

## Nehemiah 2-3

**Read Nehemiah 2: 1-8:** Nehemiah is an example of a godly man; who served as a highly-valued government servant. Nehemiah was the cup bearer to the King of Persia. Nehemiah, Joseph, and Daniel were famous examples of this blessing of *excellence in public service*. Joseph was elevated to the top household servant of the Pharaoh's Captain of the Guard, and then he became some kind of incarcerated administrator over the entire prison! After that, Joseph became the Governor over all of Egypt. Daniel became the chief administrator under Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon; then the chief administrator under Darius the Mede; and then the ultimate problem solver for King Belshazzar.

*But while Joseph was there in the prison, <sup>21</sup> the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. <sup>22</sup> So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. <sup>23</sup> The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did. (Genesis 40:21-23)*

Sometimes Christians can become embittered about being forced to serve ungodly leaders. We can become judgmental about all that we do not like about our situation and our country. Nehemiah is an example of our need to live above our circumstances. Nehemiah was able to bring a much-needed support to God's struggling people. Queen Esther was used to save all of the Jews in the whole world, because of her favor with the king. It really comes down to praying about having *the heart of a servant*. We will be much happier if we pray to serve where we are placed. Otherwise we become embittered critics of all that is wrong.

**Read Nehemiah 2:9-10:** Jerusalem had been completely destroyed 70 years prior. Nehemiah was in a position to have the favor of the foreign king to take time off and help his own nation. He went to rebuild the city's walls. Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem to survey the work at hand. The territorial leaders and locals heard about the plan of the Jews to rebuild their home in Jerusalem. This angered them. Anti-Semitism has been a worldwide problem for a long time. They did not want to see the Jews return; or regain their independence. You can be assured that your quest for the things of God will not be welcomed by everybody. It should be comforting to know that you are not in league with the heathen.

**Read Nehemiah 2: 11-16:** What Nehemiah saw was total devastation. There was so much rubble and debris; that he had to get off of his animal; and walk it on foot.

The entire city was razed to the ground. There was not much left to rebuild from. When we give ourselves over to sin there is a fall. We generally lose everything that we own; and any self-respect. It is a pitiful scene when a sinner has tried everything until they cannot go any further. They literally light their own life and livelihood on fire. God told the Jews to leave with the Babylonians; but they stayed and starved...and were slaughtered. Our own imaginations lead us to ruins. The Jews lost their own life and the life of everyone connected to them. Sin is not a personal decision. It is infectious; and it ruins our neighbors lives as well.

**Read Nehemiah 2:17-18:** Nehemiah was inspired to repair the broken down city walls. He was ashamed and saddened at the place of his heritage being turned into a dump. Jerusalem is a big part of the national pride and identity of the Jews. Satan is a good trader. He is successful at getting us to trade away the things of value and stability for fleeting things that do not end up being all their billing promises. Luring us with an idol is like trading fool's gold for something that is life-giving and hard to obtain.

Idols are non-existent; but they create a venue for demons to lure people in according to their lusts. Satan capitalized on the sins of the Jews; and he destroyed them after he drew them in. Satan wants to wipe out any group of people who reflect God to others. That is exactly what sin does. It draws us away from our responsibilities; and further away from our base. Then it kills us.

*each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. <sup>15</sup> Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. (James 1:14)*

*Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8)*

Nehemiah was known as a *repairer of the breach*. That has a deeper meaning for our life application. Isaiah chapter 58 tells us that true faith is all about fixing broken down and defeated lives. In fact; it tells us that is the path to true blessings and spiritual health.

*Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings. (Isaiah 58:12)*

We are like a city surrounded by walls. Are we open to allowing anything in? We are called to be discerning; and reject evil. A cities walls and gates are like our level of holiness. What kind of nonsense and hate speech do we listen to? What



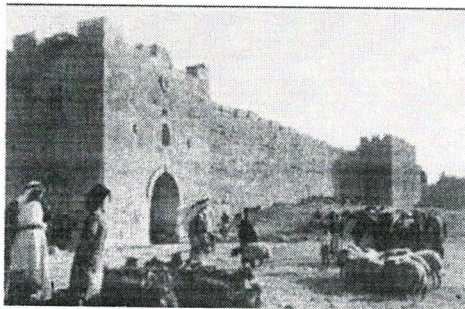
amount of crude joking do we allow? What are the lyrics of the songs we listen to? An open gate in a city allows the enemy to plant seeds of fear, lust and doubt. We have eye gates and ear gates. The devil is definitely controlling much of the media.

*...you were dead in your transgressions and sins, <sup>2</sup>in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup>All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh<sup>[u]</sup> and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. (Ephesians 2:1-3)*

### Nehemiah 3

**Read Nehemiah 3:1-5:** The people began to rebuild the walls. Families and groups of priests took sections of the wall; and completed their section. Jerusalem's walls originally were just around a 12 acre area. That was the size of the Jebusite city; which David conquered. King Solomon expanded the walls of the city to 32 acres. King Hezekiah made it wider and stronger in places when the Assyrians threatened an invasion.

Nebuchadnezzar laid siege in 589 B.C.; and destroyed Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Jerusalem King Cyrus of Medo Persia captured Babylon in 539 B.C. 70 years after they were taken captive, the Jews were allowed to return to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. In 458 B.C. Ezra brought another group of captives to Jerusalem and in 445 B.C. the final expedition of Jews came to Jerusalem under the leadership of Nehemiah. King Artaxerxes of Persia agreed to send Nehemiah to Jerusalem, appointed him as Civil Governor for 12 years, and authorized him to complete the rebuilding of the wall (and gates) of the city.



How could a small unskilled Hebrew population handle the enormous civil engineering job? It was more of a rehab, than new construction. There were different degrees of total destruction of the wall and gates. The first and probably the most compelling reason to believe that Nehemiah did not build a new wall on

top of the eastern slope is because of the narration in Nehemiah chapter three. Nowhere does it mention the building of a new wall. It says, 35 times, that he *repaired* the wall. Nehemiah built a new wall on the eastern ridge and abandoned Hezekiah's mid-slope wall.



One of her reasons for this argument was that Nehemiah 4:10 says: *there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall*. Nehemiah 4:10 is not the end of the story, however. Nehemiah 4:15 tells us that the work of rebuilding Hezekiah's broken wall continued and was not abandoned: *...we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work*. Nehemiah's predecessor, Hezekiah, built his wall on the ruins of the old Jebusite wall, not on the top of the ridge. The only wall, therefore, for Nehemiah to repair was Hezekiah's mid-slope wall.

Dr. Shiloh could not understand why artifacts of Nehemiah's Persian period were found along the inside of Hezekiah's mid-slope wall. The answer is that Nehemiah did not build on top of the ridge but repaired Hezekiah's mid-slope wall. There were actually three separate walls in some areas of Jerusalem.





**Read Nehemiah 3:6-32:** There was so much work to do; and everybody had a big chunk to handle. There was no time to observe your neighbor; as you had a huge task before you. In God's kingdom we have things to do as well. Those who are roving critics are probably not doing their own work. When we take an inventory of our life; it can seem to not add up to being more than a pile of rocks...and woefully incomplete. In reality; nobody has the scope of completing the whole work of God in their own life.

*Unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labor in vain. (Psalm 127:1)*

*I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. <sup>7</sup>So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. (1 Corinthians 3:6-7)*