

# CAPITOL STUDIES

JANUARY 26, 2022 • WEEK 5



## NEHEMIAH: THE CIVIL SERVANT FROM SUSA

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### *Verse of the Week*

Nehemiah 3:12

*Next to him Shallum the son of Hallo-hesh, the official of half the district of Jerusalem, made repairs, he and his daughters.*

## Nehemiah: The Builder of Helpers Part II



**G**OD'S WORK DEMANDS great cooperation, coordination, and commendation. Nehemiah shares cooperative partnerships of God's people. He commends them for their efforts. This whole chapter reminds us of 1 Corinthians 3:11-13, "For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work." It is a cooperative effort involving men and women using their particular gifts and abilities.

Romans 12:4-8 says, "For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness."

*Arin Hess*

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## INTRODUCTION

This work was united. You will notice that almost every verse in chapter 3 begins with words such as these: “And next unto him,” “Next unto them,” “After him,” “After them.” Every worker joined his work with his neighbor’s. Because they were united in heart, they willingly worked in coordinated effort. They were inspired not by any selfish consideration of personal reward or preeminence but by one general, God-honoring motive—the glory of His Name. This included the security of the people and the removal of the shame surrounding the city. The challenge was to keep encouraging one another to love and good works. We cannot be truly united in the great work of God unless all merely sectarian and personal interests yield to the one intense desire to bring honor and glory to God our Savior. The struggle in churches today is often more like the confusion of Babel than the conviction of Pentecost: “We are workers together with Him” (2 Corinthians 6:1).

The work on the walls was organized and directed with the spiritual leaders, the priests, cooperatively taking the lead (3:1). Then the forty-some other groups of workers followed suit. God, through Nehemiah, noted each worker and put their names in this book. People are important to God. We will look at the meanings of these names as we go through the chapter. Names are significant. Proverbs 22:1a tells us that “a good name is to be more desired than great wealth.” In the Hebrew culture, names were given as a description of a particular character trait. This is also true of the various Jewish names for God. Each name of God always reveals a part of His character. *El Shaddai*, meaning “God Almighty”; *Jehovah Jireh*, “the LORD will provide”; and *Immanuel*, “God with us” are just a few of God’s many names.

Jerusalem was built with twelve gates, ten of which are mentioned in Nehemiah. Beginning at the Sheep Gate, we take a tour counterclockwise from the northeast to the west, to the south, to the east, and back again north to the Sheep Gate. Our study follows the natural layout of this chapter with the gates and topography defining the working portions and the people who repaired there. Each worker had a specified area of responsibility. Again, we have the reminder that one person cannot do everything, but each person can do something. However, it is not likely that there will ever be 100-percent cooperation. Remember the nobles who refused to help with the wall (3:5)?

### I. THE SHEEP GATE

#### Nehemiah 3:1, 32

The building of the walls began with the Sheep Gate. Through this gate, the sacrificial animals were led to the altar in the temple. This gate gave constant witness to the fact that “without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Hebrews 9:22). Beginning with this gate was important for another reason. “This northern section of Jerusalem opened up to the central Benjamin plateau where enemy forces could attack most easily from the N[orth]. The rest of the perimeter of the city was protected by



the natural valley topography.”<sup>2</sup> Unlike the other parts of the wall, this portion was also specifically sanctified. Note the last part of verse 1: “They consecrated the wall to the Tower of the Hundred and the Tower of Hananel” (“God has favored”).

**Builders:** The priests, led by Eliashib (“God restores”); the men of Jericho, perhaps led by Zaccur (“mindful”). Other towns in the area joined in the effort to help restore the walls and address the defenseless condition of Jerusalem, because it reflected on the whole nation of Israel.

**Significance:** This gate is a type of Christ who was led as a “lamb to the slaughter.” It pictures the blessed sacrifice of the Lamb of God. “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). All that we are and have as Christians begins at the Sheep Gate, for the Person and work of Christ are the beginning of true restoration and regeneration. At the close of Nehemiah 3 (v. 32), this gate is mentioned again. This is the gate that leads us to life eternal and into God’s very presence (John 14:6). The Sheep Gate had no locks or bars, symbolizing the door of salvation, ever open to the sinner.

## II. THE FISH GATE Nehemiah 3:3-5

**Builders:** The sons of Hassenaah (“lifted up”); Meremoth (“elevations”) – also repaired the section by his own home (v. 21); Meshullam, the son of Berechiah (“friend”) – also repaired the Old Gate (v. 6); Zadok, son of Baana (“righteous”); Tekoites (“trumpet blast”) – Tekoa was the birthplace of the prophet Amos. These workers also helped repair the Water Gate.

