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down, yea, we wept When we remembered Zion. We hung our harps Upon the willows in the midst of it. For there those who carried us away captive asked of us a song, And those who plundered us requested mirth, Saying, ‘Sing us one of the songs of Zion!’ How shall we sing the Lord’s song In a foreign land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, Let my right hand forget its skill! If I do not remember you, Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth; If I do not exalt Jerusalem Above my chief joy.”** A love for Jerusalem has been stamped upon the hearts of the Jews!

2. I want you to notice what is taking place here. As Nehemiah hears the bad news regarding Jerusalem he is broken. Now he could have just said, “Well, I will pray for them!” That truly was not what he did here. Yes he was praying, but he was praying to the Lord for direction in what to do. And he prayed for four months regarding this issue. Too often people love to criticize this or complain about what is going on over here but their heart is not broken over the issue, they are just complainers! If what you see before you has not brought you to your knees, then is it really that important to you? It was to Nehemiah and he has given it over to the Lord to direct him in what he should do! He was not asking the Lord to send others, but again, what he should do in this situation! What a heart!

3. As leaders, this is especially true. You see, if you are called to do a work and you are not preparing yourself for that work, if you don't understand that this is not going to be easy, you will most likely become discouraged and the work will stop. Redpath put it like this, "There is no winning without warfare; there is no opportunity without opposition; there is no victory without vigilance. For when ever the people of God say, 'Let us arise and build,' Satan says, 'Let me arise and oppose.'" May we not forget that! Yes God is greater but it doesn't mean the work will not be difficult. God will allow those things into our lives, into the work we are doing so that we will draw close to Him and not rely on our ability to accomplish the work. But you have to have a correct perspective before you start and you need to keep your eyes upon the Lord! And not only that, but we must truly believe that God will correct the problem no matter how difficult it is as Nehemiah was doing. He is basically saying, "Through me, God is going to correct a problem that's been around over hundred years. Through me, God is going to do something that completely failed before." We must have a vision, a goal, that is big enough for God to handle and too big for us to handle!

4. As we begin to look at this prayer of Nehemiah, look at how he starts out and how he finishes it in the remainder of this chapter.

VERSES 5-7

1. Nehemiah starts out this prayer with God on the throne and Nehemiah recognizes that there is only one God and it is not Nehemiah! That is important. And we see that this burden for Jerusalem and his people causes Nehemiah to pray fervently over this situation. He recognizes the reasons for their problems, that they have turned from God. They deserved what they were getting. And I want you to notice the humility in which Nehemiah comes before God. He does not speak of the sins of the people, but Nehemiah includes himself with those that have transgressed the Laws of God.

And as you get down to verse 7, the word, “**corruptly**” is a Hebrew word which speaks of, “to damage, to wound, to cause pain or hurt.” Nehemiah is saying that we have brought pain upon God in our disobedience. We have damaged His character by our actions in the sight of others.

That is true humility and it is as Jesus said in Matthew 5:3-10, “**Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**”

You see, a broken spirit, in humility, when we realize that our sin has separated us from God and apart from Jesus we will never enter into a relationship with Him, that is when we will truly see God. You see, apart from that broken spirit, we will think we are good enough to get in. But with that broken spirit, as we humble ourselves before the Lord, He will lift us up, we will see God! That is what we see here with Nehemiah and God will clearly direct him in what he should do!

VERSES 8-11

1. Here we see Nehemiah come to God and resting in the promises of God! You see, even in all their wickedness, Nehemiah reminds God what He has promised them, that if they would ever turn back to Him that He will forgive them and restore them. Nehemiah is basically saying, “Lord, you made these promises to Moses and the children of Israel, now I am asking you to make good on these promises.” You see, Nehemiah is quoting out of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 30 and as you read through this prayer you see Nehemiah just re-affirming the faithfulness of God. Even in the judgment, God was faithful for He said these things would happen if they turned from Him and they are witnesses of that. And now they are resting in the promise if they return He will hear their cry and bring them back, make them prosper once again!

