

Nehemiah – Building the Future, Part 2

Nehemiah 2:17-20 Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work. But when **Sanballat** the Horonite, and **Tobiah** the servant, the Ammonite, and **Geshem** the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king? Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem.

LAST WEEK:

*The book of Nehemiah is not just about rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem – it is about building a city that could be a home for God's people and a witness for God's Name to every other city! As we proceed through the book keep in mind that we are reading Nehemiah's 2500-year-old journal. Jerusalem looked like New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina – the city was destroyed and the people were scattered and demoralized. One little historical detail should be emphasized – the news that so devastated Nehemiah was news that was 140 years old! **Nehemiah didn't get new INFORMATION, he got a new BURDEN.** Nehemiah said, "I was a cupbearer to the king of Persia, but I want to be a wall builder for the King of Heaven!" **TAKE THIS GOBLET AND GIVE ME A HAMMER!***

*We'll see as we move through Nehemiah's journal that in only 52 days, 42 different working parties restored a 50 foot high wall with a circumference of 4 miles at a rate of 504 feet per day – all the while fighting against severe opposition. How did they accomplish in only 52 days what no one had been able to do in 140 years?! **THEY GOT A FRESH BURDEN! THEY PRAYED, YES ... BUT THEY ALSO ACTED!***

The study of Nehemiah is not a study of HISTORY – it is essentially about BUILDING THE FUTURE of the people of God.

Nehemiah is the man sent by the king to lead the people of Jerusalem in rebuilding the WALLS and the GATES of Jerusalem. Excuse the bold parallel, but Nehemiah is the PASTOR in this story!

Jerusalem was originally surrounded by a wall that was interrupted only by its ten gates. The wall kept the wrong people out and the gates let the right people in. But the wall and the gates had been left in a pile of rubble!

The walls were for PROTECTION and showed the SEPARATION between the people of God and the enemies of God. The walls represent salvation, specifically from sin's power. **No separation, no salvation!**

Isaiah 60:18 Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but **thou shalt call thy walls Salvation,** and thy gates Praise.

Psalms 51:18 Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: **build thou the walls of Jerusalem.**

Proverbs 25:28 He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and **without walls.**

The gates were for ENTRANCE into the protection of the city and into the Lord's presence. Just as it was critical for the city to have WALLS to keep enemies out, it was critical for them to have GATES to let friends in!

Isaiah 26:1-2 In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. **Open ye the gates,** that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.

Psalms 100:4 **Enter into his gates with thanksgiving,** and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

John 10:7 Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, **I am the door** of the sheep.

A CHURCH HAS TO HAVE WALLS AND IT HAS TO HAVE GATES! Some people want "all walls" and some people want "all gates" – and neither opinion is right! In years past, many in the Apostolic church seemed to be all about "walls" – now many seem to be all about "gates."

Nehemiah had three enemies in his quest to rebuild Jerusalem's walls of protection and separation:

SANBALLAT – the main enemy with much wealth and influence, his name means "hatred in secret" – represents the **DEVIL**

TOBIAH – his name means "Jehovah is good," a strange name for someone opposing God's people (they have a tendency to not only do bad, but also do some good) – represents the **FLESH**

GESHEM – the most subtle enemy, his name means "corporeal" or "having material substance" – represents the **WORLD**

Today, the wall that separates the church from the world has been taken apart brick by brick, and it essentially lies in ruins in the western world.

The first thing Nehemiah does when he arrives in Jerusalem is to go on a “fact-finding mission” to see the conditions for himself. You can’t get where you need to go unless you will admit where you already are!

Nehemiah 2:14 Then I went on to the gate of the fountain, and to the king's pool: but there was no place for the beast that was under me to pass.

There was so much RUBBLE that Nehemiah couldn’t get past it! There was no way they could have built a new wall on a pile of old rubble. So they had to begin carting away the junk before they could begin to build.

1 Corinthians 3:10-11 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Unless we build our church on a biblical foundation we have nothing!

The DEVIL says the walls are “not necessary.”
The WORLD says the walls are “intolerant.”
The FLESH says the walls are “too much work.”

These are the “theme songs” of hell, the world, and the flesh!!

But the LORD says the walls are the only thing that will keep us!

Nehemiah 4:10 And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.

It’s time for some “rubbish removal” in our lives and in our church – and it’s time to build some walls (and some gates!) despite the mockery of our enemies round about us.

“You can’t build a great church if you preach the NT plan of salvation!”
“You can’t build a great church if you preach a lifestyle of holiness!”
“You can’t build a great church if you worship and pray that intensely!”

Nehemiah 4:6 So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.

WE ARE GOING TO BUILD A CHURCH OF WALLS AND OF GATES!