

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church

107 East Austin

Fredericksburg, Texas 78624

830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

C1331 – September 18, 2013 – Nehemiah 3:1-32
Nehemiah's Rebuilding Effort

We're going to move forward to Nehemiah 3 tonight but to get up to speed last week we saw Nehemiah's meteoric rise to leadership. He started off as cupbearer to Artaxerxes, the mighty king of Persia but even though he was surrounded by the luxury of palace life he had God's concerns chiefly in mind; the Jewish people and the Jewish city of Jerusalem. Upon receiving the report that the Jewish people were in reproach and the Jewish city of Jerusalem was in desolation he began to weep and fast and pray for a period of four months. His persistent prayer was a mark of a leader in the making. Nehemiah wanted to rebuild Jerusalem but to do so he would have to go into the king and request a change in his policy toward Jerusalem. The king's policy at the time was that Jerusalem should not be fortified. To ask him to reverse this policy was therefore an extremely dangerous effort as it would challenge the king's decision-making abilities. However, after four months of prayer and sadness he could no longer suppress his sadness and when he went in before the king (and the queen) the sadness was detected prompting the king to ask for the reason. Nehemiah revealed it was the condition of Jerusalem, the city of his father's and then began to tremble. However, he managed his fear by silently uttering a spontaneous prayer to the God of heaven and then issued his three requests. First, to return to Judah to rebuild the city. Second, to receive letters from the king allowing easy passage through the provinces on the way. Third, to receive a letter to Asaph, keeper of the forest around Jerusalem, to acquire timber to rebuild the Tower of Hananeel on the NW corner of the Temple Mount, to acquire timber to rebuild the wall of the city and to acquire timber to build his own personal residence. The king granted all three requests because God's good hand was upon him. The king wasn't as big and powerful as paganism asserts they are. There is a bigger and more powerful being, God, who raises kings and lowers kings and turns the hearts of kings whatever way He wants. The king

therefore granted Nehemiah's requests and also provided an armed military escort to ensure safe passage. When Nehemiah passed through the provinces the officials were very displeased that Nehemiah had come to seek the welfare of the Jews but they couldn't do anything about it because he had letters from the king and an armed escort. When he arrived in Jerusalem he took three days to rest and get to know some people. He then went out under the cloak of darkness with a few reliable men to evaluate the damage to the city walls of Jerusalem. If you have your map I passed out last week he exited the Valley Gate on the west side of the city of David and descended south to the foot of the city and around to the King's Fountains on the east side. At this point he was forced to dismount his animal and inspect the eastern walls from the ravine below. We have a question here whether he walked all the way around the city completing the circuit or whether he came back to his mount after evaluating the eastern wall. Upon further thought he probably made the complete circuit. In any case, he did re-enter at the Valley Gate. Remember, all this was done in top secret. The next day, with plan in hand he addressed the leadership, accurately analyzing the situation that Jerusalem is in a bad situation and needs to be repaired. He challenged them to actively engage in rebuilding saying, "Come let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem." He explained that God was on his side by telling them how God had been favorable to him and how the king had approved the project. Consequently the people said, "Let's do it" and they put their hand to the good work. However, their enemies immediately rose up and tried to intimidate but Nehemiah took courage and said, you boys can hit the road because you have no right or memorial in Jerusalem.

From this we see that Nehemiah was a powerful leader; he had begun as a cupbearer with God's chief interests as his own chief interests, he therefore began his action with prayer and continued to pray throughout; boldly requesting favor from the king, carefully respecting the king's authority, analytically evaluating the situation in Jerusalem, intelligently planning a strategy to rebuild, clearly explaining to the people that he was favored by God, motivating the people to engage the work and courageously resisting enemy intimidation. These are marks of a leader. The Army Leadership manual FM 22-100 summarizes leadership under the heading "Be, Know, Do." Nehemiah was a Be, Know, Do kind of man. "Be" stands for character, be somebody; be loyal, be respectful, have integrity and courage. Nehemiah displays these very qualities. "Know" stands for skills. Know your

capabilities; have interpersonal skills, have conceptual skills, have technical know-how skills and have tactical skills to employ them. Nehemiah knew how to do these things. “Do” stands for taking action. Take action; influence others, motivate them, encourage them. Nehemiah did these things. He was a man of action. He fits the “Be, Know, Do” paradigm of the Army Leadership manual. He was God’s leader, the people knew it, they followed him willingly and the Church of Jesus Christ needs more of these kinds of men.

