

The Return of the Exiles



Class 4: The Third Return under Nehemiah

The Long Route Home

The return of the exiles to Judah, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem, was accomplished in three main stages.

The first and main party returns with Zerubbabel 538 BC. His focus is on rebuilding the temple.

A second party returns with Ezra about 60 years after the temple is rebuilt. Ezra makes spiritual and religious restoration and reform.

A third wave returns with Nehemiah 13 years after Ezra. Nehemiah works to rebuild the city walls and gates.

The Second Return

1. Ezra, a priest and Torah scholar, focuses on strengthening the community and teaching the Law.
2. Ezra leads a small group of about 1500 men (plus families) back to Jerusalem.
3. The people stumble and sin by intermingling with the nations.
4. Ezra prays for the community and the people come up with a plan to avoid further punishment by God.
5. Examined Shekeniah's plan to put away foreign women and wondered if it was approved by God..

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The Third Return

1. Nehemiah's prayerful response to disturbing news about the welfare of the Jews in Jerusalem.
2. Again, King Artaxerxes is moved by God to allow another return from Babylon.
3. Nehemiah's inspection of the walls and the people's rebuilding effort.
4. See opposition and spiritual problems.
5. The successful completion of the rebuilding effort in record time.

Trouble in Jerusalem

Nehemiah

Nehemiah 1-7

Returns 13 years after Ezra and **Rebuilds the Walls** to keep worldly influence away

Nehemiah 1:1-4

The words of Nehemiah son of Hakaliah:

In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and **I questioned them about the Jewish remnant** that had survived the exile, **and also about Jerusalem.**

3They said to me, “Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire.”

4When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.

Introducing Nehemiah



Goblet and Cup from Susa

King's Cupbearer

- Nehemiah remained in Babylon and held the trusted position of King's Cupbearer (following in Mordecai's footsteps? Esther 10:3)
- He seems shocked to hear that the people are in distress, and that the city walls are broken down so he uses his powerful position to ask the King for help.

Nehemiah's Prayer

Nehemiah 1:5-11

- Praise v.5
- Consistent prayer v.6
- Confession of, "our" sins v.6-7
- Knew his Scripture v.8
- Request and plan of action v.11

5Then I said, "Lord, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you. We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses...

11Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man."

Nehemiah Before the King

Nehemiah 2:1-7

1 In the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was brought for him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before, so the king asked me, “Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart.” I was very much afraid, but I said to the king, “May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?” The king said to me, “What is it you want?” **Then I prayed to the God of heaven,**

5 and I answered the king, “If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my ancestors are buried so that I can rebuild it.”

7 I also said to him, “If it pleases the king, may I have letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, so that they will provide me safe-conduct until I arrive in Judah? 8 And may I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the royal park, so he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residence I will occupy?”

A Plan of Action

Nehemiah 2:1-9

- Passionate for the cause of his people
- Courage to act despite fear
- Immediate prayer to God (cp. Phil 4:6-7)

