**Where to Begin**

Where Do We Start Rebuilding Amidst All the Rubble?

(Nehemiah 3:1)

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Pastor Craig Ledbetter

Bible Baptist Church, Ballincollig, Cork, Ireland

[www.biblebc.com](http://www.biblebc.com)

1. **Introduction**
   1. Now we get to the actual rebuilding of the walls and gates of Jerusalem
   2. This book in the Bible describes utter devastation
      1. Trash was scattered everywhere - rubbish attracts more rubbish
      2. heaps and piles of rubbish EVERYWHERE throughout the city streets of Jerusalem (4:2)
      3. These were OLD wastes - they had been there for a long time
      4. Former desolations (unliveable conditions)
      5. Waste CITIES - not just Jerusalem, but an entire nation
      6. Many GENERATIONS – the ruinspanned generation after generation
      7. As I showed you last week, this was the Result of a load of SIN on the part of God’s people (2Chron 36:11-21)
      8. We are looking way back at about 445 years Before the birth of Christ (B.C.) – that’s 2,462 years ago!
      9. To hear of 3km of 15 foot thick walls that were broken through, and thrown down and piled up into heaps of burnt stones…
      10. Sounds like something so far removed from our “normal” life now
   3. But this is a book about REBUILDING things. Fixing things. Mending things. Repairing, Restoring things – not leaving things as they are
   4. Which is exactly what is needed today!
   5. So many things are broken today!
      1. MARRIAGE is broken – been that way for a very long time
      2. People’s MINDS are broken – unable to sleep, forgive, reason and think through their problems
      3. People’s TRUST is constantly broken – no one takes responsibility anymore for ANYTHING! Always blaming others!
      4. People’s HEARTS are broken – haven’t been happy for so many years
      5. People’s FAITH is broken – trusting in themselves, and in religious icons, and priests and prayers, and in fairies, and angels, and Bitcoins! Only to be constantly let down!
      6. Society is broken – believing that abortion is a good thing, and Same Sex Marriage is fine and dandy, and that no one should have to work! BROKEN!
   6. Worse still… Many people have never built anything spiritual in their lives – only just done what came natural. So for many people, it is time to START building!
2. **Review**
   1. **Since the first Sunday in January, we have worked verse by verse so far through the Book of Nehemiah up until chapter 3, verse 1.**
   2. **And LAST Week, we learned about Overcoming the Discouragement That Keeps People From Rebuilding. (Nehemiah 2:17-3:1)**
      1. By trusting God’s enabling power (Neh 2:20)
      2. By following their leader - Nehemiah
      3. By obedient faith in the calling of God to do the impossible (Neh 2:20)
      4. By WANTING to build, repair, and restore – not dragged kicking and screaming, but they were personally motivated to ACT
      5. By focusing on restoring people’s WORSHIP and walk with God first (Ezra 1:1-3)
      6. And now with Jerusalem’s Walls
   3. **This week, in Nehemiah chapter 3, God shows us where to start the work, and exactly WHO needs to start it!**
3. **Message – Where to Begin?**
   1. **The Work was STARTED by the High Priest - Eliashib and his fellow priests (3:1)**
      1. Who was Eliashib?
         1. We just get a glimpse of this guy, but he leaves a BIG impact on us!
         2. His name actually means “*God will restore!*” Cool!
         3. He was the High Priest of Israel - a descendant of Aaron, who was the first High Priest of God for the nation of Israel, about 1,000 years earlier when they came out of Egypt
         4. The work of the High Priest, normally was…
            1. MEDIATOR between people and God – praying for them constantly, interceding for them, holding back the judgment of God
            2. He often DISCERNED the will of God for the nation using two stones called the Urim and Thummin, which he kept in a vest pouch
            3. Worshipped God continually, even when everyone else was too busy – it was a 24/7 job. There was never a moment that he stopped being the high priest
            4. Offered the sin offering for all the people every year when he alone could enter the Holiest of Holy places in the Temple, with the blood of the sacrifice of a lamb, and sprinkled it upon the Mercy Seat to obtain forgiveness for the people
         5. But this day, and until the walls and gates were finished, Eliashib was:
            1. A worker amidst the ruin! Not looking down on it

He lived IN the city ruins – Lived amidst the ruin.

