

Nehemiah 3:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep gate; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel.

Analysis

Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep gate; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel.

This verse within Nehemiah 3 addresses themes of community, cooperation, diligence, stewardship. The detailed listing of builders demonstrates organized community effort where each person contributes according to ability and opportunity. The construction work (banah, בָּנָה) symbolizes restoring what sin and judgment destroyed. City gates were strategic both defensively and administratively, controlling access and serving as centers of commerce and justice. This passage demonstrates biblical principles applicable across both testaments—God's sovereignty combined with human responsibility, faith expressed through obedient action, and the necessity of both individual and corporate commitment to covenant faithfulness. Nehemiah models leadership that combines vision, prayer, courage, integrity, and perseverance amid sustained opposition.

Historical Context

Nehemiah's account occurs during Persian imperial dominance (539-331 BC), specifically 445-433 BC under Artaxerxes I. The 52-day wall completion represents remarkable achievement given opposition and limited resources. Excavations have confirmed portions of Nehemiah's wall and various gates mentioned in the text. The Persian period was crucial transitional time when Jewish identity shifted from monarchical nationalism to Torah-centered covenantal community. Without political independence, the people's cohesion depended on shared scripture, temple worship, and covenant obedience. This established patterns persisting through the Second Temple period into New Testament times. Understanding this context illuminates Jesus's ministry among a people shaped by these reforms and challenges.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does Nehemiah 3:1 deepen your understanding of God's character and His work in human history?
2. What specific contribution can you make to building up Christ's church in your local community?
3. How does understanding your work as part of God's larger purposes transform your approach to daily responsibilities?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּקָּם	אֶלְיָשִׁיב	הַכֹּהֵן יִם	הַגָּד וּלְ	וְאִם יוֹ	הַכֹּהֵן יִם
rose up	Then Eliashib	priest	the high	with his brethren	priest
H6965	H475	H3548	H1419	H251	H3548
וַיִּבְנוּ	אֶת	שַׁעַר	הַצֹּאֵן	הַמִּקְדָּשׁ וְהוּ	וַיַּעַמּוּ יָדוֹ
and they builded		gate	the sheep	they sanctified	it and set up
H1129	H853	H8179	H6629	H1992 H6942	H5975
וַיִּלְתְּחוּ יוֹ	וְעַד	מִגְדָּל	הַמֵּאָה	הַמִּקְדָּשׁ וְהוּ	עַד
the doors		it unto the tower	of Meah	they sanctified	
H1817	H5704	H4026	H3968	H6942	H5704
מִגְדָּל	חֲנַנְאֵל:				
it unto the tower	of Hananeel				
H4026	H2606				

Additional Cross-References

Nehemiah 12:39 (Parallel theme): And from above the gate of Ephraim, and above the old gate, and above the fish gate, and the tower of Hananeel, and the tower of Meah, even unto the sheep gate: and they stood still in the prison gate.

Jeremiah 31:38 (Parallel theme): 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.

John 5:2 (Parallel theme): Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.

Zechariah 14:10 (Parallel theme): 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.

Proverbs 3:9 (Parallel theme): Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:

Nehemiah 13:28 (Parallel theme): And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was son in law to Sanballat the Horonite: therefore I chased him from me.

Nehemiah 3:32 (Parallel theme): And between the going up of the corner unto the sheep gate repaired the goldsmiths and the merchants.

Psalms 30:1 (Parallel theme): I will extol thee, O LORD; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.

Proverbs 3:6 (Parallel theme): In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Nehemiah 6:1 (Parallel theme): Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;)