Philippians 4:6-7

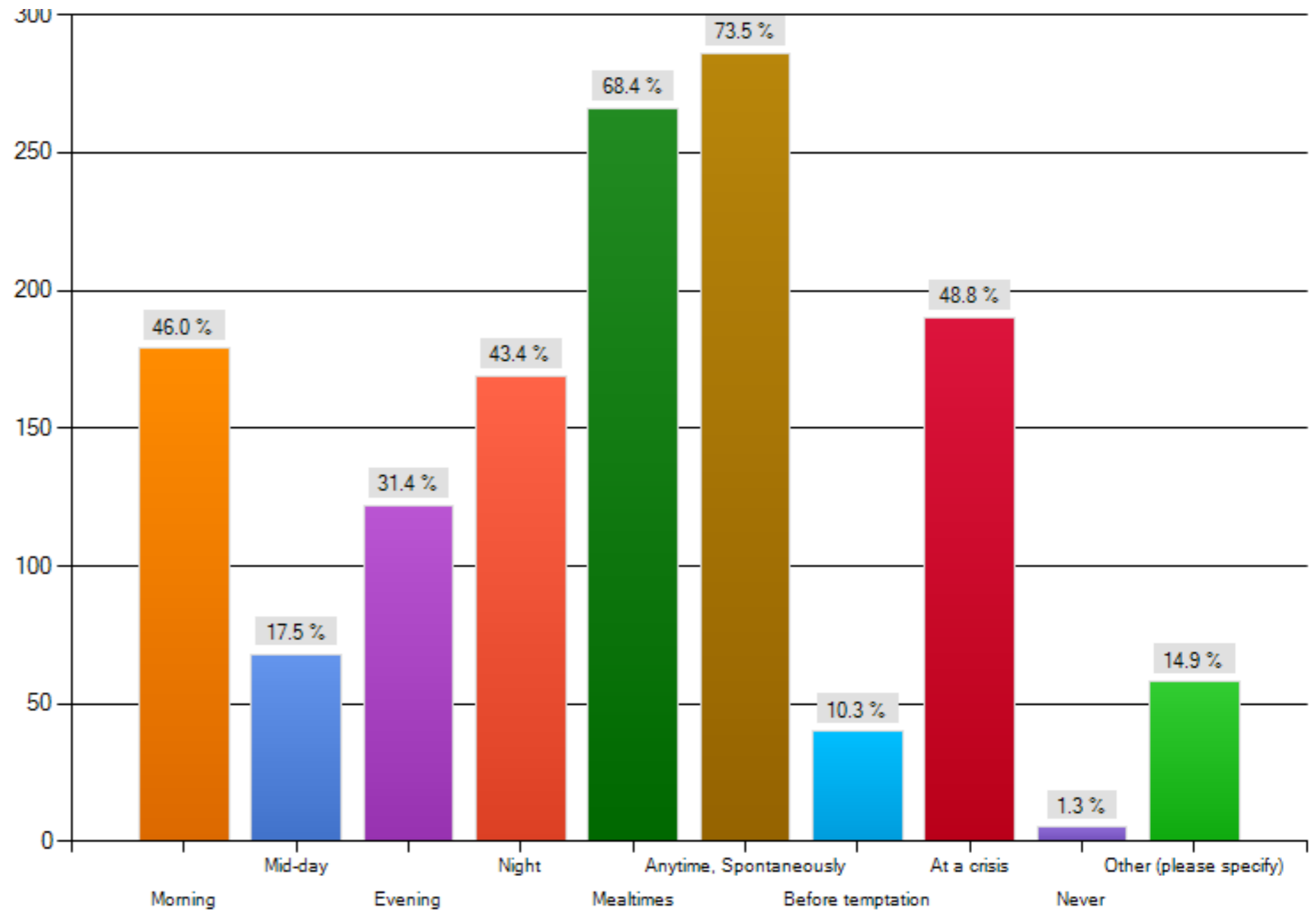
6Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 6:12-21

Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.

