

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2010. 10.30am GS.  
*Building Outreach Belonging x08.*

Text: Nehemiah 3:1 -5 John 10: 1-11

This morning we are going to continue with the account of Nehemiah and the rebuilding of the Walls and the Gates of Jerusalem.

**Slide: 1**

**1. Recap from my last talk.**

Nehemiah tells his own story of how God called him to return back to Jerusalem to rebuild the Walls and the gates.

*Historical Context*

We saw that Israel began to have world significance under the rule of Saul, David and Solomon. David expanded Israel's territory tenfold. His son Solomon succeeded him but he later compromised his integrity by allowing idol worship.

The kingdom was split into two areas. (*1King11: 11*)

The Northern Kingdom in Samaria, which included 10 tribes, called Israel and the Southern Kingdom which included two tribes called Judah.

722 BC God allowed the Assyrians to invade and conquer the Northern Kingdom.

300 years later (586 BC) King Nebuchadnezzar from Babylon invaded Jerusalem.

They burned down the house of God and took all its treasures and they took the people captive, on an 800 miles trip to Babylon, today it is part of Iraq. 70 years later the Persians under King Cyrus overthrew the Babylon Empire.

Cyrus led by the Lord (even though not part of Israel) sent a proclamation out that the Lord God of heaven, who had appointed him to build him a house in Jerusalem. (*2Chro 36:22-23*)

Nehemiah led the 3<sup>rd</sup> group around 100 years later to continue with the building and securing of Jerusalem.

**2. The walls:** I want to suggest represent, security as well as boundaries; in the different areas and responsibilities God has given us.

They can represent the walls of our life.

- Physical
- Emotional
- Relational

- Spiritual well-being

### **I want to look at:**

- The function of gates / ancient gates and their spiritual meaning.
- What Jesus said about gates
- And what insights we can learn and apply to our Lives today.

## Side 2

### **3. Read Text Neh 3:1-5**

*1 Eliashib the high priest and his fellow priests went to work and rebuilt the Sheep Gate.*

*They dedicated it and set its doors in place, building as far as the Tower of the Hundred, which they dedicated, and as far as the Tower of Hananel.*

*2 The men of Jericho built the adjoining section, and Zaccur son of Imri built next to them.*

*3 The Fish Gate was rebuilt by the sons of Hassenaah.*

*They laid its beams and put its doors and bolts and bars in place.*

## Side 3

*4 Meremoth son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz, repaired the next section. Next to him Meshullam son of Berekiah, the son of Meshezabel, made repairs, and next to him Zadok son of Baana also made repairs.*

*5 The next section was repaired by the men of Tekoa, but their nobles would not put their shoulders to the work under their supervisors.*

## Slide 4 gate

### **4. Introduction - Gates**

Jerusalem was a large city and because it had many roads that lead there, it required many gates.

Some of these gates had towers on either side of them.

The Gates had many functions they offered:

- Entry to the city
- Exits
- Security

A place of gathering to do business deals that included

- Trade
- Legal contracts
- Even romantic deals were struck. Boaz *Ruth 4*
- Gateways and doorways are also symbolic for spiritual entrances and exits
- For many of us our first encounter of gates in our childhood, safety gate followed by school gates.

#### **4a. The Ancients also believed that their Gates were protected by Statues, and gods that kept evil spirits out.**

We were at the British museum the other day and I took a picture of this Assyrian gate and the two statues that were situated at the entry point to King's courts.

*Gateways and doorways are symbolic for spiritual entrances and exits*

In the account of the Exodus we learn that they were saved by *the blood of a lamb put over the doorpost. Ex 12:7*

Also another form of protection is the Word of God.

Moses instructed the people of Israel to,

<sup>8</sup> Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.

<sup>9</sup> Write them on the door-frames of your houses and on your gates. Deut 6:8 -9

If you visit a Jewish home that has faith you will find that they will have a Mezuzah on their door frames – for when they go in & out.

#### **Slide 5 Map**

In Nehemiah 3 we read about the restoration of the walls and the 10 gates. It also records a list of very difficult names to pronounce, but the purpose of this, is important as God is recording those who did the work.

