

The Gospel According to Jerusalem's Gates

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Introduction: Open your Bible to the book of **Nehemiah 3**. Tonight we are going to get a picture in the Old Testament of the Gospel, and we are going to see the Gospel, and really the whole Christian life, in the twelve gates of Jerusalem. I've given you a handout with a general idea of where the gates might have been in the walls.

Let us divide this chapter into **3 Parts**:

- **The People**
- **The Pattern**
- **The Places**

- I. The **People** (Nehemiah 3: 1-5). The people set out in Nehemiah 3 is one of diversity and of unity, just like it is in the church of Jesus Christ.
 - A. The people were **diverse**. There are **42 groups of people** listed in this work of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. Throughout chapter 3 we find that there were a variety of workers. There were priests (verse 1) and rulers (verses 12-19) working alongside craftsmen (verse 8; 32) and even Jews from other cities (verses 2, 5, 7).
 - B. But all the people were **united** in the same overall work. While "**no man can do everything**", let us remember that "**all men can do something!**" Every child of God has been gifted by the Holy Spirit to do something – and God is much more interested in our "**availability**" than our "**capability**".
- II. The **Pattern**. One thing that seems to quickly arrest our attention is the use of the word "**next**" – it is used **14 times** in chapter 3. There is never a time to rest. Something is always happening!
 - A. The work began with the **leadership**. It was an organized work with the leadership taking the lead, and the people cooperating with that leadership—**verse 1**, "Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep gate; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel".

Application: If you want to lead God's people, you've got to be the one to set the example. God does call unfaithful people to be leaders. You can know all the correct theology, but if you are not willing to set the example in the littlest of things, you will not be a leader.

For instance, leaders need to support the outreaches and inreaches of the church. Do you have a heart for evangelism and the teaching of the Word of God. Are you faithful to all the services of the church, SS, Sunday morning, evening Bible Study,

and Wednesday night prayer meeting. If you are a man, do you lead by coming to prayer meeting? As a lady, do you lead by being faithful to our Ladies' quarterly fellowship? Are you busy in the edification of the church and evangelism of the lost?

Paul said in **2 Timothy 2:2**, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

Here the people that Paul said we are to make leaders are those who are faithful, available, teachable, and teaching others. Does that describe you? Are you faithful?

- B. Each person had an area of **responsibility**, and God noted each worker and put his name in Word of God. Remember God will not forget your labor of love and work of faith.
- C. Some **refused** to take responsibility. Notice **verse 5b** – Even in Nehemiah's day, there were some who "refused to get involved in the work" – How sad! God makes mention of these too! Verses 1-4 describe all the people working, and then we read in **verse 5**, "And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord".
1. **Application:** Consider the words of Warren Weirsbe, former pastor of the Moody Church. He said, "Some are constructionalists, helping to get the job done. Some are obstructionalists, getting in the way of those who are trying to get the job done. Some are destructionalists, and they're tearing things down".

Which are you? Which am I? Unless we are helping build, we are either getting in the way or tearing down. Let's be careful to constantly be doing the work of the Lord. Our mouth, our hands, our feet—they're all the Lord's!

2. **Application:** Remember that according to **Ephesians 4:11-12**, we are all to be doing the work of the ministry. "And he [Christ] gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ". At all times, you are to be a constructionist—" the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry... [and] the edifying of the body of Christ".

The task of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem is a wonderful object lesson for the work of the church today. We too must have organization, leadership, and people willing to cooperate and get involved in the task of evangelizing the lost and edifying the saints.

- III. The **Places**. Now we come to the actual gates themselves. What was it that God's people were building? They were building entrances to God's city. The gates themselves give us a wonderful picture of the Gospel and the Christian life. We also are to build entrances to God's city—Zion—salvation in Christ.

Let's look at the spiritual lessons for us as we examine the rebuilding of the **gates** in the walls of Jerusalem. There are 10 gates listed by name, and each one of them is significant. There are 2 other gates listed in Nehemiah making a total of 12 gates – the same number of gates which will be in the walls of New Jerusalem (**Revelation 21:12-13**).

