

Supplementary Materials for KOOL Journal for Parents/Adults

Week: 11, 2 – 8 Apr 2018 (pp. 90 – 97)

Context

Gates controlled traffic in and out of a fortified city. Jerusalem was a large city and because many roads converged there, it required many gates. The wall of each side of these wooden gates were taller and thicker so soldiers could stand guard to defend against attacks. Sometimes two stone towers guarded each gate so defenders could use archers to protect any attempt to breach the gates in time of war. In times of peace, the city gates were hubs of activity – city council was held there, and vendors set up their wares at the entrance. Building the city walls and gates was not only a military priority but also a boost for trade and commerce. The reconstruction of Jerusalem's gates and walls are narrated in a counter-clockwise circuit (3:1, 32) with various families assigned to sections of walls near their homes. This was a strategic plan of Nehemiah so that if threatened, they would be more personally involved and more highly motivated to continue building.

Key Characters #1: Nehemiah – Refer to Week 10 journal supplement.

Nehemiah had a phenomenal ability to coordinate people, to get everyone involved. This reflects a lot of careful, behind-the-scenes planning and analyzing of data to link 'who to who and work where' (beside them, next to them, after him, next to him, etc. mentioned 30 times and specific names of individuals over 70 times). He had limited power but great influence. In executing the 'impossible task' he displayed unusual leadership.

Other Characters #2-#4: Sanballat, Tobiah and Gesham – Refer to Week 10 journal supplement.

While the Trans-Euphrates officials could hardly oppose Nehemiah with force since he had authorization from Artaxerxes plus a detachment of the army (2:9) for protection, they set about to oppose the reconstruction through derision (ridicule), discouragement, dread, discord, division, defamation, danger. With them in opposition were the Ashdodites or inhabitants of Ashdod (4:7). Ashdod was one of the principal Philistine cities (1 Samuel 5). It occupied a strong position near the sea, and once seems to have commanded a seaport only 3 miles distant. The Ashdodites resented Nehemiah's undertaking which threatened to revive the power and importance of Jerusalem.

2 – 8 Apr 2018: Nehemiah 3 – 4

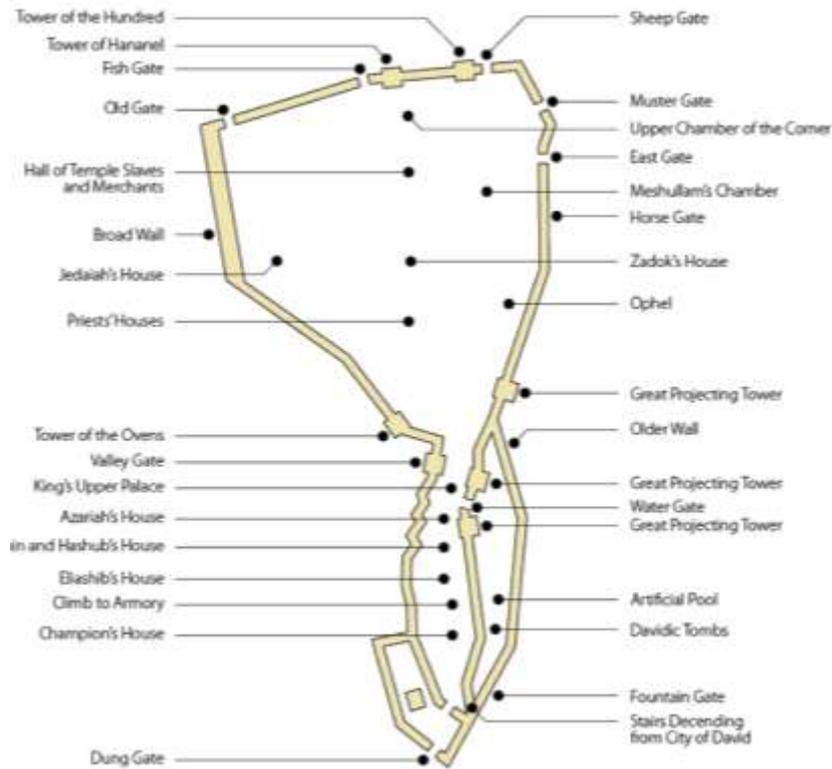
Watch video

- Dan Lewis, **11 Ezra & Nehemiah - Rebuilding the Walls**, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljz7tB_p5A (28.59 minutes, with interesting references to latest archaeological findings)

Review Verse of the Week **Nehemiah 4:9**

But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat

Jerusalem's Wall in Nehemiah's Day



Source:

<http://www.christians-standing-with-israel.org/nehemiah-rebuild-jerusalem-map.html>

Date/Read/Watch	Reflection and Response (R & R)
<p>Mon. 2 Apr</p> <p>Nehemiah 3:1—5</p> <p>{Nehemiah 3:1-2}</p>	<p>Eliashib the high priest was the first person mentioned who pitched in and helped with the rebuilding of the wall. The Sheep Gate was the gate used to bring sheep into the city to the Temple for sacrifices. Nehemiah recognized the priests' area of interest in assigning them to repair this gate, emphasizing the priority of worship (to offer sacrifices, 4:2). They could have begun by offering a sacrifice to inaugurate their work. However, the leaders of Tekoa (3:5) did not support the building project. either due to pride, or sloth, or covetousness (the men of Tekoa did as in 3:27).</p> <p>R & R:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The work of the church requires every member's effort in order for the body of Christ to function effectively (1 Cor 12:12-27). The church needs you. Are you doing your part in contributing whatever time, talent and money that are needed? <p>Notes:</p> <p>One of the main roads through Jerusalem entered the city through the Fish Gate where there was a thriving fish market. Merchants from Tyre, the Sea of Galilee and other fishing areas entered through this gate to sell their goods.</p> <p>Eliashib was the grandson of Jeshua, the first high-priest after their return from Babylon, contemporary with Zerubbabel. He, with his brethren, set a noble example, in being the first who began to rebuild the walls of the holy city. However, his close connexion (allied by marriage) with Tobiah (13:4), shows that he did not sympathize with the policy of Ezra and Nehemiah in separating the Jews from any alliance or combination with other nations.</p>