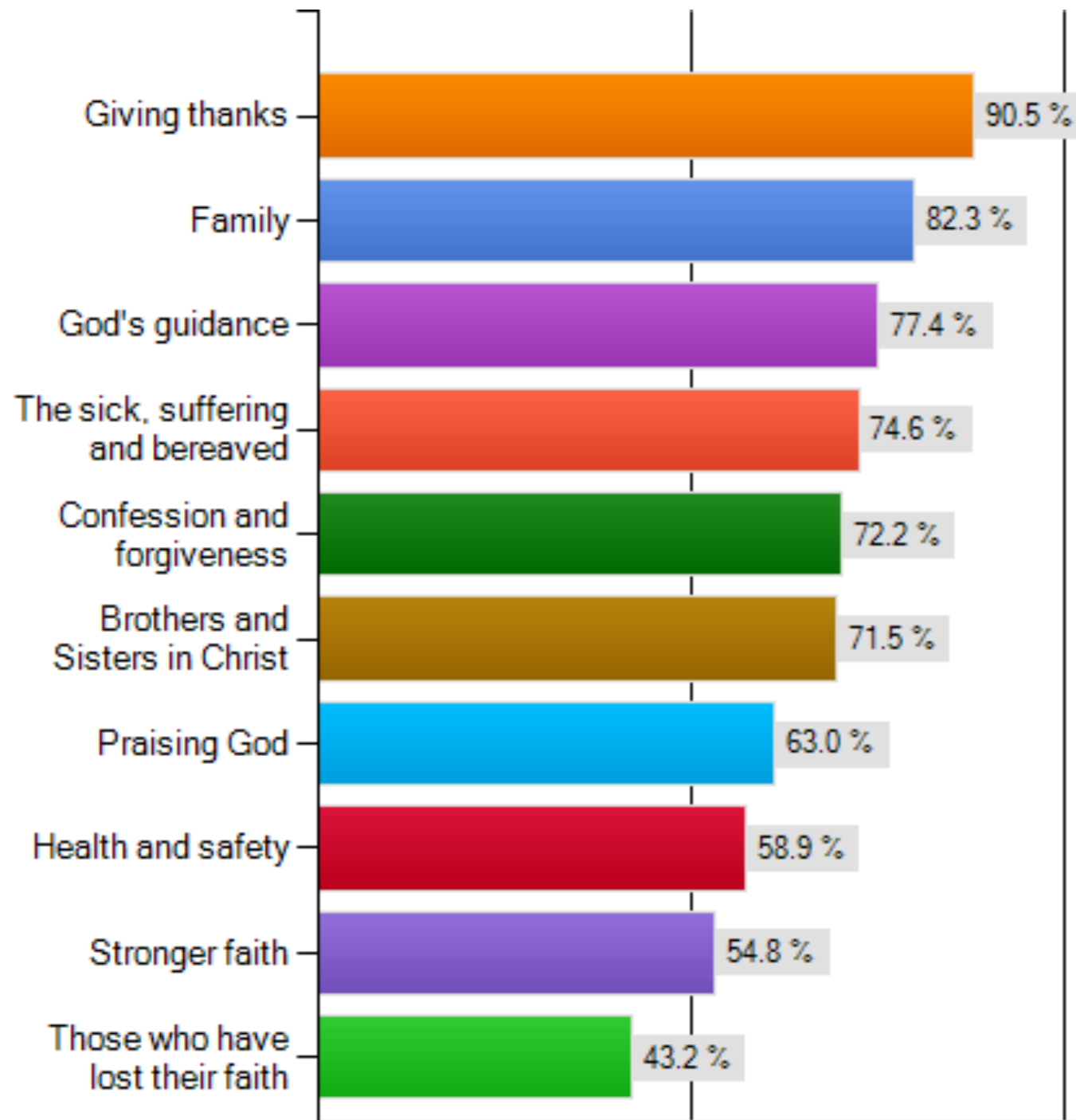
Christadelphian Prayer Survey

- 389 Respondents
- Survey conducted primarily among Christadelphians
- Survey conducted online from October 26 through November 7, 2011



When do you pray?

Christadelphian Prayer Survey



What do you pray about?

Inspecting the Walls

Nehemiah 2: 11-13

11 I went to Jerusalem, and after staying there three days I set out during the night with a few others. I had not told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem...

13 By night I went out through the Valley Gate toward the Jackal Well and the Dung Gate, examining the walls of Jerusalem, which had been broken down, and its gates, which had been destroyed by fire. The officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing...