Let us examine, by name, the meaning of these gates – **The Gospel According to the Jerusalem's Gates.**

- I. The **Sheep** Gate. **Nehemiah 3:1-2**, "Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep gate; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel. 2 And next unto him builded the men of Jericho. And next to them builded Zaccur the son of Imri."
 - A. The **Purpose**: It was called the sheep gate because this was the gate through which the sheep and lambs used in the sacrifices were bought.
 - B. The **Picture**: The very first gate mentioned points to the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross. The sheep gate was the gate sheep destined for temple sacrifice were led through as lambs to the slaughter. We know that Christ is the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world", and "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin". The work of salvation starts at the place of sacrifice, that place where the Lord Jesus Christ bled for us and bore our sins. You cannot do a work for God or for Christ, unless you have first been to Calvary and been cleansed in the precious blood of the Lord Jesus. Have you been to the Sheep Gate?
 1. **John 1:29** – "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."
 2. **John 10:1-16**, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. 2 But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. 4 And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. 5 And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. 6 This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them. 7 Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. 8 All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. 9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. 10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly. 11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. 12 But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. 13 The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd, and know my *sheep*, and am known of mine. 15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd."
 3. If you were to go by the Sheep Gate, you would notice that there were **no locks or bars** on the **Sheep Gate** – **John 6:37**, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

4. Also notice that this is the only gate that was **sanctified**, setting it apart from all of the others as a special gate.

Transition: That was the first gate, now if you'll travel with me counter clockwise, let's travel to each of these gates, because there's a lesson for us all in each of them.

II. Second we come to the **Fish** Gate (**Nehemiah 3:3-5**).

A. The **Purpose:** It was called the fish gate because the fisherman of Galilee would bring their catch in through this gate to be sold. This was the gate through which fish from the Jordan and the Sea of Galilee entered Jerusalem.

B. The **Picture:** God has commissioned all Christians to be "fishers of men"; to communicate the Gospel of Christ to a lost and dying world. There is no greater privilege in all of the world than to be an "Ambassador of Christ". Paul taught the Corinthians concerning the "ministry of reconciliation" which is bestowed upon all believers in **2 Corinthians 5**.

III. The **Prison** Gate (Nehemiah 12:39).

A. The **Purpose:** After you pass the Fish gate, you come to the Prison gate. The third **gate** we are looking at is mentioned in **Nehemiah** is found in **Nehemiah 12:39 – The Prison Gate** – it was the gate through which the prisoners entered the city.

B. The **Picture:** Of course the picture of the prison gate is the entrance into the Lake of Fire, God's eternal prison. If you decide not to go into the Sheep gate, through Christ, and you come another way, you will be cast into God's prison. The Bible says the entrance into God's prison is death. "The wages of sin is death" (**Romans 6:23**).

As Christians we must always remember that Christ became a curse for us. He went to prison for us. The just for the unjust. **2 Corinthians 5:21**, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

IV. The Gate **Ephraim** (Nehemiah 8:16; 12:39)

A. The **Purpose:** This gate is also called the Gate of Benjamin, in Jeremiah 37:13, since it led into the territory of both Ephraim and Benjamin, but more importantly, the Ephraim Gate was associated with the public square where people gathered together.

B. The **Picture:** The Ephraim Gate reminds us that as Christians we are not lone rangers. We are part of the church. We are to gather and listen to the Word of God together.

V. The **Old** Gate (**Nehemiah 3:6-12**).

A. The **Purpose:** This gate served as the main entrance to the city of Jerusalem. This gate was famous for its antiquity. This gate was the main way into the city, and it had always been that way.

B. The **Picture:** This gate points us to Christ and the Word of God. Without the Word of God we cannot know God. He has revealed Himself to us. The Word of God is like the Old Gate to us, which opens our eyes to Christ, who is the "Way, the truth and the Life". **The Old Gate** speaks of the importance of "old paths & old truths of the Word of God" (Jeremiah 6:16). The world is always looking for "some new way or

some new thing!" (Acts 17:21). My friend, there is "NO Other Way BUT Christ & His Cross!" Christ is the only answer to the woes of the world!