That is rare in leaders – most live in comfort, and only command others

This great and important man lived at the level of everyone else!

* + - * 1. He was a living example to the people of what they should all be doing

Picked up the rubble and rubbish

Carried them hundreds of meters away out of the city into the nearby river

Carefully setting the massive stones BACK in place in the wall, sealing them with mortar

* + - * 1. A finisher of what he was starting
    1. Note: Eliashib INITIATED the labour – THANK GOD FOR STARTERS
       1. He took the lead! Didn’t wait on anybody else.
       2. He was the FIRST to jump up and start picking up the rubble and start rebuilding the wall and gate here!
       3. He ROSE UP to the task – didn’t pull back or shirk, or hesitate, or neglect it
       4. Became THE example to follow – motivated the entire city to get busy
       5. He was a great encouragement to watch as he took the initiative - to just START
       6. He made several personal sacrifices:
          1. Sacrificed his position – stepped down to the level of a servant
          2. Sacrificed his time – already busy as High Priest, but was willing to take as long as necessary rebuilding
       7. As you can tell, I LIKE Eliashib!
    2. So, the work of Eliashib, the High Priest, pointed to a FUTURE Messiah
       1. In other words, Eliashib was a type/shadow/preview of who Jesus would be coming 440 years later!
       2. The Bible is FULL of people who give a glimpse ahead of time of who and what Jesus would be like!
       3. Jesus is the final High Priest
          1. Who would come and dwell amongst us (Mt 1:23; John 1:10-12) – He came right into OUR world
          2. Jesus faced the same ruined rubble that we all live in the midst of

Born in Poverty

Lived in the back of beyond, not in the big city

Faced every temptation you and I face

Attacked, falsely accused, hated, despised, rejected by everyone, misunderstood

Yep! Jesus was born into all that!

* + - * 1. Jesus came to work! To do the HARD things!

Joh 6:38 For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

Joh 4:34 Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

Jn 5:36 But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.

Jn 9:4 I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

Jn 17:4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

Jn 19:30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

JESUS kept the entire LAW FOR every man, woman and child!

* + - * 1. Jesus both offered HIMSELF as the perfect and final Sacrifice for sin, BEING the final sacrifice for sin! (Heb 4:14-16)
        2. He now repairs and restore whatever sin has destroyed in anyone’s life who would let Him!
        3. He does it all, Just by salvation itself!
      1. Truly, JESUS is the Repairer, the Fixer, the Saviour of man’s lost soul!
      2. Is He YOUR Saviour? He wants to be!
  1. **The Work Began with the Sheep Gate and adjoining walls (3:1)**
     1. They built first, THE most important GATE - the Sheep Gate - and its adjacent walls on both sides
     2. Included two towers, Meah and Hananeel, on either side of the sheep gate. We will se how they are special in a moment
     3. What’s so important about THIS gate?
        1. Directly connected with the Temple and the constant worship that was going on there
        2. It faced Bethlehem where the best sacrificial sheep were being raised
        3. Only those shepherds with the perfect lambs were allowed to pass through this gate
        4. Porters were there to keep defective lambs out!
        5. Near it was the sheep market, where they were then sold to worshippers who didn’t have their own lambs
        6. And next to it was the sheep pool, where the sacrifices were washed – called the Market Pool (John 5:2-9). JESUS makes sure to visit this gate and pool one day
        7. It was prophesied that this gate was to be built first…
           1. Jeremiah 31:38 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the city shall be built to the LORD from **the tower of Hananeel** unto the gate of the corner.
           2. Zech 14:10 All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses.
  2. **Not only did Eliashib REBUILD the wall and Gate, but SANCTIFIED it (3:1)**
     1. He prepared it for use – for a singular use! Did not mix the activity that came in and out of this gate with buying and selling, or with rubbish disposal
     2. It was for the spotless sheep to be brought into the city
     3. So it should be made clean too – not left in shambles
        1. They took away all the rubbish
        2. Washed the new walls and gate doors, and cleaned it all up so it was beautiful to look at
        3. But he also dedicated it to its original and best use – keeping ungodly things and people OUT!
     4. This gate was NOT just restored, and in its place, and pretty, but READY and prepared for USE! Ready for men and sheep to enter!
     5. Sounds like how a Christian ought to be! (2Tim 2:21)
  3. **Last truth… Eliashib Did NOT Rebuild the Entire Wall** (3:2,4,5…)
     1. EVERYONE had to Get Involved (the rest of the chapter, which we will look at two weeks from now)
     2. Thirty-eight individual workers are named in this chapter
     3. Forty-two different people groups are identified (masons, carpenters, Levites, priests, merchants, men and women) besides the many workers that Nehemiah did not name whose labours were ALL important to the task.
     4. Evangelist D. L. Moody said, "A great many people have got a false idea about the church. They have got an idea that the church is a place to rest in ... to get into a nicely cushioned pew, and contribute to the charities, listen to the minister, and do their share to keep the church out of bankruptcy, is all they want. The idea of WORK for them—actual work in the church—never enters their minds.”
     5. I aim to change that, next time we open Nehemiah in two weeks!