### **5. So what can we take from this chapter / these few verses 1-5?**

I think quite a lot. I believe that each of the gates speak of different experiences in our Christian life that we need to come into.

Their order and position is very specific and give us insight into the journey that God takes each one of us on.

There are Ten gates but we will only look at the first two gates mentioned, which is the **Sheep gate**, (also known as St Stephen's Gate) and the **Fish Gate** (also known as the Damascus Gate).

### **6. In V1 the Priests are the first persons mentioned in regards To restoring the gates.**

It was called the sheep gate because this was the gate that was used to lead the sheep and lambs to the sacrifice.

I believe we can find some symbolism here with Jesus our High Priest. He too is the first and the last who bring restoration to our

Lives.

### Side 6

I believe we can find some symbolism here with Jesus our High Priest.  
He is the once and for all sacrifice  
And this is what Jesus said,

<sup>7</sup>Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep.

<sup>8</sup>All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them.

<sup>9</sup>I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.

He will come in

and go out, and find pasture. John 10: 7 -9

### Slide 7

## 7. This is the first experience we have when we come to Christ.

*The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. (John 1:29-30 NIV)*

The sheep gate speaks to us of the cross and the sacrifice that was made for us by Jesus.

It is the starting point of everything, but if you read to the end of this chapter V32 we come a full circle of the gates and we are back to the sheep gate. That is because everything starts and ends with Jesus' death on the cross.

## 8. In V2 the men of Jericho rebuilt next to the priests

Reading through the chapter one of the first things that we see is that the whole process was a team effort.

We had the leaders and the members, all in the community, rebuilding the walls and the gates. Everyone had something to offer.

As Paul reminds us in Eph 4:11-13

We all have different gifting but it is for the edification of all.

## 9. But not everyone took part - Nehemiah had enemies both from within the community and from outside.

In V 5 we are introduced to the noble men, we are told that that were lazy. They did not participate, it is noted that they are the only ones who did not support the building project.

In this account of Nehemiah, we see two types of enemies one that is from within and the other from outside the camp.

They both in their own way undermined the work of the Lord.

**The first enemy** we read about in verse 5 we are told that,

*'their nobles would not put their shoulders to the work under their supervisors'. 3:5*

They were not speaking against the work of the Lord but their actions spoke louder than words.

They were lazy and proud they were not going to work under the supervision in other words the authority, or leadership of the Tekoa men.

***Our enemies are not just from outside they are often from within.***

**The second** enemy was those who were not part of the community.

Sanballat the governor of Samaria and his mates opposed the building project continually.

When we are out doing the Lords work you can be sure to have opposition from both within and out of your situation.

The enemy will come from within the gates and speak and act in ways to undermine the work of God that he is doing in your life.

The Enemy (of Jesus & humanity) works like Sanballat who tried to scare Nehemiah - to put fear in him, or at least discourage him and ridicule and bullied and tried to deceive him, even kill him.

The Enemy's ways and purposes do not change!

Jesus in *John 10* Warns us of the enemy's ways -

<sup>10</sup> *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

### **What must we do?**

We are called to stand and watch and pray at our gates.

What are the weak entry points in your life that the enemy uses?

Do you have a wobbly wall or a brick that has come loose?

Is there an area in your life that you need to give attention to?

It's much easier to respond like the noble men? (Lazy and not participating.)

If the Lord is leading us to build and repair sections of our walls and gates, we cannot avoid it forever.

We cannot walk on by!

We can be sure the Lord will find another opportunity to help us deal with those wobbly bricks and weak gates.

### **Slide 8**

### **Finally we come to the fish gate in V3**

I don't know if you noticed from the map but next door to the sheep gate is the fish gate, this would have been the gate that the fishermen brought in their catch. This speaks of evangelism as we have been called to be 'fishers of men'.

**Slide 9****This is a natural progression in our Christian life.**

After experiencing the forgiveness and the process of restoration of our lives we would want to tell others about Jesus. Because of Jesus we can now go out and fish for People and return, we don't need to worry and stay within the safety of our walls.

*V 9 He will come in and go out and find pasture.*

Today we invite you if you have never been through the sheep gate to come. Jesus is the Gate.