2. Notice that Nehemiah is making himself available before God, for God to use him but he is not running ahead of God. He knows about the work that needs to be done and he has given it to the Lord and he is just telling the Lord that he is willing to be the man to step forward and do the work! What a heart this man had. And you have to understand how horrible this situation was for the people in Jerusalem and yet, as hopeless as this situation many have looked, Nehemiah trusted in the Words of God as he quotes Scripture, and he knew God through God's Word, and thus he was able to fully rest upon the faithfulness of God. And even though things looked hopeless, Nehemiah knew that God could just as easily turn things around. It is as Jeremiah 32:17 says, "**Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You.**"

I think this is an important lesson for all of us. Where are you at tonight? Are you struggling in your marriage? Maybe it is a work situation. Maybe you are struggling with your parents. Maybe there is a friend that you are having a hard time with. Maybe it just seems like the walls of your life are just crashing down. What are you going to do? You need to give it to the Lord. You need to humble yourself before Him. You need to understand that the One who has created the heavens and the earth can help you because there is nothing that is too hard for Him! May we not forget that and may we just seek Him and let Him guide us in how to handle the situation!

3. It says that Nehemiah was a cupbearer to the king. According to Herodotus, the Greek historian, he tells us that the Persians bestowed great honor on the cupbearers, often making them chief administrators over the staff. So besides tasting the food and drink for the king to see if it was poisoned, he became the king's right hand man. Obviously he accompanied the king at every meal and get-together, so they had a close relationship, and yet, as we shall see, Nehemiah was a very humble man. And what I want you to notice is that he did not flaunt his position, but here, at the close of the chapter he just tells us his responsibility in the Persian Empire!

NEHEMIAH 2

VERSES 1-2

1. The month of Nisan corresponds with our March/April, and for some 4 months now Nehemiah has been in prayer over this situation. And I don't know how long he was not himself but what was going on in his heart now overflowed in the way he looked. He was down, those inner feelings of sorrow, of a broken heart, has manifested itself in his outward countenance. And the king picks up on this, realizing he is not physically sick, but emotionally down. Now you may think that this is not such a big deal, but it was. Understand that a servant was to serve the king with a joyful heart and not complaining or have a bad day. It could cost you your life if you behaved in that manner and that is why Nehemiah was afraid that his hearts sorrows were manifested in front of the king.

2. Now here's the thing. We, as Christians are servants of the King of kings, and thus, we should serve Him with a joyful heart no matter what we are doing. Too many times people murmur and complain because they aren't doing what they want. They don't have the ministry they want. "I have to clean the church again!" or "I have to teach Sunday School again!" or "I have to stay late at work again!" or whatever it may be and understand that not only does the Lord see what you are doing, how you are complaining, but so are those around you and you are a bad witness because of that. We should heed the words of David when he said in Psalm 84:10, "**For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.**" You see, perspective is everything and we should be honored to do anything for the Lord and to do it with a cheerful heart bringing honor and glory to Him!

3. One more point here. Please understand that Nehemiah did not try to change the king's heart to get what he wanted. He gave it to the Lord and now, some four months later the king's heart is ready and he will let Nehemiah go to Jerusalem as we will see. May we learn the lesson of not trying to change someone's heart but leave it up to the Lord; He does a much better job!

VERSE 3

1. So here we see that as the king asks Nehemiah what is wrong he says, “Nothing, I am okay!” right? No, that is not what he said. He was honest with the king; he let the king know what was troubling his heart. He was broken over what his father’s city, Jerusalem was like. And since he never lived there he only had the reports that the city was in ruins, the walls broken down, the people not safe! I think there is a balance folk’s. Yes, we don’t want to be Wendy Whiner and complain about everything but we do need to let our brothers and sisters know what is troubling us so they can pray for us. Now I am sorry to have to say this but it does need to be said. There are just some people you can’t tell what is wrong because they are like a grapevine in that they hear it and then it spreads like wildfire. You have to be wise who you share with, but you should have someone you can tell and for those of you who are married, that should be your spouse. For those of you who are not married, it should be someone of the same sex; brothers in the Lord should speak to brothers and sisters to sisters! I realize that some of you may not agree, but I have seen it happen where things get out of hand and before you know it there is a relationship where there should have been no relationship!