<p>Tue. 3 Apr</p> <p>Nehemiah 3:6—16</p> <p><i>{Nehemiah 3:13-16}</i></p>	<p>Even the women folk were involved as the daughters of Shallum helped with the difficult work of repairing the city walls. It was a matter of national security, not a civic beautification project.</p> <p>R & R:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nearly everyone was dedicated to the task and willing to work at it. Are you pulling our weight in the projects our church is involved in, e.g. the new Blk 50 work being established at Teban Gardens? <p>Note: The Dung Gate was the gate through which the people carried their garbage to be burned in the Valley of Hinnom.</p>
<p>Wed. 4 Apr</p> <p>Nehemiah 3:17—32</p> <p><i>{Nehemiah 3:28-32}</i></p>	<p>Each priest repaired the wall in front of his own house (3:28), saving time travelling to distant parts of the wall and had greater motivation to do the job quickly and properly. This would also enable the family to work together on the task. Nehemiah blended self-interest with the group’s objectives, helping everyone feel the wall project was their own.</p> <p>R & R:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you are part of a group working on a project, how do you ensure that everyone sees the importance and meaning of their own jobs? <p>Note: The Horse Gate (3:28) was at the far eastern point of the wall, near the Kidron Valley.</p>
<p>Thu. 5 Apr</p> <p>Nehemiah 4:1—6</p> <p><i>{Nehemiah 4:4}</i></p>	<p>Sanballat, Governor of Samaria, who could have harbored hopes to also be appointed the governor of Judea, deemed Nehemiah a threat to achieving his plans. So he, together with Tobiah, tried to scare Nehemiah away or discourage him by scorn (derision) and also to increase the feelings of hatred and contempt for the Jews in their own party (the associates and the armed citizens, 4:1). Nehemiah’s imprecations against them (4:4-5) are uttered more in a spirit of prophecy rather than a spirit of prayer, and are to be considered as declaratory of the judgments of God against persecutors (which were accomplished in the subsequent doom of these nations). Despite the opposition, the work on the wall progressed well because the people had set their hearts and minds on accomplishing the task. They did not lose faith or give up.</p> <p>R & R:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What can we learn from Nehemiah’s response to this round of opposition? Did he let discouragement stop his work? God’s people have often been a despised people, but He hears all the slights that are put upon them. When you are ridiculed for your faith or criticized for doing what you considered to be right, how should you respond? <p>Notes: 4:2 – the stones were burned, and broken by the Chaldeans, when they took the city. Archaeologists have found that the old wall exists to the enormous</p>

	<p>depth of 125 feet below the rubbish, with stones of very great size.</p> <p>4:3 – foxes were very numerous because in the late desolation of Jerusalem. The stone wall being built so far was low enough for a fox to easily ascend to its top, and also weak because it was built so hastily that the least weight or thrust would tumble it down.</p>
<p>Fri. 6 Apr</p> <p>Nehemiah 4:7—23</p> <p>{Nehemiah 4:7-9,21}</p>	<p>Nehemiah had trouble from the enemies, the workmen, and the Jews not resident in Jerusalem. In response, he again combined prayer with preparation and planning. While trusting God, His people also had to stay vigilant to watch over what was entrusted to them, including protecting their own family. Nehemiah reminded the people of their calling, their goal and God’s protection. He kept a trumpeter by his side, so that an alarm might be immediately sounded when needed to provide assistance to the most distant detachment of their brethren.</p> <p>R & R:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we combine our prayer with thought, preparation and effort in caring out our work for the Lord? • Every true Christian is both a labourer and a soldier, working with one hand, and fighting with the other. Do we always have on hand the Word of God which is the sword of the Spirit against any spiritual enemies? <p>“If we think to secure ourselves by prayer, without watchfulness, we are slothful, and tempt God; if by watchfulness, without prayer, we are proud, and slight God: either way, we forfeit his protection.”ⁱ</p>
<p>Sat. 7 Apr</p>	<p>“God, when He has important public work to do, never fails to raise up instruments for accomplishing it. In the person of Nehemiah, who, to great natural acuteness and energy added fervent piety and heroic devotion, God provided a leader, whose high qualities fitted him for the demands of the crisis. Nehemiah’s vigilance anticipated every difficulty, his prudent measures defeated every obstruction, and with astonishing rapidity this Jerusalem was made again ‘a city fortified’.”ⁱⁱ</p> <p>R & R:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pray for the extension of PPH’s Community Service area of work through the new Centre at Blk 50 Teban Gardens. Consider how we can, together with our family, be God’s instrument in the extension of this outreach work.

References

G A Getz, **Life Essentials Study Bible: Biblical Principles to Live By**, Holman Bible Publishers, 2011.
<https://bibleprinciples.org/pf-search-book/> (search videos by book and click on Nehemiah) Lawrence O. Richards, **The Teacher’s Commentary**, 1987, Victor Books. Tyndale House Publishers, **Chronological Life Application Study Bible**, 2004. <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/nehemiah/4-23.htm>

ⁱ Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary, <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/nehemiah/4-7.htm>

ⁱⁱ Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/nehemiah/4-9.htm>