In Neh 3 we come to Nehemiah’s rebuilding effort. This chapter appears to be lacking in the application zone unlike most of the other chapters in the Bible since all it does is describe who built what. However, every portion of the word of God is the word of God and every portion is there for a purpose and He wants us to know it because it contributes to our learning loyalty to Him. And there is some great application from this chapter whether you see it yet or not. And if you haven’t noticed recently I’ve been more intentional in giving definite application, particularly at the end of each lesson after we’ve given the interpretation. This is important because it helps people see how to properly derive application from the text. There are three primary applications of Nehemiah 3. I’m going to give you two of them in advance and one at the end. First, a leader must have a clear plan in view in order to be successful and efficient in completing the project. His plan must involve many aspects. First the plan must be based on a thorough analysis of the situation. Second, the plan requires knowing your skills and abilities. Third, the plan requires knowing and acquiring the materials. Fourth, the plan requires being organized. Fifth, the plan requires thinking through obstacles in advance and knowing how to overcome them. Sixth, the plan requires knowing what people to involve in your project and how to keep them motivated. Seventh, the plan requires steadfastness in order to complete the project. Any lack in these seven areas leads to inefficiencies in completing the project. So these are the kinds of leadership skills that I find behind this passage which is highly descriptive of the plan that Nehemiah proposed and implemented.

So as we go through this you may temporarily lose the forest for the trees because there are a lot of people’s names and geographical references but in the end all of these aspects of a leaders planning stands behind it. A second application is that the Bible is reporting real history. The Bible and its truth depends on the record it contains being an account of real history. If what

this book says happened didn't happen then you might as well chunk the whole thing. There's no picking and choosing. This chapter reveals a lot of history and some of it has been unveiled in the archaeological record. This shows that it is rooted in space and time. Jerusalem is a monument to the historic authenticity of the word of God. Unfortunately Israeli archaeologists no longer have access to the Temple Mount for research and attempts to unearth earth's past have been responded to by Muslim projects on the Temple Mount that inevitably destroy archaeological artifacts that demonstrate the ancient connection of the Jewish people to the Temple Mount. Even though the Muslim projects are denied authorization by the Israeli government they often carry them out anyway. Fortunately in the 1800's, many archaeological discoveries were made by Captain Charles Warren; others like Kathleen Kenyon followed in the 1900's and other work has continued as made possible. We therefore have a tremendous amount of very accurate details regarding the Temple Mount. Tonight we will see some of the rich archaeology of Jerusalem and the Temple which captures the historicity of the Bible. So two applications tonight that we don't want to lose sight of; the importance of leadership planning and the historicity of the biblical accounts.

Now some introductory observations on Nehemiah 3 as far as his plan goes. First, he assigned everyone a specific place to work. These assignments are apparent from the expressions "next to him," "next to them," "after them," and the like used 28 times in the chapter. The assignments are in a counterclockwise rotation starting near the center of the N side of the Temple, moving to the E, then S and W ending back in the center of the N side at the Temple. Second, the assignments were made near people's work or home. This shows efficiency in three respects. First, it eliminated the need to commute. Commuting wastes time that could be used for working. Nehemiah saw the advantage of eliminating the need to commute to enable them to complete the work more quickly. Second, it enjoined a personal interest in the quality of building. Since the wall they were building was near their home it would encourage them to build with more care. Nehemiah saw this advantage for completing a job well done. Third, it took advantage of the abilities of each family member. Children could fetch items for father; mother could prepare necessary meals and water. With work close to home it provided many advantages for the timely and efficient completion of the work. Third, it employed people of all strata in society encouraging unity. The