VERSES 4-8

1. Nehemiah pours his heart to the king and the king wants to know what can be done about this situation. Now Nehemiah doesn’t just say anything, but he prays about the situation. Not a long, drawn out prayer, but a short, to the point prayer. God knows what we need before we even ask Him. So we don’t need to impress Him with our fancy words or speaking in the old King James tongue.

2. Now the date that this decree was issued is very important to us, prophetically speaking! In Daniel 9:25 we are told, **“Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times.”** Daniel 9:25.

Now if we look at the Scripture we can find four starting points, but only one is correct and you will see why. In Ezra chapter 1 we see a decree by Cyrus, king of Persia, to rebuild the Temple in around 536 B. C. But this is not speaking of the streets and the walls of the city but only the Temple and thus this is not the starting point.

Another starting date is given to us in Ezra chapter 6 and here we see a decree by Darius, king of Persia to again rebuild the Temple around 520 B. C. and thus, this too is not the starting point.

The third potential starting point is found in Ezra chapter 7 and here we see a decree by king Artaxerxes Longimanus to restore the articles of the Temple and this was around 447 B. C. and again this is not the starting point.

The starting point, according to Daniel, is to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and so we see in Nehemiah chapter 2 that king Artaxerxes Longimanus gave the command to Nehemiah to rebuild the streets and the walls. This is the starting point which we are told occurred in the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of king Artaxerxes reign.

How do we know the exact date? According to the 1990 edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica, it states that Artaxerxes ascended to the throne of the Medo-Persian Empire in July 465 B. C. So if the command was given in the twentieth year of his reign that would put the year the command was given at 445 B. C. Now according to Hebrew tradition, when the day of the month is not specified, then it is taken to be the first day of that month. So the day of the decree by Artaxerxes was the first day of the Hebrew month Nisan 445 B. C., which corresponds to the fourteenth day of March. Thus, our starting date is March 14, 445 B. C.

And so we see that Nehemiah is going to return to re-build the walls of the city with the starting point which Daniel spoke of in Daniel 9:25 being March 14, 445 B. C. Now if you would count off 483 years from this command, its ending point will usher in the Meshiach Nagid or the Messiah the King.

This prophecy is based on a 360 day Babylonian calendar. That means if you were to count off 173,880 days from March 14, 445 B. C., you would come to the day where the Messiah would be introduced.

How does this work out? Well, from March 14, 445 B. C. to March 14, 32 A. D. is 476 years (From 1 B. C. to 1 A. D. it is only 1 year, for there is no year for zero). If you take those 476 years and multiply it times 365, our calendar year, it would come to 173,740 days. You need to add for leap years which would equal 116 days (1 day for every 4 years, except for centennial years, they are not leap years except for every 400th year). Then from March 14 to April 6 equals another 24 days bringing our total to 173,880 days.

It was on April 6, 32 A. D. Jesus rode through Jerusalem as Messiah the King, the only time He allowed the people to worship Him as king, we call that day Palm Sunday. There were other times that the people wanted to make Him king, but He would not allow it. In John 6:15 we read, **“Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone.”** You see, His time had not come yet. But when those days were fulfilled, 173,880 days after the command that Artaxerxes gave to Nehemiah, on March 14, 445 B. C., as Daniel said, the Meshiach Nagid did indeed come!

3. We need to keep in mind that this was a dangerous journey and so Nehemiah gets letters from the king to secure the work he is to do. But ultimately Nehemiah knows that it is the hand of God upon his life that will keep him safe!

VERSES 9-10

1. Why was the enemy so upset as Nehemiah came to Jerusalem? Because Nehemiah was coming to aid his people, to help them out and the enemy did not want the Jews strong, but weak! Whenever you begin to help people physically and spiritually, the enemy will get upset and try to destroy the work. If you are doing nothing, the enemy can care less because you are no threat to him.

2. What I like about Nehemiah here, and there are many things about him that I like, is that God gave him the vision of what needed to be done, the king allowed him to go and then we are told, “**Then I went . . .**” Many times Christians talk and talk about what they are going to do and there is no action, there is no, “**Then I went . . .**” Talking about doing something is not that same as doing it, I am sure you all know that and yet how often people get caught in that trap. Folk’s, God is in the *DOING* of the thing not in the *TALKING* about the thing!