Master Motivator

**TOGETHER
WE CAN DO IT!**



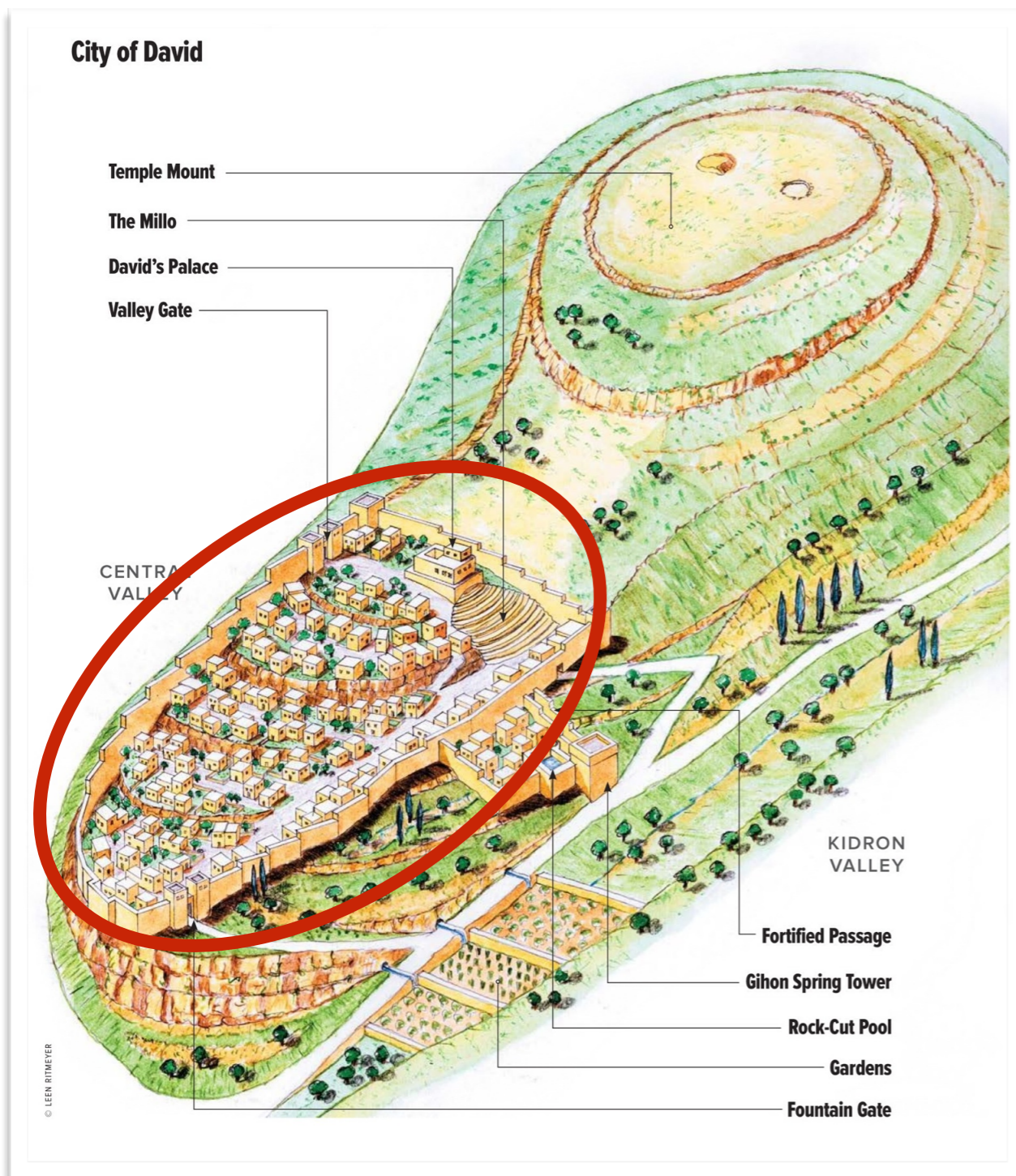
Nehemiah Brick Co.

Nehemiah 2: 17-18

17 Then I said to them, “You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace.” I also told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me.

They replied, “Let us start rebuilding.”