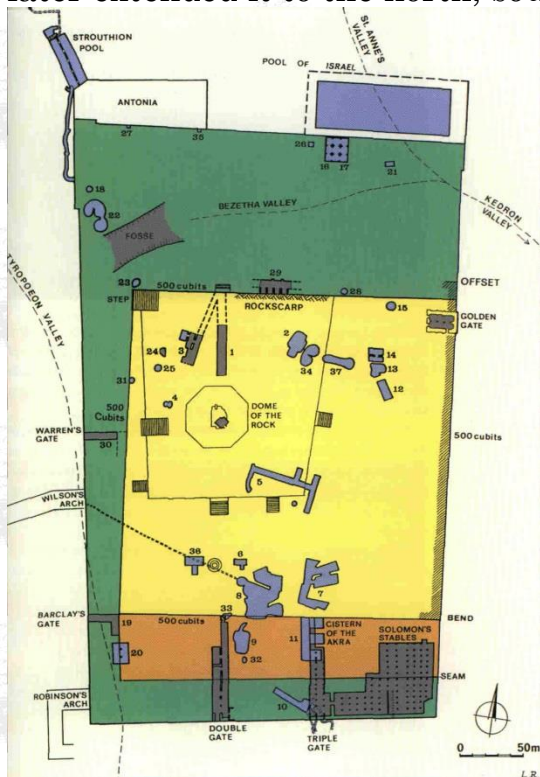
occupations of several people are listed: high priest, priests, goldsmiths, perfumers, district rulers and merchants as well as daughters. People from every strata are indicated as contributing to the project. Their inclusion is designed to break down social, gender and age barriers in order to bring about unity and camaraderie among the people. So I mention three wisdom principles you can find embedded in Nehemiah's plan, there may be others. To find them you have to meditate on the text and ask questions, that's how you elucidate principles.

So with general observations out of the way let's start with the verse-by-verse. Verse 1, **Then Eliashib the high priest arose with his brothers the priests and build the Sheep Gate.** Eliashib we see was in the position of **high priest**, so he was the chief spiritual leader, his job was to oversee all the priests who operated in the Temple offering sacrifices and annually on the Day of Atonement he would enter the Most Holy Place to make atonement for the nation. He was a top man and he and **his brothers the priests** would **build the Sheep Gate**. The Sheep Gate was the gate that the lambs were brought through in order to be sacrificed in the Temple so this gate adjoined the Temple.



The Sheep Gate as you can see from your map is on the N side of the Temple and slightly off center to the W of the Prison Gate. Remains of the Prison Gate have been found near Cistern 29 and we know from Neh 12 that the Sheep Gate was west of the Prison Gate. It doubled as a wall for the Temple because there was no independent wall skirting the north side of the Temple Mount. The Temple Mount at this time was a perfect square as we saw in Ezra's explanation of the rebuilding of the foundation of the Temple along the

very course of Solomon's Temple. This perfect square was 500 cubits square which according to the royal cubit would have been 861 feet per side making the total surface area 17.2 acres. Today the only portion of this square that we can see is an 861 foot section of the eastern wall. The reason is because the Hasmonean dynasty extended the mount toward the south and Herod later extended it to the north, south and west in the time of Christ.



So the Temple Mount you are accustomed to seeing is a rectangular shape, much larger than in Nehemiah's time and that means that the archaeological remains of the Sheep Gate on the N, NW side are encased within the present Herodian Temple Mount. The exact location is slightly west of Cistern 29. It has been speculated that it is to be identified with the later Tadi Gate since the meaning of *Tadi* remains unknown but a similar word *Tali* means "lamb" and could therefore refer to the Sheep Gate. The **high priest** and his brothers the **priests** would be working on this section of the wall because it is near their work and would eliminate a commute. It would also be of special interest to them since the lambs for slaughter would be delivered through this gate.

So middle of verse 1, **they consecrated it and hung its doors. They consecrated the wall to the Tower of the Hundred and the Tower of Hananel.** These were the next two towers to the east along the N wall of the Temple Mount. The **Tower of the Hundred** was also known as the "Tower

of Meah” and that’s the name given it on your map. Together these two towers probably made up the fortress that protected the Temple and the city from invading armies which always descended upon Jerusalem from the north. Later in history these towers were probably destroyed and replaced by the Ptolemaic *Akra* and when John Hyrcanus came in 134BC the *Akra* was replaced by the *Baris*. The point is that the structures built at the N, NW corner of the Temple Mount served as a fortress against enemy attacks and the archaeological remains are encased within the much larger Herodian Temple Mount that we see today.

