

“Construction: Building Together”
Nehemiah 3:1-32
Nehemiah: Rebuilding a City & People for God
Mercy Hill Church | April 2, 2023

Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brothers the priests, and they built the Sheep Gate. They consecrated it and set its doors. They consecrated it as far as the Tower of the Hundred, as far as the Tower of Hananel. ²And next to him the men of Jericho built. And next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built. ³The sons of Hassenaah built the Fish Gate. They laid its beams and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. ⁴And next to them Meremoth the son of Uriah, son of Hakkoz repaired. And next to them Meshullam the son of Berechiah, son of Meshezabel repaired. And next to them Zadok the son of Baana repaired. ⁵And next to them the Tekoites repaired, but their nobles would not stoop to serve their Lord. ⁶Joiada the son of Paseah and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah repaired the Gate of Yeshanah. They laid its beams and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. ⁷And next to them repaired Melatiah the Gibeonite and Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon and of Mizpah, the seat of the governor of the province Beyond the River. ⁸Next to them Uzziel the son of Harhaiah, goldsmiths, repaired. Next to him Hananiah, one of the perfumers, repaired, and they restored Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall. ⁹Next to them Rephaiah the son of Hur, ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, repaired. ¹⁰Next to them Jedaiah the son of Harumaph repaired opposite his house. And next to him Hattush the son of Hashabneiah repaired. ¹¹Malchijah the son of Harim and Hasshub the son of Pahath-moab repaired another section and the Tower of the Ovens. ¹²Next to him Shallum the son of Hallohesh, ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, repaired, he and his daughters. ¹³Hanun and the inhabitants of Zanoah repaired the Valley Gate. They rebuilt it and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars, and repaired a thousand cubits of the wall, as far as the Dung Gate. ¹⁴Malchijah the son of Rechab, ruler of the district of Beth-haccherem, repaired the Dung Gate. He rebuilt it and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. ¹⁵And Shallum the son of Col-hozeh, ruler of the district of Mizpah, repaired the Fountain Gate. He rebuilt it and covered it and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. And he built the wall of the Pool of Shelah of the king's garden, as far as the stairs that go down from the city of David. ¹⁶After him Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, ruler of half the district of Beth-zur, repaired to a point opposite the tombs of David, as far as the artificial pool, and as far as the house of the mighty men. ¹⁷After him the Levites repaired: Rehum the son of Bani. Next to him Hashabiah, ruler of half the district of Keilah, repaired for his district. ¹⁸After him their brothers repaired: Bavvai the son of Henadad, ruler of half the district of Keilah. ¹⁹Next to him Ezer the son of Jeshua, ruler of Mizpah, repaired another section opposite the ascent to the armory at the buttress. ²⁰After him Baruch the son of Zabbai repaired another section from the buttress to the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest. ²¹After him Meremoth the son of Uriah, son of Hakkoz repaired another section from the door of the house of Eliashib to the end of the house of Eliashib. ²²After him the priests, the men of the surrounding area, repaired. ²³After them Benjamin and Hasshub repaired opposite their house. After them Azariah the son of Maaseiah, son of Ananiah repaired beside his own house. ²⁴After him Binnui the son of Henadad repaired another section, from the house of Azariah to the buttress and to the corner. ²⁵Palal the son of Uzai repaired opposite the buttress and the tower projecting from the upper house of the king at the court of the guard. After him Pedaiah the son of Parosh ²⁶and the temple servants living on Ophel repaired to a point opposite the Water Gate on the east and the projecting tower. ²⁷After him the Tekoites repaired another section opposite the great projecting tower as far as the wall of Ophel. ²⁸Above the Horse Gate the priests repaired, each one opposite his own house. ²⁹After them Zadok the son of Immer repaired opposite his own house. After him Shemaiah the son of Shecaniah, the keeper of the East Gate, repaired. ³⁰After him Hananiah the son of Shelemiah and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph repaired another section. After him Meshullam the son of Berechiah repaired opposite his chamber. ³¹After him Malchijah, one of the goldsmiths, repaired as far as the house of the temple servants and of the merchants, opposite the Muster Gate, and to the upper chamber of the corner. ³²And between the upper chamber of the corner and the Sheep Gate the goldsmiths and the merchants repaired.

Big Idea: As God’s people, we are called to serve Him together and one another for His glory!