And I do realize that it is a lot easier to talk about it than to do it because it is scary, you have to take those steps of faith and do it! But let me give you just two verses to help you if or when you feel this way. Paul said in Philippians, “**I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. . . . And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.**” Philippians 4:13, 19.

Do you see that? You can do all that God wants you to do in Christ because He is the one who will strengthen you! Not only that, but He will supply all that you need to do the task He is asking you to do. So don’t talk about what God wants you to do, *DO IT!*

VERSES 11-16

1. Please understand that the work that Nehemiah was about to begin was enormous. So he doesn't rush in, but takes time to pray and seek God's direction in this matter. And as Nehemiah goes out to see the work that needed to be done it was devastating to him. The city, the walls were destroyed back in 586 B. C. by the Babylonians, and they still remained in ruins. It was so bad at one point that his animal could go no further so he had to get off of this animal and walk. Nehemiah had the burden and now he is getting a vision of the work that needed to be done before he told anyone why he was even there. He went at night, he only had his animal, there were not a lot of things that could have drawn attention to him and he now saw with his eyes what he had heard with his ears of what needed to be done! In a sense, Nehemiah was counting the cost of what needed to be done and before we step forward, we should do the same!

2. Now was Nehemiah wrong in what he was focusing upon? Should he just have looked at the good, they were back in the land that God had promised them after all? Many feel that way but you can't negate what needs to be rebuilt; you can't hide your head in the sand. It is as we see what needs to be done that we have a broken heart over it and we begin to pray and move forward to do the work! It is as Redpath wrote, "It is utter folly to refuse to believe that things are as bad as they really are. It is vital in any undertaking for God to know the worst, for whenever there is to be a wonderful movement of the Holy Spirit, it begins with someone like Nehemiah who was bold enough to look at facts, to diagnose them, and then to rise to the task."

VERSES 17-18

1. Notice what Nehemiah is doing here. He is exhorting the people to do the work, to rebuild the walls. Now let me say this. These people had to be discouraged, for some 100 years that they have been back in the land these walls remained destroyed. When they tried to repair them, their effort was stopped.

And now Nehemiah is telling them, “Men, let’s rebuild the walls!” Now he does not just say those words, but he gives them the words of God to encourage them in this work. You see, he showed them how the hand of God was upon his life bringing him to Jerusalem and with the king’s encouragement! The Word of God spoken can give people great encouragement folk’s, may we not forget that. Showing how God is working in this venture also gives encouragement. And the people shouted, “**Let us rise up and build.**” They were so encouraged that they are ready to go; they were like-minded in the task before them with Nehemiah!

2. As parents, may you encourage your children by giving to them the Word of God and showing how God is working in your life and their life! As a friend, as a co-worker, may we be able to encourage people with the Word of God and showing them our life as a witness of what God is doing! May we be the ones to either encourage them in the work or to draw them to Christ by our actions!

3. Years ago I experienced the frustration with a person who was not like-minded, and it was only trouble. This man was on the board of elders and it got to the point that everything that the senior pastor said, for instance, “The sky is blue” he would say, “No, it is gray!” He contradicted everything that was said. And it was a constant struggle even to go to these board meetings for nothing was accomplished. And God finally removed him and it is amazing how smoothly things can go when people of like minds are working together for the cause of Christ!

VERSES 19-20

1. Word quickly spreads of what the plan was all about and the enemy catches wind of it. And as they hear of what the Jews want to do they then begin to laugh and ridicule the work that is about to begin. Please understand that spiritual opposition to the work God wants to accomplish is a reality and the tragedy is many Christians fail to take that into account and thus, when things get tough, they are defeated and don't complete what God has for them to do!

Don't become discouraged, don't stop the work, but do what Nehemiah did. He stood on the faithfulness of God to sustain them in the work and he told the enemy to take a hike, for this land is not even theirs, but ours! Remember what Paul said in I Corinthians 15:58, words of encouragement in the work we are doing. He said **“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.”** Why do we listen to the enemy who laughs at the work we are doing instead of the Lord who called us to do the work and not only can we do the work in Him, but He will supply our needs to complete the work!