Verse 2, **Next to him the men of Jericho built.** Moving in a counterclockwise direction we find some people who had to commute. Jericho is E of Jerusalem near the Jordan River. So their commute was necessary simply because they didn’t live in Jerusalem. They probably stayed in Jerusalem for the duration of the project. They worked along the W portion of the wall as it diverged from the Temple. **And next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built. 3Now the sons of Hassenaah built the Fish Gate; they laid its beams and hung its doors with its bolts and bars.** The **Fish Gate** was on the E side adjacent to the Temple wall because the wall continued to diverge away from the Temple forming a separate structure. It’s been suggested that the **Fish Gate** was the gate that the fishermen from Tyre brought their fish in to the city to sell (13:16).

Verse 4, **Next to them Meremoth the son of Uriah the son of Hakkoz made repairs. And next to him Meshullam the son of Berechiah the son of Meshezabel made repairs. And next to him Zadok the son of Baana also made repairs. 5Moreover, next to him the Tekoites made repairs, but their nobles did not support the work of their masters.** The **Tekoites** would also have to commute; they came from the same town as the prophet Amos. Their **nobles**, it is noted, **did not support the work.** The phrase **did not support** means literally, “bring their necks,” that is, they didn’t show up to work. For some purpose or another the **nobles** didn’t come help, they remained in Tekoa.

Verse 6, **Joiada the son of Paseah and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah repaired the Old Gate; they laid its beams and hung its doors with its bolts and its bars.** The **Old Gate** you can see just south of the **Fish Gate** along the western wall adjacent to the Temple. Verse 7, **Next**

to the Melatiah the Gibeonite and Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon and of Mizpah, also made repairs for the official seat of the governor of the province beyond the River. There was a gate in this section called the Ephraim Gate but it evidently did not need repair, the men who worked on it also had to commute because they lived in Gibeon and Mizpah. These two towns were in another province but surprisingly the governor of that province was pro-Jerusalem and therefore sent these men to work on the walls and Nehemiah assigned them to this portion.

Verse 8, **Next to him Uzziel the son of Harhaiah of the goldsmiths made repairs. And next to him Hananiah, one of the perfumers, made repairs, and they restored Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall.** You see the **Broad Wall** on your map; it was built by Hezekiah almost 300 years before. If you go to Jerusalem today this wall has been exposed by archaeology since the 1970's.



The height of the wall is missing but the estimated height is shown by the marker in the picture. Compared to the size of the people in the background you can see the amazing width and height of the wall. Hezekiah built it in preparation for the Assyrian siege against the city. So this group, whose

occupations as **goldsmiths** are mentioned, made repairs as far as the **Broad Wall**.

Verse 9, **Next to them Rephaiah the son of Hur, the official of half the district of Jerusalem made repairs.** This man was obviously a leader in Jerusalem and he got right to work alongside everyone else. You notice that he wasn't above everyone else. This, of course, would enhance the unity of the people when they saw their leaders getting their hands dirty.

Verse 10, **Next to them Jedaiah the son of Harumaph made repairs opposite his house. And next to him Hattush the son of Hashabneiah made repairs. 11Malchijah the son of Harim and Hasshub the son of Pahath-moab repaired another section and the Tower of Furnaces** or "Ovens". Presumably baking went on in this area (Jer 37:21). This is a common trade and shows the other end of the social strata engaging in the work. We don't know exactly where the **Tower of Furnaces** is located but it has to be in the area just south of the **Broad Wall** because of the counterclockwise circuit Nehemiah is tracing.

Verse 12, **Next to him Shallum the son of Hallohesh, the official of half the district of Jerusalem, made repairs, he and his daughters.** Here you see that this high official and even **his daughters** were brought into the work. They could bring their abilities and help to their father. Everyone contributed and therefore everyone had a personal interest.