1. **Conclusion**
   1. **Let Jesus Christ Work a GOOD WORK in you** (Philp 1:6) – Forge, Fashion, Rebuild
      1. He has already been at work in your life
      2. He hasn’t been waiting for YOU to get right. He took the lead!
      3. Eliashib’s name meant “*God will restore*”
      4. Jesus’ name means “*Jehovah Saves!*”
      5. Tell me if that is not important to believe!
   2. **Thank God that Jesus, like Eliashib, is a FINISHER of what He starts**
   3. **Jesus IS a living example to people of what WE should all be doing** – how WE should be living, loving, forgiving, serving… I choose to follow Him
   4. **But more than that, Jesus is the only MEDIATOR between people and God** (1Tim 2:5) – praying for them constantly, interceding for them, holding back the judgment of God. Only HE can bring you and God together
   5. **And, like Eliashib, Jesus made several personal sacrifices:**
      1. Sacrificed His position as God – stepped down to the level of a servant (Philp 2:5-7)
      2. Sacrificed His time – already busy as High Priest, but was willing to take as long as necessary rebuilding
      3. But more than Eliashib, Jesus actually sacrificed HIS life, for MINE! He offered HIMSELF as the sin offering for all people of all time to obtain forgiveness for us (Heb 9:11-15)
      4. Eliashib’s sacrifices were flawed and had to be repeated constantly, but Jesus’ sacrifices were PERFECT and ONCE for all time (Heb 7:27; 10:10)
   6. **He WILL do all the really hard stuff – the impossible stuff**
   7. **The Work in us MUST begin in OUR Sheep Gate – the gate into our Heart and Soul**
      1. Let the Lamb of God into our soul – that’s how you get born again! Saved! Forgiven! (Revelation 3:20)
         1. Whatever is blocking His clear entrance needs to be cleared away
         2. Whatever you have locked and closed off from Him, needs to be released, and surrendered to His presence
      2. And He will SAVE, and Restore, and Rebuild from THERE
      3. Not from the place YOU want Him to start
         1. Like your husband or wife
         2. Or your money problems
         3. Or your health problem
         4. Or your loneliness problem
         5. But you HEART problem – sin, deep, covered, hidden in your heart
   8. **And Christian, Sanctify Whatever God is Repairing – Keep it Clean**
      1. God repairs things so that they can be USED!
      2. As we use the new life God has given us, we need to keep it clean
      3. If He has given you a second chance at life, dedicate it to a godly and clean way of living for HIS glory
         1. Take a good look at what you allow into your home and mind and heart
         2. And start taking out all the rubbish – take out the trash – DAILY! (2Tim 2:21)
         3. THAT’S why God says to read and read and read and learn this Book – it washes and cleanses and purifies you daily as you do!
         4. Clean up and wash by the water of THIS BOOK – reading, confessing, repenting
         5. THAT’S why we meet together as a church Sunday morning, evening and Wednesday evening, to rub off on each other and motivate and encourage each other to KEEP clean what God restored in us!
         6. Holiness is beautiful (Psalm 29:2)
         7. Sounds like how a Christian ought to live!