4. Now as we move into chapter 3 of Nehemiah we are going to see Nehemiah place certain people in charge over various areas of the walls that needed to be re-built. And he placed them in the sections that were close to their homes and thus they would have a personal interest in building this section of the wall. Also, in case of attack from the enemy they would not have to rush home to protect their families, but they could take a firm stance by the wall they were repairing, by their homes and families. And so Nehemiah was very wise in the way he set-up this work force.

Also, in Isaiah 60:18 we read, **“... But you shall call your walls Salvation, And your gates Praise.”** When you look at the various gates that surrounded Jerusalem, their names give us a picture of the Christian life which brings forth praise. These 10 gates spoken of here in chapter 3 represent our Christian walk as you will see as we go through each one.

NEHEMIAH 3**VERSES 1-2**

1. The Sheep Gate is where the sheep would enter into the city, located near the pool of Bethesda (John 5:21). Before we can enter the sheep gate we have to come through the door, Jesus Christ, **“... The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”** John 1:29. It is then that you become one of His sheep and He will lead you in and out.

John 10:1-4 tells us, **“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.”** So the first step in our walk is coming to Christ and once you come to Christ, if you have drifted away, the rebuilding always starts with a renewed focus on Jesus!

2. We also see that Eliashib and others built the wall. Keep that in mind. One group will build the gate and these others will be rebuilding the wall, which was just as important.

VERSES 3-5

1. The next gate that was repaired, in this order, was the Fish Gate. This is where the fish from the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River were brought into the city. For the Christian, those who are His sheep, Jesus said in Matthew 4:19, “**... ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.’**” Once you are saved you are to tell others of Jesus and let me say this. When you first get saved you can’t help but tell others what Jesus has done for you. May we never lose that love, that zeal for the Lord!

2. In verse 5, others who were rebuilding the wall, some refused to do the work. Why? Maybe they thought it was foolish, that it would never work, maybe they did not agree with what Nehemiah was saying. Whatever the case, of all the men that Nehemiah lists here, these leaders of the Tekoites, the nobles refused and they are the only ones listed in this chapter who did not join in the work! What a sad statement. May we fulfill the work the Lord has called us to do!

VERSES 6-12

1. We move on now to the next gate, the Old Gate. What does that mean to us today? Think about it. The Old Gate speaks of the old things, the foundational truths that we stand upon. Not new things that are not found in the Word of God, but those truths that God shows us through His Word. In doing so we learn more of what and why we believe.

In Jeremiah 6:16 we read, “**Thus says the LORD: ‘Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls’ . . .**” When times get tough, when you are going through the valley of the shadow of death, you need to rest upon the Old Gate, the Word of God!

VERSE 13

1. As we move on the next gate we come across is the Valley Gate. Think about that for a minute. Our Shepherd will lead us through those dark valleys where we will encounter trails and tribulations to help us get rid of those things that are hindering our relationship with Him and draw us closer to Him. It is in the valley, many times, that God shows us the junk in our hearts.

Remember what Peter said as he warned us, “**Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.**” I Peter 4:12-13. That is not an easy thing to do unless you have a correct perspective of the situation, as Psalm 23:4 tells us, “**Yea, 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.**” We will go through the valley but the Lord is right there with us comforting us, correcting us, protecting us all the way!

VERSES 14

1. This is one that many like to ignore, the Dung Gate or the Refuse gate. The Dung Gate was the gate that led to the Hinnom Valley, south of the city, where the garbage was taken to and burned. And it was important for the health of the city just as it is important for us to get rid of the garbage that is in our lives to keep us spiritually healthy. You see, God is also purging, removing the garbage in our life if we would only let Him. Paul put it this way when he said in II Corinthians 7:1, **“Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”** You and I need to recognize that we need to confess our sins to God. We need to be honest with Him and confess our sins before Him because confession is the means by which we get out the garbage. Remember what John said in I John 1:9, **“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”** May we not ignore the Dung Gate!