Verse 13, **Hanun and the inhabitants of Zanoah repaired the Valley Gate. They built it and hung its doors with its bolts and its bars, and a thousand cubits of the wall to the Refuse Gate.** From the map this is a large section, about 1600 feet, so evidently these two groups were made up of a lot of people. The **Valley Gate** is the gate that Nehemiah exited and re-entered the night he went out to evaluate the walls. This gate is presumably called the Valley Gate because it opens up into a valley known today as the Tyropoeon Valley or Valley of the Cheese-makers. It's not nearly as defined today as it was then because the layers of destruction have filled it in so it was more pronounced then than now but it's still an important landmark in Jerusalem's topography. You see water running through it on your map. They continued to build the wall south all the way to the **Refuse Gate**, also known as the Dung Gate because everybody carried their trash out this gate, it was

also where executed criminals bodies were cast and dead animals, they were all taken out and cast into the Valley of Gehenna down below which burned in fire continually. That's why Christ likens this valley out the gate to the lake of fire; it served as a fitting reminder of the eternal punishment of all the trash of history that ends up trash because it refuses to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. So they built the Valley Gate and the long section of wall south to the Refuse Gate at the foot of the city.

Verse 14, **Malchijah the son of Rechab, the official of the district of Beth-haccherem repaired the Refuse Gate, He built it and hung its doors with its bolts and its bars. 15 Shallum the son of Col-hozeh, the official of the district of Mizpah, repaired the Fountain Gate.** The **Fountain Gate** you also see on your map near the S end of the city on the eastern side. This was near the Pool of Siloam which received water from the famous Hezekiah's Tunnel which is about 1800 feet long through solid rock starting up near the Water Gate and descending about 3 feet in elevation to the foot of the city in the Pool of Siloam. It's a remarkable engineering feat. So they **repaired the nearby Fountain Gate.**

Middle of verse 15, **He built it, covered it and hung its doors with its bolts and its bars, and the wall of the Pool of Shelah at the king's garden as far as the steps that descend from the city of David.** He's referring to this wall and the region within which contained the **king's garden**. There was lots of water down here at the foot of the city so a good place for a garden.

Verse 16, **After him Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, official of half the district of Beth-zur, made repairs as far as a point opposite the tombs of David and as far as the artificial pool and the house of the mighty men.** This is going to place the tombs of royal kings in David's line down in this southern section of the city. The **artificial pool** may be Siloam's pool or another pool. The **house of the mighty men** may be the barracks of David's mighty men, select soldiers something akin to our Green Berets.

Verse 17, **After him the Levites carried out repairs under Rehum the son of Bani.** So the Levites had to put off some of their tasks in order to engage the construction work. Also **Next to him Hashabiah, the official of half the district of Keilah, carried out repairs for his district. 18 After**

him their brothers carried out repairs under Bavvai the son of Henadad, official of the other half of the district of Keilah. We can tell from this that Jerusalem was divided into districts. Verse 19, **Next to him Ezer the son of Jeshua, the official of Mizpah, repaired another section in front of the ascent of the armory at the Angle.** There are two angles in the wall, this is the first angle and you can see it labeled on your map. So we're moving north along the eastern wall. Verse 20, **After him Baruch the son of Zabai zealously repaired another section, he had great personal interest, from the Angle to the doorway of the house of Eliashib the high priest.** Apparently many of the priests lived in this area but they worked on the wall near the Temple because that was their interest and they needed to be near the Temple during construction. Verse 21, **After him Meremoth the son of Uriah the son of Hakkoz repaired another section, from the doorway of Eliashib's house even as far as the end of his house, that is Eliashib's house. Eliashib** had a big house. He was the high priest and the high priest was the richest man in Jerusalem. He had a big house, and he was so rich so he could minister to the nation, not hoard it for himself, so he could give to people who were in need, teach them the word of God, etc...he was responsible for the spiritual well-being and it requires a lot of expenses to minister.

Verse 22, **After him the priests, the men of the valley, carried out repairs.** The valley is the Kidron Valley. Verse 23, **After them Benjamin and Hasshub carried out repairs in front of their house. After them Azariah the son of Masseiah, son of Ananiah, carried out repairs beside his house.** Notice all these are repairing the wall by their house so that they have a personal interest in building it well. Nehemiah had a wise building strategy. Verse 24, **After him Binnui the son of Henadad repaired another section, from the house of Azariah as far as the Angle and as far as the corner.** The Angle we know is the second angle, on the map where it says second turning of the wall. The corner I don't know about but it can't be far.

