

Nehemiah

Return to Me

They [visitors] said to me, “The remnant there in the province who survived the captivity are in great distress and reproach, and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire.”

Nehemiah 1:3

*This left the city defenseless against enemy attacks.

When I heard these words, I sat down
and wept and mourned for days; and I
was fasting and praying before the God
of heaven. Nehemiah 1:4

Nehemiah prayed... “Remember the word which You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful I will scatter you among the peoples; but if you **return to Me** and keep My commandments and do them, though those of you who have been scattered were in the most remote part of the heavens, I will gather them from there and will bring them to the place where I have chosen to cause My name to dwell.’”

Nehemiah 1:8-9

Now it came about that when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became furious and very angry and mocked the Jews. Nehemiah 4:1

*Why do others get angry when we obey God?

Hear, O our God, how we are despised!
Return their reproach on their own heads
and give them up for plunder in a land of
captivity. Do not forgive their iniquity
and let not their sin be blotted out before
You, for they have demoralized the
builders. Nehemiah 4:4-5

So we built the wall and the whole wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.

Nehemiah 4:6

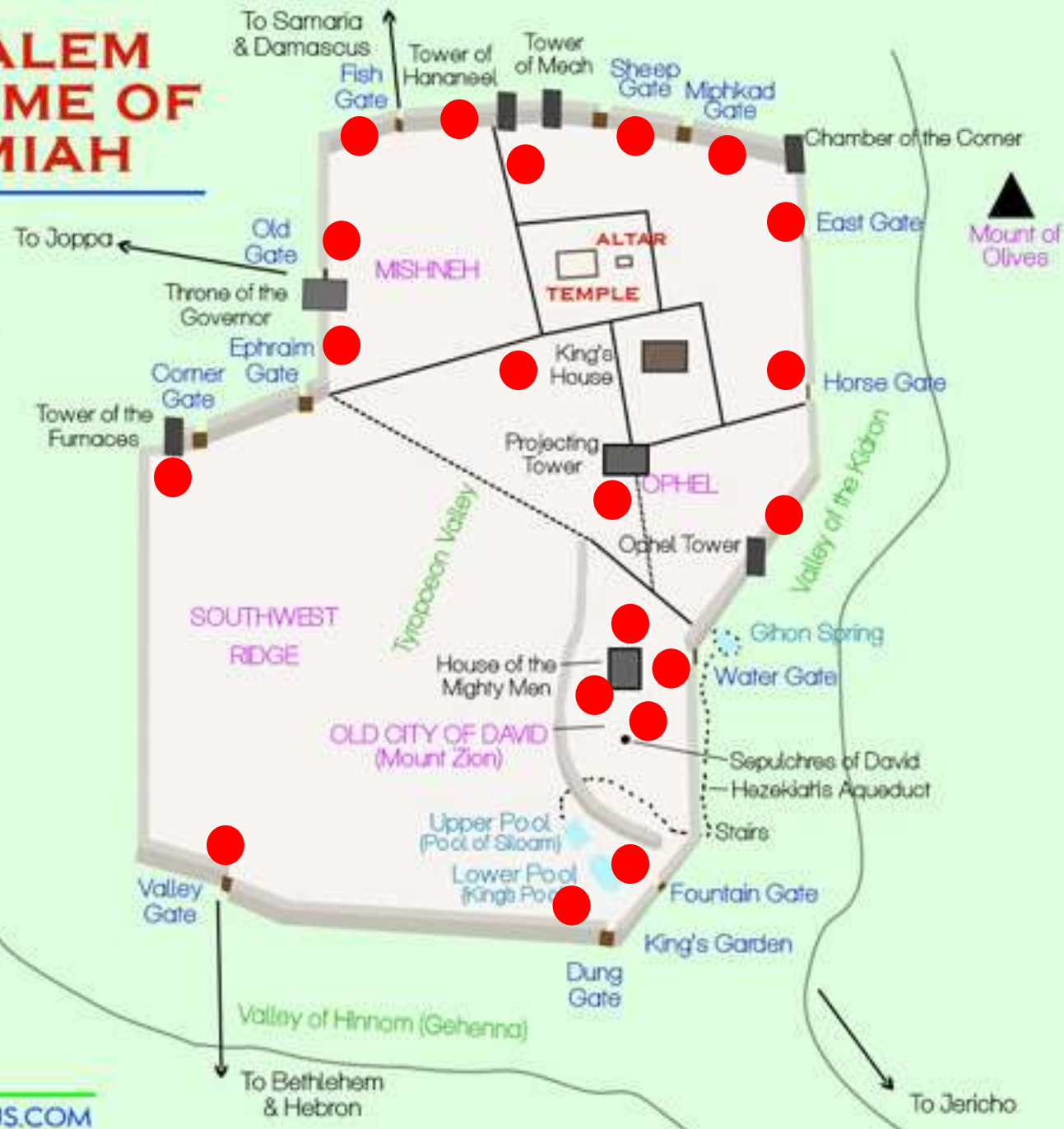
- *Faithfulness to God is contagious
- *Unfaithfulness to God is contagious
- *Faithfulness to God often takes a long time

JERUSALEM IN THE TIME OF NEHEMIAH

C. 445 B.C.

BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

Nehemiah was governor of Judah under Artaxerxes I of Persia. He rebuilt Jerusalem during the Second Temple period.



