

The Joy of the Lord is our Strength
A Study in the Book of Nehemiah
#4 Let's Get to Work (Neh. 3:1-32)

Introduction

#1. A word about the TEMPLES:

The Jewish worship center was first built by Solomon and stood on the Temple mount in Jerusalem. **The First Temple** was erected in the 960sBC, fulfilling a dream of his father, David. Solomon's temple was destroyed by the Babylonians when they razed Jerusalem in 587 BC.

A second, much smaller temple was erected on the same site by Zerubbabel when this small Jewish contingency returned to their homeland from Babylon. This structure, known as the **Second Temple**, was completed in 516/515 BC.

The Third Temple was greatly expanded and beautified by Herod the Great, a project that took 46 years to complete, The Romans destroyed this **Third Temple** in AD 70.

The site on which the temples were constructed had great historic significance. We believe that Mount Moriah (where Abraham came to sacrifice Isaac-Gen. 22:2 and where David purchased a threshing floor from Araunah to build an altar and sacrifice to God) is on the temple mount.

The prophet Ezekiel predicts that the **Future Temple** will stand in the same place, even though that site is currently occupied by the Mosque of Omar (the second most holy place in Islam). Ezekiel's Temple is described in great detail in Ez. 40-48.

Where is God's temple today? See I Cor. 6:19-20

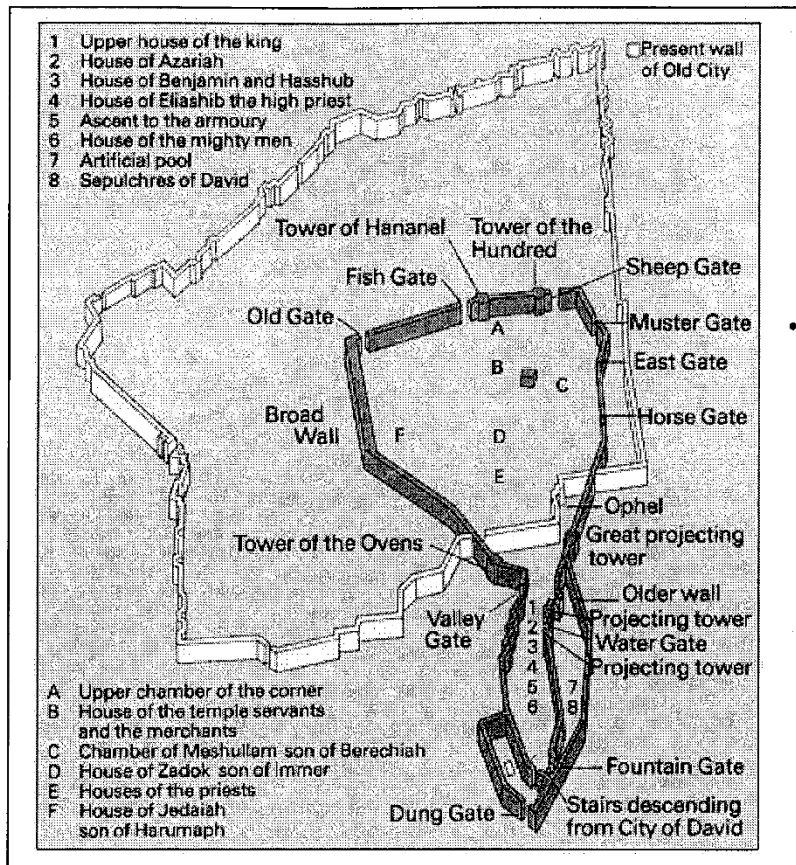
#2 The preparations were completed. It was time to get to work.

Note the physical dimensions of the wall:

The wall ran for about 2.5 miles or 4018 meters. It was 39 ft. high, 8.2 ft. thick with 35 watch towers and 7 main gates. It enclosed about 220 acres.

"Let us start rebuilding. So, they began this good work." (2:17-18)

The Wall is Repaired



Northern Section (vs. 1-7):

1. The priests rebuilt the Sheep Gate (3:1) John 5:2 (pool of Bethesda); and Zech. 14:10 suggest this gate is located in the northeast section.
2. Sons of Hassenaah or Senaah (the largest group of returnees enumerated in Ezra 2:35 and Neh.7: 38) rebuilt the Fish Gate (3:3) The fish Gate was one of Jerusalem's main entrances. See II Chron. 33:14.
3. Meremoth made repairs in this location and again as noted in vs. 21. This may be the same priest listed in Ezra 2:59, 61. Meshullam also repaired an additional section (see vs. 30). (3:4)