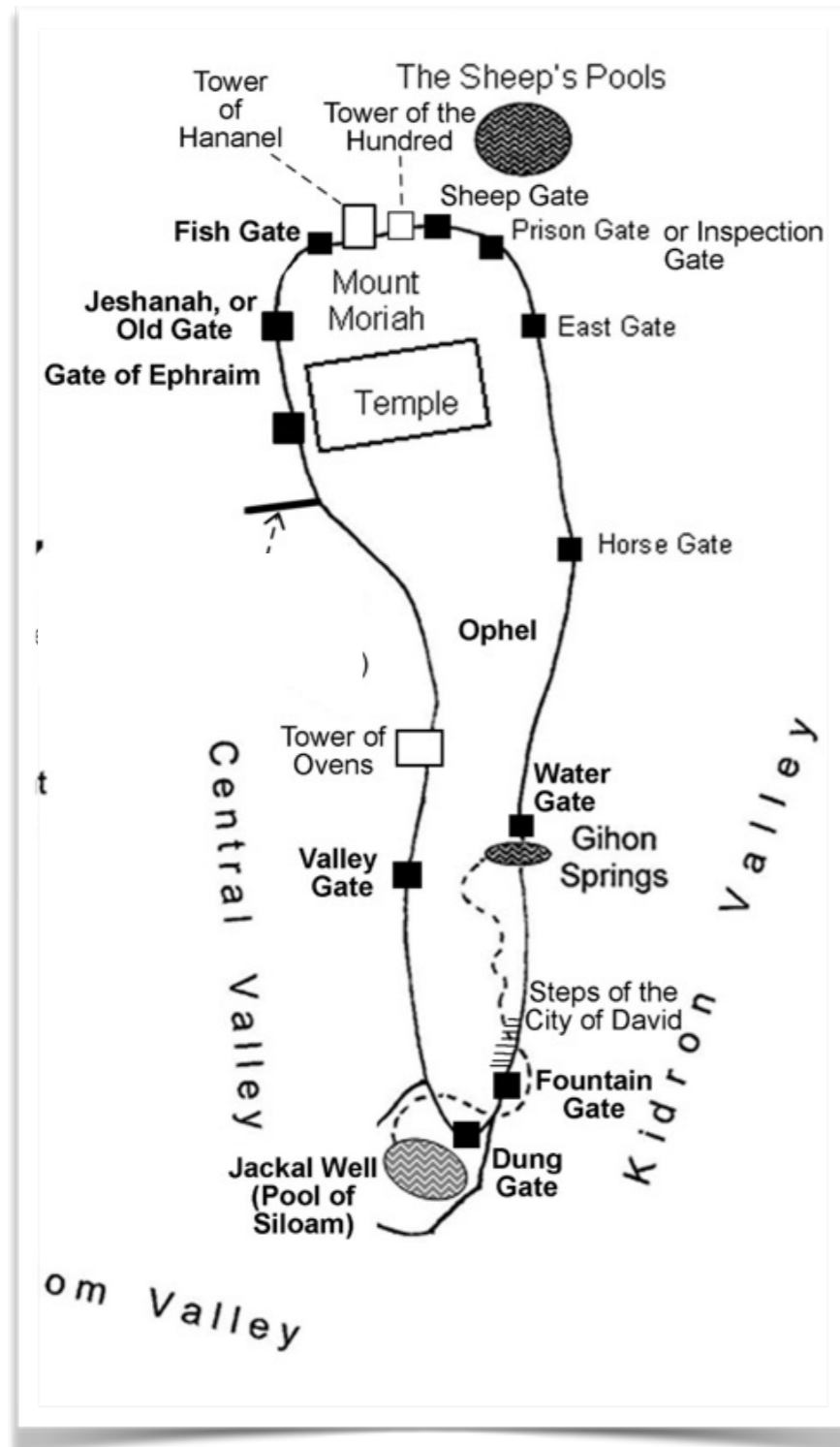
David and Nehemiah's Jerusalem



Old and New Testament Jerusalem



A Team Effort



Nehemiah 3

- The workers came from all over Israel, not just Jerusalem.
- The workers included people from all walks of life.
 - Priests (v1, 22, 28)
 - Women (v8, 31)
 - Craftsmen (v8, 31)
 - Merchants (v32)
- The workers repaired sections near their homes and had a personal interest in their work.

Rebuilding the Walls and Gates

Nehemiah chapter 3 describes the rebuilding effort and lists 46 different building parties encircling Jerusalem:

The Northern Wall: 3:1-5

- Sheep Gate - where the sacrificial animals were brought into the city.
- Fish Gate - where the merchants brought their catch from the Mediterranean, Sea of Galilee, and the Jordan.

Western Wall: 3:6-12

- Broad Wall - discovered by archeologists

Southern Wall: 3:13-14

- Dung Gate - where the refuse was brought to Gehena

Eastern Wall: 3:15-31

- Fountain Gate - leading to the city's water supply



Sheep Gate
Fish Gate
Old Gate
Valley Gate
Dung Gate
Fountain Gate
Water Gate
Horse Gate
East Gate
Inspection Gate
Ephraim Gate
Prison Gate

Lessons for Us

Our careers and vocations should not necessarily influence which roles we perform within the ecclesia.

- Contrast the Nobles from Tekoah (v5) with Shallum, a ruler in Jerusalem (v12)

Ecclesial projects can unite ecclesial members as we work toward a common goal.

- "So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart". (4:6)

Lessons for Us

- The wall was a visual reminder of the need to separate from the world.
- The wall was built around Jerusalem, **not through it.**

Rebuilding the Spiritual Temple

The people of Israel **and the priests and the Levites** have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands with their abominations...

Ezra 9:2



2 Corinthians 6:14-18

Opposition from Without



Prayer and Action

1. Set a Watch

"We prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat". 4:9,13

2. Armed the Workers

"From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armor". 4:16

Opposition from Within

Nehemiah's initial concern was more about the people than the condition of the walls.

- He had been buying the freedom of Jewish slaves (5:1).

Sadly, some wealthy were taking advantage of the poor who were struggling to eat, and pay the required Persian taxes (5:1-5)

Nehemiah leads the reform by example (cp. v11, 15-18)

2 Thessalonians 3:6-10

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers and sisters, to keep away from every believer who is idle and disruptive and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you to imitate. For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat."

The Wall is Finished!

- Despite the difficulties, the walls and gates around the city were completely repaired in record time (6:15).
- Now, the city which reminded largely vacant, was about to be resettled (7:4-5, 11:1-2).

Nehemiah 11:1-2

Now the leaders of the people settled in Jerusalem. The rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of every ten of them to live in Jerusalem, the holy city, while the remaining nine were to stay in their own towns. The people commended all who volunteered to live in Jerusalem.