VI. The **Valley** Gate (Nehemiah 3:13).

- A. The **Purpose**: The Valley Gate led to the valley of Rephaim. This valley was where David often fought Goliath as a humble shepherd boy. The valley gate speaks of remembering God in the valleys of life when we think our situation is impossible. This gate led to the valley of Elah where David fought Goliath.
- B. The **Picture**: Sometimes God allows us to go through the valley in order to prepare us for a future task; sometimes in order that we might be stronger now; and sometimes in order to get our attention. God's promise is that **"He will go through the valleys with us!"**

VII. The **Dung** Gate (Nehemiah 3:14).

- A. The **Purpose**: The dung gate was the gate of the city where all the waste and all the refuse was taken out of to cleanse the city. All the garbage and corrupt things in the city were brought through this gate to the garbage dump in the Hinnom Valley, outside Jerusalem where it was cast into the fire.
- B. The **Picture**: The Dung Gate speaks of the necessity for the believer to constantly examine his own life in order to rid himself of unconfessed sins! Imagine how difficult it would be to repair such a gate as this.....yet we have the promise of God that states, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). In other words, the Christian life is a life of constant repentance—a constant turning from our sin to God.

This was a very important gate to the city of Jerusalem, and it is a very important principle for believers today! **2 Corinthians 7:1**, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God".

VIII. The Gate of the **Fountain** (Nehemiah 3:15-25).

- A. The **Purpose**: This is the gate by the **Pool of Shiloh**, where the cleansing and healing and renewal took place. It speaks of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in preparing and filling us for service.
- B. The **Picture**: Notice the mention of the many workers **united together** in the work in verses 15-26. Today, the Holy Spirit binds believers together in order that we might see the work accomplished.

John 7:38, "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water".

IX. The **Water** Gate (Nehemiah 3:27)

- A. The **Purpose**: The Water Gate was used to bring water into the city – An aqueduct brought some water into the city, but not all of it. The remainder was carried in through the water gate.
- B. The **Picture**: Often God's Word refers to itself as **"water"** – Ephesians 5:26; Psalm 119:9. We need the washing of water by the Word! It is also important to note that this is the only gate that needed "NO REPAIRS!"

- X. The **Horse** Gate (Nehemiah 3:28)
- A. The **Purpose**: The Horse Gate speaks of the "believer's warfare". The horse was the animal ridden by a warrior!
- B. The **Picture**: Believers are engaged in "spiritual warfare!" (Ephesians 6:10-18; 2 Timothy 2:3-4). There are many adversaries of the believer, and we must be prepared for battle on a daily basis! Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries" (**1 Corinthians 16:19**).
- XI. The **East** Gate (Nehemiah 3:29-30)
- A. The **Purpose**: **The East Gate** is perhaps the most well-known gate of all! It fills the student of God's Word with enthusiasm and excitement because of its connection with the 2nd Coming of Christ! The East Gate was the first one opened in the morning – it is **sealed today**, but according to prophecy, we know that one day it will again be opened for business! Most students of the Bible believe that when Christ returns, He will enter into this particular gate.
- B. The **Picture**: Christians today anticipate that the Lord's Return for His Bride, the Church (**1 Thessalonians 4:16-17**). Believers today ought to be ever looking for the coming of the SON, just as did the watchman in Nehemiah's day who looked eastward every morning for the rising of the SUN to open the East Gate.
- XII. The **Inspection** Gate (Gate Miphkad) (Nehemiah 3:31-32) –Translated the "Inspection" Gate in other versions.
- A. The Purpose: **The Gate Miphkad** speaks of **judgment**. The word "**Miphkad**" actually means in Hebrew, "review; appointment; account". In the days of David, the soldiers would pass through this gate "**in review**" before their king, who stood to greet them and express his gratitude for their unselfish loyalty and daring. It was also a gate in which those who entered the city had to "**register**".
- B. Whether or not a person is saved, "we must ALL give an account of ourselves before the Lord" (**Romans 14:12**).