4. Next to them, the men of Tekoa worked (their nobles worked minimally). That expression refers to the imagery of oxen that refuse to yield to the yoke. Tekoa was the home of the prophet, Amos. (3:5)
5. The Jeshanah (Old) Gate was repaired by Joiada and Meshullam. It was in the northwest corner and is identified with the Corner Gate referred to in II Kings 14:13. (3:6)
6. Next to them the men of Gibeon and Mizpah worked. Apparently, these cities were not destroyed by the Babylonians. (3:7)

Western Section (vs. 8-13)

7. The goldsmiths worked next. (3:8)
8. Then the perfumers labored. (3:8)
9. Rephaiah (oversaw one of the five districts of Judea. He repaired the section closest to his home. (3:9)
10. Then Jedaiah and Hattush made repairs next to their homes. (3:10)
11. Malkijah and Hasshub repaired another section that was near the ovens and the town bakers. (3:11) Malkijah is mentioned in Ezra 10:31 and that reference might make him a contemporary of both Ezra and Nehemiah. (3:11)
12. Shallum is the son of Hallohesh (likely not a real name, but a title that means whisperer or enchanter. It might refer to a kind of guild, rather than an actual family line.) His daughters participated in this section of the wall. (3:12)
13. Hanun and others from Zanoah worked on the Valley Gate down as far as the Dung Gate. (3:13)

Southern Section (vs. 14)

14. Malkijah son of Recab worked on the Dung Gate (where the piles of waste and garbage were burnt). (3:14). The Recabites are mentioned in Jer. 35.

Eastern Section (vs. 15-32)

15. Shallum repaired the Fountain Gate (Spring Gate). It was adjacent to the En-Rogel spring-near the Siloam Pool. (3:15)
16. Nehemiah son of Azbuk made repairs near the tomb of David. (3:16) See I Kings 2:10, II Chron. 21:20, 32:33.
17. The Levites worked on the next section of the wall (Descendants of the Levi- the tribe set aside for the service of the tabernacle and temple. They worked for the priests [who were descendants of Aaron]). (3:17-18)

18. Ezer, Baruch (Jeremiah's scribe) and Meremoth worked on the next three sections (3:19-21). Baruch worked "zealously" - It means to glow or burn. It conveys real effort.
19. The priests worked alongside the men who had houses adjacent to the wall (3:22-32). Note that the Water Gate (vs. 26), the East Gate (vs. 29), the Inspection Gate (vs. 31) and the Gate of the Guard were gates associated with the palace-temple complex, not actual gates of the city.

They completed half of the work

4:6 "So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart."

Except for the nobles from Tekoa, all manner of city dwellers pitched in to complete the repairs and some groups did double duty!

So What?

The Bible has much to say about the value and importance of WORK. See Matt. 5:16

1. God modeled it and passed on the responsibility to work. See Gen. 1-3.
Gen. 2:8, 15: "To cultivate"-foster growth and improve, "to maintain"-to preserve from failure or decline and "to subdue"- to exercise control and discipline.
2. After the fall, work became difficult. "To toil:" means challenging, difficult, exhausting, full of struggle. See Gen. 3:17-19.
3. God gives each of us distinct skills and abilities for certain kinds of work. See Ex. 31:1-5
4. We are responsible for the quality of our work. See Matt. 25:21
5. Our work is yoked with Christ. See II Cor. 6:14-15 and Matt. 11:29:30
6. As we work, we are an ambassador for Christ and our job is to serve others. See Mark 12:31 and Matt. 7:12
7. There is a rhythm to work and rest and that rhythm is essential for life. See Ex. 20:8-11.
8. The fruit of our labor (money-wealth) should be directed by the Lord. See I Cor. 4:7 and I Tim. 6:17-19
9. Work is a gift from God. See Ecc. 5:19
(Adapted from Andy Mills' material)

A word about walls and healthy boundaries

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Nehemiah was so specific about who the workers on the wall were?
2. Do details matter to the Lord? Read Matt. 5:18, Luke 12:7
3. Does our culture value work (in and of itself)? Do you?
4. How is work a gift from God?
5. Thinking about the walls as modern-day boundaries in relationships... do we need them? How do they help or hurt our relationships?

Personal Reflections

1. How hard is it for you to see yourself as an important part of what God is doing? Can you celebrate your place "on the wall?" Why or why not?
2. Do you see your daily job as an expression of service to the Lord? Does it have meaning other than supplying money for needed resources?
3. If you happen to be "retired," what does that mean in reference to God's assignment for you?
4. Do "fences" really make good neighbors? Why or why not?
5. What "walls" or boundaries are necessary for a healthy relationship? Do you have yours in place?