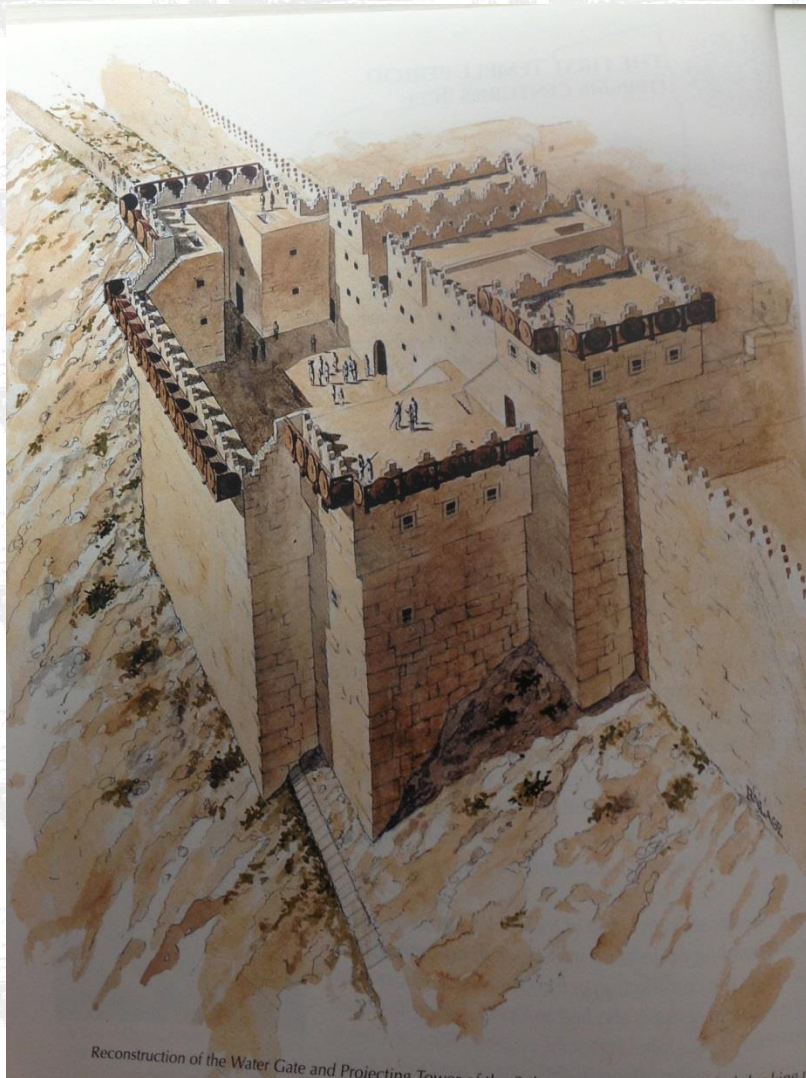
Verse 25, **Palal the son of Uzai made repairs in front of the Angle and the tower projecting from the upper house of the king, which is by the court of the guard.** We don't know exactly where these things are but they're in this region south of the Water Gate **and the tower projecting from the upper house of the king** is part of the palace built by Solomon in

what was, at the time, the upper part of the city. The **court of the guard** may have been a part of Solomon's great courtyard near his palace.

End of verse 25, **After him Pedaiah the son of Parosh made repairs.**

26The temple servants living in Ophel made repairs as far as the front of the Water Gate toward the east and the projecting tower. The **temple servants** were the Nethinim. We saw them in the book of Ezra, they were people who had been captured and put into tasks of helping with menial tasks for the priests who served in the temple. They might chop wood for the fires or bring water. They were strategically placed in the **Ophel** which is the region just south of the Temple Mount where the elevation rises. Since the Gihon Spring was over near the **Water Gate** then it makes sense that they lived here and carried water from the Gihon Spring up these steps to the Temple Mount.

The mention of the **Water Gate** is interesting because archaeology has uncovered the remains of this gate and its **projecting tower**. I'm not sure what you've been thinking about these walls but they're not little dinky walls. This is a fortress city and I think the following picture demonstrates the kind of building project they were undertaking. This is an artist's depiction of the Water Gate with its projecting tower but it's probably quite accurate. It's quite a sight (site?). The actual **Water Gate** is in the center, the **projecting tower** is on the right and to the left is outer gatehouse through which people would enter before being admitted into the city through the **Water Gate**.



