

Rebuilding the Wall

Nehemiah 3

RUBBLE DWELLERS *or* PROPHECY FULFILLERS

Are you living with the curse or pursuing the blessing?

Finally the work begins!

- People often say, “Better late, than never,” but that should never be the way that we handle the work of God.
- It had been 92 years since the first group of exiles returned to Jerusalem—and all the while, the walls remained broken, the people living in disgrace amid the rubble.
- Now in just six months, the inertia of 92 years is shifted—because one man cared, prayed, and resolved to make a difference.

Tackling a big project—

- The walls of Jerusalem are one and a half miles in circumference—a huge undertaking that had been so overwhelming the people had chosen to just live with it.
- Nehemiah's plan: each person take a section and work side by side with others. The work was divided into 42 sections.
- At a minimum, people took responsibility for the section in front of their houses.

What do we need to learn and apply?

There are always those who won't get involved—

Next to them the Tekoites made repairs; but their nobles did not put their shoulders to the work of their Lord. (NKJV)

- This was not Nehemiah's project; it was not a neighborhood improvement day. This was God's project and Nehemiah was here because the gracious hand of God was on him. The leaders from Tekoa were, in fact, rejecting the will and mission of God.

Living with the curse—

“But see, we are slaves today, slaves in the land you gave our ancestors so they could eat its fruit and the other good things it produces. Because of our sins, its abundant harvest goes to the kings you have placed over us. They rule over our bodies and our cattle as they please. We are in great distress.” (Nehemiah 9.36-37)

- God wanted to give them great blessing but they settled for rubble as their portion. When we don't have a vision for God's purposes, when we can't see or dream beyond where we are, when we aren't living for the fulfillment of God's covenant purposes *we reduce our lives to being managers of rubble and giving our children a legacy of rubble.*

“*Nehemiah, at the height of power and influence in Persia,
—was a student of Scripture who interpreted life
in light of the Bible,
—prayed for God to accomplish the purposes
He laid out in the Bible,
—and took action to do what he could to be used of the Lord
in answer to those prayers.*

Nehemiah lived for the high cause of God’s kingdom.

The calling to rebuild—

*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)

This was not just Nehemiah's calling; it is the calling of the Church of Jesus Christ; it is the mission of every church in its neighborhood and the calling of every follower of Christ. God's mission is our life-mission: rescuing people from the disgrace of sin, seeing them reconciled to God, helping to restore them to wholeness of life in Christ.

It's *all* about Jesus!

All Scripture points to and finds its fulfillment in Jesus. He is first and foremost, and the first section of the project gives us a beautiful revelation of Christ.

- The first section to be rebuilt was undertaken by Eliashib, the high priest. Eliashib's name means "God restores." With his fellow priests, he rebuilt the Sheep Gate and consecrated it—a declaration that this was the holy work of God they were undertaking.

- Jesus is the true, ultimate and final High Priest, the Mediator of our salvation.

Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. (Hebrews 7.25-26)

- Jesus is the Gate, the one and only Way of salvation.

Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. (John 10.7-9)

“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14.6)

- Jesus is the Sacrificial Lamb for our sin.

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1.29)

Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. . . . And they sang a new song—

“You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.

You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.” (Revelation 5.6, 9-10)

- The work of rebuilding the wall began at the Sheep Gate and ultimately ended at the Sheep Gate. Everything begins and ends with Jesus!
 - ▶ His calling is our calling,
 - ▶ His work is our work,
 - ▶ His mission is our mission.

“You are my witnesses from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1.8)

“You are My witnesses.”

- As those who are in Christ, we share in His priestly ministry: the mission of reconciling people to God through Christ—

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5.18-20)

- Are we living lives that are connected or disconnected to the prophetic mission of God?
- Are we set apart as Christ's fellow priests, pursuing the work of reconciling people to God, or are we pursuing a different identity?
- Have we become so wrapped up in our own lives and work that we have become blind to the brokenness around us and no longer see the need or feel the urgency to do something?

Are we content to live with the rubble of sin and need around us or will we embrace the mission of God and become difference-makers and prophecy-fulfillers?