This was a 360-degree construction project. The descriptions begin with locations in the northeast and move counter-clockwise.

When I saw their fear, I rose and spoke to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people: “Do not be afraid of them [the enemies]; remember the Lord who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives and your houses.”

Nehemiah 4:14

What are your priorities?

1. God
2. Family
3. Possessions

From that day on, half of my servants carried on the work while half of them held the spears, the shields, the bows and the breastplates; and the captains were behind the whole house of Judah. Those who were rebuilding the wall and those who carried burdens [bricks and mortar] took their load with one hand doing the work and the other holding a weapon [sword]. Nehemiah 4:16-17

A sword and a spear are crossed on a red carpet. The sword is positioned diagonally from the top left to the bottom right. The spear is positioned diagonally from the top right to the bottom left, crossing the sword. The spear has a blue and white patterned handle and a large, pointed, light-colored shield or banner attached to its shaft. The sword has a cross-guard and a pommel.

**“one hand doing the
work and the other
holding a weapon”
Nehemiah 4:17**

Nehemiah Chapter 5

Up to this point Nehemiah's challenges as a spiritual leader focused primarily on those outside of Judah. But before the walls were finally rebuilt, he encountered the most difficult and intense kind of problem almost every spiritual leader has to face sometime—problems within.

Now there was a great outcry of the [less wealthy] people and of their wives [managing homes while husbands worked on the wall] against their Jewish brothers. For there were those who said, “We, our sons and our daughters are many; therefore let us [who do not own property] get grain that we may eat and live.” Nehemiah 5:1-2

There were others who said, “We [owners of property] are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards and our houses that we might get grain because of the famine.” Nehemiah 5:3

Also there were those who said, “We have borrowed money for the king’s tax on our fields and our vineyards. Now our flesh is like the flesh of our brothers [wealthy people], our children like their children. Yet behold, we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters are forced into bondage already, and we are helpless because our fields and vineyards [harvests] belong to others.” Nehemiah 5:4-5

Then I was very angry when I had heard their outcry and these words [the injustice which had been brought to his knowledge]. I consulted with myself [took time to think] and contended with the nobles and the rulers and said to them, “You are exacting usury [exorbitant interest], each from his brother!” Therefore, I held a great assembly [public meeting] against them. Nehemiah 5:6-7

They violated God's command not to charge their own people interest

- “If you lend money to My people, to the poor among you, you are not to act as a creditor to him; you shall not charge him interest.” Exodus 22:25
- “Now in case a countryman of yours becomes poor and his means with regard to you falter, then you are to sustain him, like a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with you. Do not take usurious interest from him, but revere your God, that your countryman may live with you. You shall not give him your silver at interest, nor your food for gain.”
Leviticus 25:35–37
- “You shall not charge interest to your countrymen: interest on money, food, or anything that may be loaned at interest. You may charge interest to a foreigner, but to your countrymen you shall not charge interest, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all that you undertake in the land which you are about to enter to possess.” Deuteronomy 23:19–20

Leadership Challenge Facing Nehemiah

- If Nehemiah calls a public assembly (a large meeting of all the wall-builders), then the construction project would halt and progress would stop.
- How important must this financial issue be for Nehemiah to stop the construction progress to address it?

For the people of Israel in the days of the Bible...
Money could be loaned but not to gain interest from
another person's distresses

“If there is a poor man with you, one of your brothers, in any of your towns in your land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand from your poor brother; but you shall freely open your hand to him, and shall generously lend him sufficient for his need in whatever he lacks.”