The remains of this gate and the projecting tower can be seen in the southern Temple Mount excavations carried out by the Mazar's (Benjamin and granddaughter Eilat, see below).



Verse 27, **After them the Tekoites repaired another section in front of the great projecting tower and as far as the wall of Ophel.** Again the **Ophel** is the upper region of the city next to the Temple Mount. This has been highly excavated. The wall extended from the tower on up to the corner of the Temple. This is the second section of the wall that was completed by the **Tekoites** (cf 3:5).

Verse 28, **Above the Horse Gate the priests carried out repairs, each in front of his house.** The **Horse Gate** was probably where the king had his horses brought in to his palace area. Some of the priests in this time lived in the area and so **carried out repairs.**

Verse 29, **After them Zadok the son of Immer carried out repairs in front of his house. And after him Shemaiah the son of Shecaniah, the keeper of the East Gate, carried out the repairs.** Verse 30, **After him Hananiah the son of Shelemiah, and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired another section. After him Meshullam the son of Berechiah**

carried out repairs in front of his own quarters. Again, one of the emphases is Nehemiah's strategy of having people repair the areas near their own homes so they would have a personal interest in the job being done right. At this point we're moving north up the eastern wall beside the Temple.

Verse 31, **After him Malchijah, one of the goldsmiths, carried out repairs as far as the house of the temple servants and of the merchants, in front of the Inspection Gate and as far as the upper room of the corner. You see some of the common professions held by these workers, goldsmiths and merchants,** they repaired the walls all the way up to the **Inspection Gate**, referred to on the map as the Miphkad Gate.

Finally, verse 32, **Between the upper room of the corner and the Sheep Gate the goldsmiths and the merchants carried out repairs.** And this finishes the walls back to the starting point at the Sheep Gate. Someone was assigned to repair every gate and section of the wall for the entire circuit of the city.

In conclusion, let's see if we have any questions concerning the archaeology of Jerusalem and then we can draw some lessons from this passage. First, a leader must have a clear plan in view in order to be successful and efficient in completing the project. This plan of Nehemiah's has all the earmarks of a well-devised plan. He assigned everyone a specific place to work. The assignments were made near people's work or home. This eliminated the need to commute, enjoined a personal interest in the quality of building and took advantage of the abilities of each family member. Finally, he employed people of all strata of society to encourage unity. Second, the Bible is a historical book that takes place in space and time. It is not a religious, upper story book. We don't float out of history into some spiritual realm of our own imagination when we come to the Bible. As Nehemiah shows us it is rooted in real life events, in this chapter centered on a construction project involving the walls of Jerusalem. So real are these events that we have uncovered archaeological evidence of the structures in this chapter. This means the Bible applies to your life and my life in the ordinary details of life. God has not given us a book that drifts away into an other worldly mysticism or forces us to look within to find the divine but a book that is God's personal revelation to us sufficient to stimulate our trust in Him and apply His principles to the real and ordinary everyday details of life. Finally, a third

application of this passage comes from a question I would ask. Why was Nehemiah so concerned with restoring Jerusalem? There's a logic here you want to catch. The report came to him that the people were in reproach and Jerusalem was in reproach. If Jerusalem was in reproach then God's name was in reproach and God's people were in reproach. That's the logic. Therefore Nehemiah reasoned that if we rebuild Jerusalem then Jerusalem will no longer be a reproach and God's name will no longer be a reproach and God's people will no longer be a reproach. It was the way of restoring their reputation in order to be a testimony to the world. The application for us is, what are we doing to restore our reputation before the world so we can be a testimony to the world? The church in America has a bad reputation. We contribute in part to that reputation. We proclaim to be Christian but we live like pagans. What steps are we taking to put off our pagan sinful lifestyles and put on Christ? Where is holiness among God's people? The world sees no difference so I'm asking you, why isn't there a difference? I'm asking you, if you are not living a holy life why aren't you? Why are you continuing to live in sin? Sin is bondage. Why not live a holy life and be set free from bondage to sin so that the church of Jesus Christ will no longer be a reproach in this country and instead will be a testimony to the world. That's why Nehemiah took the steps he did and that's why we should take steps to repent of sinful living and dedicate our lives completely to Christ.

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