Overview of Nehemiah 3

- Comparable to the list of genealogies throughout the Bible
 - Part of the legacy and history of our faith, even though these people and names may not mean anything to us at first glance.
 - Yet these names have been recorded in the Word of God for the knowledge and edification of God’s people – even for us today (2,500 years later!)
- The chapter covers the different portions of the walls (and gates) of Jerusalem which were being repaired under Nehemiah’s vision and plans.
 - The chapter lists in order the different parts of the walls in a counter-clockwise fashion

1. The Unity & Diversity of God's People

- The unity of God's people in rebuilding the wall as they work shoulder to shoulder, side by side:
 - "...and next to him/them..." (vv.2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 17, 19)
 - "...after him..." (vv.16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 30, 31)
 - Building of the Tabernacle (cf. Exodus 35:30-35)
- The diversity of God's people
 - Different occupation, skills, socio-economic and geographic backgrounds: religious leaders (v.1, 17), civil leaders (v.9, 12, 14-15), goldsmiths/perfumers (v.8, 31), women (v.12), Tekoites (v.5), Gibeonites – descendants of Amorites (v.7), etc.
- The theme of unity for God's glory is central throughout the Bible: John 17:21, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 2:20-21, 4:16, Acts 2:5-11 (vs. Genesis 11:1-9), Revelation 7:9-10
 - "E pluribus unum" – "out of many, one" traditional motto of the US. In 1956, US Congress passed an act in 1956 adopting "In God We Trust" as the official motto. Out of the union of the 13 colonies a new nation was formed.
 - The Gospel is what unites God's people together – and this unity is for God's glory!

2. The Availability & Adaptability of God's People

- The people of God were available to God and available for God
 - Regardless of ability, experience, etc.
- The people of God were flexible and willing to adapt
 - Many – if not the majority – of the people were serving out of their comfort zone, out of their skillset, giftings, and experiences:
 - Eliashib, the high priest, working on the sheep gate (v.1)
 - Uzziel (v.8) & Malchijah (v.31), goldsmiths
 - Hananiah, perfumer (v.8)
 - Rephaiah (v.9), Shallum (v.12), Malchijah (v.14), Shallum (v.15), rulers
 - Some did more (or different) work than others
 - Tekoites repaired the Fish Gate (vv.3-5) and the Wall of Ophel (v.27)
 - Eliashib worked on the Sheep Gate (v.1) while Baruch & Meremoth repaired the area around Eliashib's house (vv.20-21)
 - Azariah repaired the areas around his house (v.23), like Zadok (v.29) and Meshullam (v.30)
 - Malchijah repaired the Dung Gate (v.14)!
- ...in contrast to the nobles of Tekoa (v.5) who, "would not stop to serve their Lord" (ESV), "put their shoulders to the work under their supervisor" (NIV).
 - "Lord" = "their Lord God" or "their lords"
 - These nobles were neither available nor willing to be flexible/adaptable in helping rebuild the walls.
 - *Possibly* why the Tekoites did double duty (vv.3-5 and v.27)
 - Cf. Judges 5:16-18 when 4 of the tribes of Israel stayed home and didn't risk their lives in the battle against the Canaanites.

3. The Heart & Humility of God's People

- The people had a servant's heart which stems from humility
 - Unity (despite differences), availability, and adaptability flow out of a heart of humility
 - At the foundation or underlying their unity, availability and adaptability was humility.

- Augustine quote: “If you plan to build a tall house of virtues, you must first lay deep foundations of humility”
 - Humility isn’t found in looking within ourselves but fixing our eyes on God.
 - John Flavel quote: “They that know God will be humble and they that know themselves, cannot be proud”
- Serving one another and serving God; serving out of love for others and love for God (cf. Matthew 22:37-40) for God’s glory!

Christ Connection

- Palm Sunday (cf. Matthew 21:6-11, Zechariah 9:9)
 - Esau McCaulley from Christianity Today:
 - “But history tells us there might have been a deeper reason: Those plants were symbolically linked to military victories and Messiahship. A generation before Jesus, when Simon Maccabee drove Israel’s enemies out Jerusalem, people celebrated by waving palm branches: On the twenty-third day of the second month, in the one hundred seventy-first year, the Jews entered it with praise and palm branches, and with harps and cymbals and stringed instruments, and with hymns and songs, because a great enemy had been crushed and removed from Israel. (1 Mac. 13:51, NRSV). The Testament of Naphtali, another book written by Jews of that period, also discussed palm branches in the context of messianic expectation. So when Jesus entered Jerusalem, people used them to interpret his identity. He was another Simon Maccabee—a long-hoped-for king who would drive out the Gentiles. All the Gospels are clear that Jesus chose a symbol, a way for his people to make sense of his kingship. But it was the young donkey, not the palm branch (John 12:14). John rightly sees the donkey as Jesus intended. It was the fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9, which says, “Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. Jesus picked a symbol that emphasized humility and lowliness instead of military strength.”
- Jesus came not in power (which he demonstrated glimpses of in His earthly ministry) but in humility (re: in His incarnation and crucifixion).
 - Mark 10:45 “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (cf. Philippians 2:1-11, John 13:14-15 - Jesus washing his disciples’ feet)
- Ultimately the reason we can serve God and one another is because we see, understand and believe that Jesus first came to serve us!

Reflection Questions

- In what ways have you seen the power of the gospel to unite different people together?
- When was a time you experienced the joy of working alongside others for a common goal?
- Have you ever been unwilling to serve or help out? What were the reasons why you didn’t?
- What are some areas perhaps you can serve beyond your strengths, abilities, experiences or comfort? Are there new ways in our church community where you can serve?
- As we consider Palm Sunday (and Easter Sunday), how does this passage remind you of who Jesus is – and why He came to this world?