

# CAPITOL STUDIES

JANUARY 19, 2022 • WEEK 4



## NEHEMIAH: THE CIVIL SERVANT FROM SUSA

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### *Verse of the Week*

Nehemiah 3:1

*Then Eliashib the high priest arose with his brothers the priests and built the Sheep Gate; they consecrated it and hung its doors. They consecrated the wall to the Tower of the Hundred and the Tower of Hananel.*

## Nehemiah: The Builder of Helpers Part I



**T**HIS THIRD CHAPTER OF NEHEMIAH is a remarkable one. Here we see God's people at work building and repairing. God gives a record of the names of the people, where they worked, and how they labored. God keeps such a record of all His servants and their labors. When all His people appear one day before the Judgment Seat of Christ, the books will be opened and "each will receive his own reward according to his own labor" (1 Corinthians 3:8; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:12). This chapter is crowded with the names of those who took part in the work of repairing the wall. Their names are held in everlasting remembrance because, like Mary, they had wrought a good work for the honor of His Name. Holy deeds stand like footprints on the sands of time. Some brief but important lessons can be learned here. This is God's honor role of dedicated workers.

Pastor Arin Hess  
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## INTRODUCTION

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.

### I. NEHEMIAH MADE THE NEED PERSONAL IN HIS PRESENTATION

*Nehemiah 2:17*

*Then I said to them, "You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned by fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a reproach." <sup>1</sup>*

Nehemiah included himself in the appeal to correct the shameful condition of Jerusalem. A good leader not only shows the way, but he also goes the way.

### II. NEHEMIAH GAVE HOPE FOR A SOLUTION BY DIRECTING ATTENTION TO GOD

*Nehemiah 2:18*

*Then they said, "Let us arise and build."*

The need was set before them; they took it to heart and made up their minds to make a start at once. Motivating the people was Nehemiah's great gift.

### III. NEHEMIAH DELEGATED JOBS ACCORDING TO WHAT EACH PERSON WOULD BE MOST MOTIVATED TO FULFILL

#### A. Everyone Had a Job in an Area that Affected Him or Her Personally

*Nehemiah 3:1-5*

*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. <sup>2</sup>Next to Eliashib the men of Jericho built. And next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built. <sup>3</sup>Also the sons of Hassenaah built the Fish Gate; they laid its beams and hung its doors with its bolts and bars. <sup>4</sup>And next to them Meremoth the son of Urijah, the son of Koz, made repairs. Next to them Meshullam the son of Berechiah, the son of Meshezabel, made repairs. Next to them Zadok the son of Baana made repairs. <sup>5</sup>Next to them the Tekoites made repairs; but their nobles did not put their shoulders to the work of their Lord.*



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.

It is thrilling to see how they labored to rebuild the wall. They strengthened their hands for that great task. Our attention is drawn to a phrase which is found many times in this chapter: "He repaired opposite his house." That is where the real work for God must begin, at home.

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.

## B. Everyone Knew What and Where His or Her Specific Job Was

Nehemiah assigned everyone a specific place to work. This coordination stands out in the phrases "next to him," "next to them," "next to that," "after him," and "after them," which occur more than 28 times in this chapter.

## IV. NEHEMIAH USED EVERYONE WITHOUT REGARD FOR POSITION OR QUALIFICATION

### A. Get Leaders Involved

*Nehemiah 3:1*

*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.*

The high priest and priests were first to begin building. They apparently did not have the idea that such work was beneath their position. Rather, those with sacred office took the lead in this restoring work. The Sheep Gate 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 and 28.

### B. Look for Willing Hearts More than Skillful Hands

All may not be able to do the same work, but all can work. The daughters of Shallum (v. 12) could not perhaps do as heavy of work as the son of a goldsmith or the son of an apothecary (v. 8). The priests (v. 1) and the





merchants (v. 32) may not be equally expert in the art of building, but in the Name of God they helped in the work.

Dr. Viggo Olsen, a Nebraska native, “who helped rebuild ten thousand houses in war-ravaged Bangladesh in 1972, derived unexpected inspiration from reading Nehemiah 3, admittedly not one of the more moving passages of Scripture. However, Olsen said, ‘I was struck... that no expert builders were listed in the “Holy Land brigade.” There were priests, priests’ helpers, goldsmiths, perfume makers, and women, but no expert builders or carpenters were named.’ Is this not a healthy reminder in a day when the church is so a-gawk over competence and professional skills?”<sup>2</sup>

“He that will not work should not eat” (2 Thess. 3:10). Surely this holds true regarding spiritual things as well as temporal things. What right has anyone to feast continually on spiritual things if there is no outcome in active service for the Lord, the Giver of all? Those who go and work out of love for Him will receive from Him “that which is right.” “A wise man’s heart directs him toward the right,” ready to manifest itself in action (Eccles. 10:2). Where the heart has been given to God and His cause, the hand of service will certainly follow.

### C. Accept the Fact that Some People Will Not Work

*Nehemiah 3:5*

*Next to them the Tekoites made repairs; but their nobles did not put their shoulders to the work of their Lord.*

This verse is puzzling, but it seems that there were some from the town of Tekoa, the “nobles,” who refused to assist in the work. Did they think it was beneath them? By contrast, however, the chapter is littered with others who had social and political clout who avidly contributed their share to the work (see Nehemiah 3:9, 12, 15, 19).

## V. WHEN EVERYONE DOES HIS OR HER PART, THE WORK WILL SUCCEED

The word “repaired” occurs more than thirty times. It dominates the chapter. Each builder repaired—made anew and finished—that piece of work given him or her to do. They were all successful in their work, although all did not do, perhaps, the same amount of work. In the temperament and manner of these workers, there would doubtless be great diversity, but in their object and purpose there was great unanimity and partnership. No one can do everything, but every person can do something.