VERSES 15-25

1. As we move on away from the Dung Gate we come to the Fountain Gate. The picture here is this. As God purges our hearts from all that filth He will also refresh us with the water of His Spirit. Jesus said in John 4:13-14, **“... ‘Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.’”** Also in John 7:38 we read, **“He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”**

God will give us times of refreshing, as He pours His spirit out upon our lives empowering us to do the work and to strengthen us. But we do need that refreshing, we need to be continually being filled with the Holy Spirit. You see, when a believer is filled with the Spirit, he is not just a well, he is not just a container to contain God, but he is a fountain of living water which will gush out to be a blessing to other people. All of us should be a blessing to others in these days in which we live.

VERSES 26-27

1. The seventh gate that we come to is the Water Gate. And this was the gate they used to bring water into the city. And there is something that I believe is interesting here. The water gate did not need to be repaired, only those things around it. Water symbolically represents the Word of God, and God's Word does not need repair because it is not broken. What an important statement that is for us today as many try to add to the Word, make it more relevant for the day, change the Word of God like it needs to be changed or repaired. God's Word is perfect because God is perfect!

Remember what Jesus said in John 17:17, "**Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.**" God's Word is truth and He knew what we needed even before we needed it! He has given us His Word so that we can know who He is and how we are to live out our lives! Also in John 15:3 we read, "**You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.**" And in Ephesians 5:26 Paul tells us, "**that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word.**" Thus, we will grow in the Lord as we read and apply those lessons that God has for us in His Word to our life!

VERSE 28

1. The next gate was the Horse Gate; it led to the Kidron Valley. The horse is an animal of power and of strength. And as with the horse, God will give us the strength, the power to complete the work He has called us to do, to finish the race. Paul reminds us in II Timothy 2:3, **“You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”** Now don’t loose heart because we are told in Isaiah 40:29-31, **“He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall, But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.”** The Hebrew word of **“wait”** speaks of “to serve.” In other words, we are to be busy doing the work of God and He will give us the strength to finish it. And in Isaiah 41:10, **“Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”**

VERSES 29-30

1. The ninth gate is the East Gate and it was the first gate opened in the morning as the sun rose up! The East Gate is the gate that Christ will enter through when He comes to set up His kingdom here on the earth. When the Turks found out about that prophecy they blocked up the east gate with all kinds of rocks to prevent Christ from entering through it and there is a graveyard in front of it! Like that is going to stop Him!

In Ezekiel 43:1-5 we read, **“Afterward he brought me to the gate, the gate that faces toward the east. And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east. His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory. It was like the appearance of the vision which I saw; like the vision which I saw when I came to destroy the city. The visions were like the vision which I saw by the River Chebar; and I fell on my face. And the glory of the LORD came into the temple by way of the gate which faces toward the east. The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple.”** After serving the Lord on earth, we will rule and reign with Him in His kingdom! May we not lose sight that as dark as this world may be, the Son is going to be rising, the Son of God is coming soon to gather His bride, the Church! And then, after the Tribulation Period, He will enter through that East Gate!

VERSE 31

1. The tenth and last gate is the Miphkad (mif-kawd') Gate. This is the Hebrew word which means, “Inspection.” It is the gate that the soldiers passed through to enter the city after battle. As Christians we will stand before God to receive our rewards. Paul said in II Corinthians 5:10, **“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”** Paul is speaking of those works that have been done out of the right motivation, the right heart, which will be rewarded.

In I Corinthians 3:12-15 we read, **“Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”** And yes, it is also speaking of the judgment of unbelievers, which the Lord will do! At what inspection sight will you appear before the Lord, the Bema Seat of Christ or the Great White Throne Judgment?

VERSE 32

1. We have covered these ten gates that were repaired but why does Nehemiah start and end with the Sheep Gate? That is really simple if you think about it. It is because our Christian life begins and ends with the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. Without Him, we can do nothing that will be accepted by God! He truly needs to be the focus of our lives! And let me close with this, when we began to look at these gates this evening we spoke about the message that God has for us and I think that message is clear. It is just as Isaiah has said **“... But you shall call your walls Salvation, And your gates Praise.”** Isaiah 60:18.

Never forget that!