**Significance:** We do not know for certain why this gate was called a Fish Gate. Perhaps there was a fish market nearby, or perhaps this was the gate through which the fishermen returned home. This gate does remind us of the words of Christ, “Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men” (Mark 1:17). After we have passed through the Sheep Gate of salvation, we must go through the Fish Gate. First, we are saved through faith in the sacrificial death of Jesus, the Lamb of God, and then we are called to be fishers of souls for Him. In this way the work of God is built up, the church is built up, and Christ is lifted up. It is interesting that Hassenaah’s name means “lifted up.” He was the chief builder at this gate. We must lift up Christ before others: “*He must increase, but I must decrease*” (John 3:30).

## III. THE OLD GATE Nehemiah 3:6-12

**Builders:** Jehoida (“Jehovah knows”) with Meshullam; Melatiah (“Jehovah delivered”), a Gibeonite; Jadon (“thankful”), the Meronothite; Men of Gibeon (the “hill city”); Men of Mizpah (“watch-tower”); Uzziel (“my strength is God”); Hananiah (“God has favored”), a perfumer; Rephaiah (“tower, raised platform, pulpit”); Jedaiah





(“praised of Jehovah”); Hattush (“at his hand”); Malchijah (“my King is Jehovah”); Hashub (“considerate”); Shallum (“retribution”).

**Significance:** The Old Gate was also called the “Corner Gate.” This Old Gate reminds us of Christ, the Cornerstone, 1 Peter 2:6: “Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious cornerstone, and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed” (John 5:39; Luke 24:27; Revelation 1:8, 13-18). It speaks of the old paths and the old truths of the Word of God (Jeremiah 6:16, 18:15). The world’s people are forever looking for “some new thing” (Acts 17:21). They refuse to go back to the basic truths of Scripture which have stood the test of time.

#### IV. THE VALLEY GATE

##### Nehemiah 3:13

This included 1,500 feet of wall. It was probable that some of this wall was still standing, and repairs were just needed for the breaches in the current wall.

**Builders:** Hanun (“gracious”); inhabitants of Zanoah (“cast off or broken”).

**Significance:** This gate pictures the low place of humility (1 Peter 5:6; James 4:6-7). In Philippians 2:8b, “He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross,” 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. Are you allowing yourself to be humbled like Jesus?

#### V. THE DUNG GATE

##### Nehemiah 3:14

The Dung Gate was used to carry refuse and filth out of the city to be burned in the Valley of Tophet or Hinnom. Imagine how difficult it would be to repair a gate in such a place.

**Builder:** Malchiah (“my King is Jehovah”), the official (ruler – *sar*) of Beth-haccherem (a small town and its surrounding region near Jerusalem). Politicians were laboring here.

**Significance:** This gate reminds us of the exhortation in 2 Corinthians 7:1, “Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit” (1 Thessalonians 4:7; Isaiah 1:16-17).

#### VI. THE FOUNTAIN GATE

##### Nehemiah 3:15-25

**Builders:** Shallum (“retribution”); Nehemiah (“Jehovah comforts”), another Nehemiah; the Levites; Rahum (“compassion”); Hashabiah



(“Jehovah has considered”), an official of Keilah; Bavvai (“my goings”), another official of Keilah; Ezer (“treasure”), official of Mizpah; Baruch (“blessed”); the priests; the men of the plain; Benjamin (“son of the right hand”) – Deuteronomy 33:12:“Of Benjamin he said, ‘May the beloved of the Lord dwell in security by Him, Who shields him all the day, And he dwells between His shoulders.’” Hasshub (“associate”); Azariah (“Jehovah has helped”); Binnui (“built-up”); Palal (“judge”); Pedaiah (“Jehovah has ransomed”). Some worked more zealously (v. 20) than others, and some (Meremoth, v. 21) did more than others.

**Significance:** The fountain ever-flowing is a blessed type or picture of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit desires to fill us to overflowing with blessing (John 7:37-39). The “wells of water” springing up like a fountain can be ours only when we have put away all sin. Sin defiles and hinders the Holy Spirit. God wants to fill and use clean vessels.

## VII. THE WATER GATE

### Nehemiah 3:26-27

**Builders:** All of the workers here repaired the wall on either side of the Water Gate. The gate itself did not need to be repaired.

The temple servants, sometimes translated Nethinim (“those who are given”), were probably descendants of the Gibeonites who were made drawers of water (Joshua 9:23). They would naturally want to live near the most important source of water.<sup>3</sup> The Tekoites also repaired part of this section.