Deuteronomy 15:7–8

Biblical Calling to Meet the Needs of Others

- He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need. Ephesians 4:28
- Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world. James 1:27
- We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. 1 John 3:16-18

Previous Problems facing Nehemiah

- His builders would be demoralized by the opposition's mockery
- His builders would be overwhelmed by the scale of the project
- His builders would be distracted by the pleas of family members living in outlying villages

New Problems facing Nehemiah

- A food shortage because crops were not being tended to during the wall construction project (**supply chain problems**)
- Shortage of food supply caused prices to rise (**inflation**)
- Some people had to mortgage their homes and property in order to buy the more expensive food (**increased debt**)
- Some people had to take out high-interest loans in order to pay their taxes (**credit debt**)
- Some people had to sell their children into slavery in order to pay off their debts

Problems facing our nation today

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PERSONAL FINANCE

With inflation running at a 40-year high, 36% of U.S. adults tapped their savings to cover living expenses: Survey

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AUTOS

Don't expect a sudden turnaround on supply chain problems, top autos CEO says

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Problems
facing
our
nation
today



Americans' credit-card debt had the biggest jump in more than 20 years, New York Fed says

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By [Andrew Keshner](#)

Americans added \$312 billion in debt during the second quarter — an increase that New York Fed researchers called 'pretty sizable.'

I said to them, “We according to our ability have redeemed our Jewish brothers who were sold to the nations [non-Jews]; now would you even sell your brothers that they may be sold to us?” Then they were silent and could not find a word to say. Again I said, “The thing which you are doing is not good; should you not walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the nations [non-Jews], our enemies?” Nehemiah 5:8-9

*We can dishonor God by treating fellow believers badly

“And likewise I, my brothers and my servants are lending them money and grain. Please, let us leave off this usury. Please, give back to them this very day their fields, their vineyards, their olive groves and their houses, also the hundredth part [1% interest per month] of the money and of the grain, the new wine and the oil that you are exacting from them.” Nehemiah 5:10-11

*Godly leaders care about all people

How would the people react to
Nehemiah's correction?

How would we react?

Then they said, “We will give it back and will require nothing from them; we will do exactly as you say.” So I called the priests [as witnesses] and took an oath from them that they would do according to this promise.

Nehemiah 5:12

*Godly leaders motivate others to do right

I also shook out the front of my garment [a symbol of rejection] and said, "Thus may God shake out every man from his house and from his possessions who does not fulfill this promise; even thus may he be shaken out and emptied." And all the assembly said, "Amen!" And they praised the Lord. Then the people did according to this promise. Nehemiah 5:13

Moreover, from the day that I was appointed to be their governor [פֶּחָה *pechah*] in the land of Judah [during the construction project], from the twentieth year to the thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes, for twelve years [444-432 BC], neither I nor my kinsmen have eaten the governor's food allowance. Nehemiah 5:14

*Godly leaders manage God's resources well

*The reference to Nehemiah's 12 years as governor refers to a time in office lasting much longer than the wall-building phase

But the former governors who were before me laid burdens on the people and took from them bread and wine [meals for government officials] besides forty shekels [500 grams] of silver; even their servants domineered the people. But I did not do so because of the fear of God. Nehemiah 5:15

- *Godly leaders refuse to use privileges to hurt others
- *Godly leaders fear dishonoring the Lord

I also applied myself to the work on this wall; we did not buy any land [force people to mortgage their property], and all my servants were gathered there for the work. Moreover, there were at my table one hundred and fifty Jews and officials, besides those who came to us [dignitaries] from the nations that were around us.

Nehemiah 5:16-17

*Godly leaders seek to meet the needs of others

Now that which was prepared for each day was one ox and six choice [fat] sheep, also birds were prepared for me [at Nehemiah's expense]; and once in ten days all sorts of wine were furnished in abundance. Yet for all this I did not demand the governor's food allowance, because the servitude was heavy on this people. Nehemiah 5:18

Remember me, O my God [אֱלֹהִים *Elohim*],
for good, according to all that I have
done for this people. Nehemiah 5:19

*Seven times in his prayers recorded in this book
Nehemiah asked God to remember (Nehemiah 5:19;
6:14 [twice]; 13:14, 22, 29, 31). – Bible Knowledge Commentary

*What are we doing for other people?

Lessons from Nehemiah's Life for All of Us

- Listen to and obey God's calling on our lives
- Work diligently and effectively in our calling and work
- Be careful and wise stewards of our own resources
 - Get out of debt
 - Stay out of debt
- Notice the needs of others around us
- Use our resources to help others
 - First Melissa has an effective benevolence ministry

Lessons from Nehemiah's Life for Leaders

from Nehemiah chapter 5

- Godly leaders care about all people
- Godly leaders motivate others to do right
- Godly leaders manage God's resources well
- Godly leaders refuse to use privileges to hurt others
- Godly leaders fear dishonoring the Lord
- Godly leaders seek to meet the needs of others

Nehemiah

Return to Me

“When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, **in the latter days you will return to the Lord your God** and listen to His voice. For the Lord your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them.”

Deuteronomy 4:30-31