## CONCLUSION

Those who had houses “repaired each in front of his house” (v. 28). Building for God should begin at the Jerusalem of our own door. Joshua said: “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15).



To say, “the prophet has no honor in his own country,”<sup>3</sup> is no excuse for a Christian worker’s failure at home. Our influence for Jesus Christ abroad will be pretty much like what it is at home. The Holy Spirit will never put a premium on hypocrisy. These workers succeeded because they would not be discouraged, although “their nobles did not support the work of their masters” (v. 5). Those whose hearts God has touched have also got God-touched hands, so they press on with the work, and the God of Heaven prospers. “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

It may be interesting to note that the names of the first and last workers mentioned are suggestive of Jesus Christ as the Alpha and Omega of this great spiritual work: Eliashib (God the Restorer) (v. 1) and Malchiah (God is King) (v. 31). Between the rising of the High Priest and the coming of the King, the work was done.<sup>4</sup>

As we look at the map of Jerusalem, it is true that we cannot precisely locate every place mentioned. True, we may not find Nehemiah 3 as lively and stirring as some narratives of the Old Testament. Still, the names here constitute a roll of honor of Yahweh’s workers, recorded for lasting — and coming — remembrance. And this is typical scriptural and divine practice, for Matthew 10:42 tells us that Christ sees and remembers all acts of love and devotion offered to and for him (cf. Mark 14:9; Heb. 6:10).

“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.”<sup>5</sup>

“No one person could have accomplished the work of repairing the walls and restoring the gates. It took leadership of organization 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.”<sup>6</sup>

In our next study we will see how the cooperation of the workers was the biggest key to rebuilding the wall.

Pastor Arin Hess

## FOOTNOTES

1. All Scripture quotations, unless noted, are taken from the *New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*.
2. Ralph Davis, “Ezra-Nehemiah, Part 11: Blessed Builders,” *Third Mill Magazine Online*, Volume 3, Number 10, 2001.

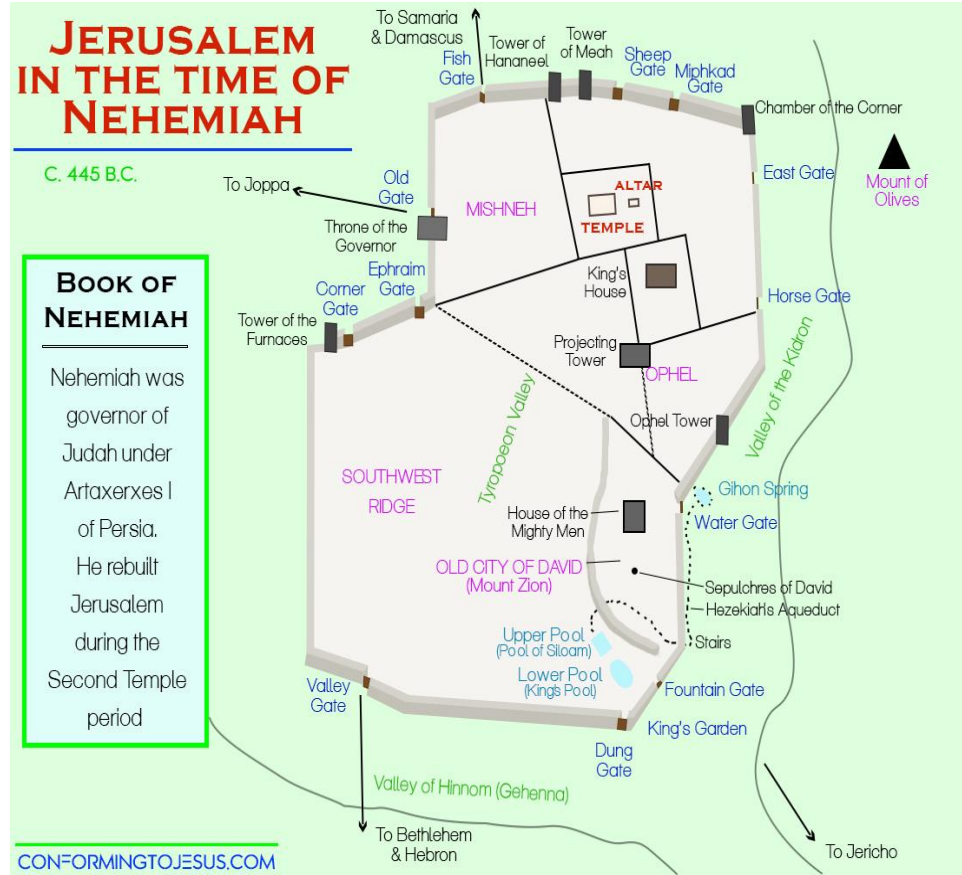


Verse of  
The Week

Nehemiah 3:1

Then Eliashib the high priest arose with his brothers the priests and built the Sheep Gate; they consecrated it and hung its doors. They consecrated the wall to the Tower of the Hundred and the Tower of Hananel.

3. See parallel passages Matt. 13:57, Mark 6:4, Luke 4:24, and John 4:44.
4. James Smith and Robert Lee, *Handfuls on Purpose for Christian Workers and Bible Students, Series I-XIII*, Volume 6, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971, pgs. 127-130.
5. Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Determined*, Victor Books, 1996, pg. 36.
6. *Ibid.*, pg. 47.



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