**Significance:** Water is often a symbol of the blessed Word of God (Ephesians 5:26; John 17:17). The Word is used by the Holy Spirit to build up our lives as we apply it daily (Acts 20:32). Note that this is the seventh gate mentioned, and seven is the Biblical 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” (Psalm 119:89).

## VIII. THE HORSE GATE

### Nehemiah 3:28

**Builders:** The priests who were near to their homes, where it was easier to build and to protect family.

**Significance:** It “stood north of the Water Gate, adjacent to the temple area. It was here that wicked Athaliah was executed (2 Chronicles 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 (Isaiah 2:7). The Horse Gate reminds us that there is warfare in the Christian life (2 Timothy 2:1-4) and that we must always be ready to do battle (Ephesians 6:10-18). It is significant that the priests repaired this gate as well as the Sheep Gate. Both were near the temple area.”<sup>4</sup>





The Horse Gate suggests warfare and victory. In a world of evil, the people of God must be ready to fight and wage war (2 Timothy 2:1-4). We wrestle against Satan, against principalities of the air, against rulers of darkness in this world (Ephesians 6:10-18). Paul exhorts us to be soldiers of Christ: “Put on the whole armor of God.” Victory is on our side, but we must battle for Christ to gain that victory. Christ is coming one day on a great white horse. He will come triumphantly (Revelation 19:11).

## IX. THE EAST GATE Nehemiah 3:29-30

“This gate 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.”<sup>5</sup>

**Builders:** Zadok son of Immer (“righteous”). Are we strong in integrity? Shemaiah (“heard of Jehovah”); son of Shecaniah (“habitation of the Lord”); Hananiah, son of Shelemiah (“God has favored”); Hanun, the sixth son of Zalaph (“gracious”).

**Significance:** The East Gate makes us think of the second coming of Jesus Christ (Matthew 24:27). In Ezekiel 10:16-22, the prophet saw God’s glory depart from the temple by the East Gate (see also Ezekiel 11:22-25). But later (Ezekiel 43:1-5) he saw God’s glory return “from the way of the east.” When Christ returns to dwell once more in the great Temple of the Millennium, as the Shekinah Glory of God, He will return through the East Gate. The East Gate faces the rising of the sun. It suggests the coming of the Lord for His people. We wait for the rising (coming) of the Son.

## X. THE INSPECTION OR MIPHKAD GATE Nehemiah 3:31-32

This gate means the “appointed place.” It also means the place of “visitation.” The Hebrew word *miphkad* means “appointment, account, census, mustering.” It carries the idea of troops showing up for review. This was probably the gate in which the judges sat to settle disputes and controversies.

**Builders:** Malachiah, the goldsmith’s son (“my King is Jehovah”). The goldsmiths and the merchants are listed again.

**Significance:** It suggests the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10). It speaks of God’s judgment: “It is appointed for men to die once



and after this comes judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). Certainly, God is going to call all souls up for judgment one day.

## CONCLUSION

“Nehemiah had a phenomenal ability to coordinate people – to get everyone involved. This didn’t just happen. It *never* ‘just happens’! What may appear to be a smooth-running operation always reflects a lot of careful, behind-the-scenes planning.”<sup>6</sup> It took **coordination**, **cooperation**, and **commendation** to see this work done properly and quickly. How are you encouraging one another to do God’s good work?<sup>7</sup>

- 1) When the roll is called up yonder, what significant projects will we have completed as partners in the gospel with our fellow brethren?
- 2) What names listed here strike you in terms of their significance?
- 3) Why didn’t Nehemiah just pay some contractors to do the physical labor of rebuilding the walls?

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Arin Hess".

Pastor Arin Hess

## FOOTNOTES

1. All Scripture quotations, unless noted, are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, 1995 Update.
2. Paul Apple, *Hard Work in Hard Times-Rebuilding God’s Work and God’s People: Commentary on the Book of Nehemiah*, [www.bibleoutlines.com](http://www.bibleoutlines.com), 2010, pg. 36.
3. Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Determined*, Victor Books, 1996, pg. 45.
4. *Ibid.*, pg. 46.
5. *Ibid.*, pg. 46.
6. Gene A. Getz, *Nehemiah: Becoming a Disciplined Leader*, Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995, pg. 51.
7. Several sources provided information for development of these truths in chapter three. Peter A. Stevenson, *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther*, BJU Press, 2011. John G. Butler, *Nehemiah: The Wall Builder*, LBC Publications, 1998. J. William Kanoy, *Studies in Nehemiah Chapter Three: Rebuilding the Gates*, Colonial Press, 1994. David Cloud, Way of Life Literature, Port Huron, MI, [www.wayoflife.org](http://www.wayoflife.org).



