

The Old Testament is what God had done and is a foreshadowing of what He wants to do in our lives. Seeing what God does allows us to apply it to our lives today.

Nehemiah 7 The Temple was a place where God's grace was given, a place where His presence rested, a place of sacrifice, a place of forgiveness, and a place of worship. God's Word says we are His temple today and are to be filled with His praise. The rebuilding of the walls provided a separation of His people unto the Lord and also protection from the world. When God rebuilds a life, He also wants to protect the heart of those individuals. The doors/gates helped to keep the bad out and let the good in. The walls gave security and protection. They completed the work and it needed to be protected. Do we do that spiritually in our lives? **Nehemiah 6:16** *When all our enemies heard about it, and all the nations surrounding us saw it, they lost their confidence; for they realized that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.* How many have seen a transformed life and known it was from God? The Lord builds and we need to protect it.

Nehemiah established 3 areas of protection for Jerusalem... Gate guards, singers (offered praises to the Lord) and the Levites (priests responsible for the Word). **Psalms 137** describes the Israelites while in exile and their desire to sing the songs of Zion without a place. The singers were often appointed as gate guards. The praises offered protection, too. Our lives need the same protection, or it will become a place of destruction.

Nehemiah 7:2 *Then I put Hanani my brother, and Hananiah the commander of the citadel, in charge of Jerusalem, for he was a faithful man and feared God more than many.* Nehemiah knew he could trust these two to protect the city as they were faithful and feared God. With a sense of accomplishment as the work finished, they wanted to rest. But as with the Israelites, when God renews a heart, we must keep our defenses alert. **Psalms 51:10-11** *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.* These words come after a failure in David's life. David had not protected what God gave to him. David let his guard down and let others do his job. David claims a new heart but he didn't protect it. **Proverbs 4:23** *Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life. Rid yourself of a deceitful mouth and keep devious speech far from you. Let your eyes look directly ahead and let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you. Watch the path of your feet, and all your ways will be established. Do not turn to the right or to the left; Turn your foot from evil.* Jerusalem was the heart of Israel and Nehemiah knew to preserve it meant that it needed protection. Scripture talks about how much our hearts need to be protected, watched over, as the place where God's Spirit dwells within us. **Psalms 119:9** *How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your Word. With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. I have treasured Your Word in my heart, so that I may not sin against You.* We want to live a life to honor God and it begins with the heart. **Matthew 12:34...** *For the mouth speaks from that which fills the heart.* To know a person's heart, just listen to the words that come out. Our words reveal what is really happening inside. What good is a rebuilt life if we don't guard our heart! The purpose of rebuilding the walls was to protect the presence of God in their midst.

3 Keys to guard our hearts:

(1) Operate in the light. **Nehemiah 7:3** *Then I said to them, "The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot, and while they are standing guard, the gatekeepers are to keep the doors shut and bolted.* It's harder to operate in evil ways in broad daylight. We are most likely to fail when it's late and when others are not around. The lie we believe is that if we keep this a secret long enough, we can fix it on our own. The enemy

wants to separate us from those who can help us. **I Thessalonians 5:5** *For you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then, let's not sleep as others do, but let's be alert and sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who are drunk, get drunk at night. But since we are of the day, let's be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.* Paul knew the strength that comes from people in community and in front of one another. Do you find yourself hiding? **James 5:16** *Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed.* Healed also means set free. Confess means to bring things to light. Let's bring our challenges and trouble with decisions to the light of those around us so that God can bring clarity.

(2) Know that our lineage matters. **Nehemiah 7:61-65** Nehemiah excluded those claiming to be Levites (priesthood) that couldn't prove their lineage. Sometimes we make little compromises and let those little influences into our lives. Be careful of getting counsel from other broken people. **2 Peter 1:5-10** *Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they do not make you useless nor unproductive in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the one who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. Therefore, brothers and sisters, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choice of you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble.* Model these things so that our lives and our actions prove our lineage. If it doesn't, then we've either forgotten our lineage or never had it to begin with. Jesus is the answer to both. Do you have a lineage with Christ? If not, Jesus is the solution and available to anyone who would ask.

(3) Lifestyle is important. **Nehemiah 7:4** *Now the city was large and spacious, but the people in it were few and the houses were not built.* Jerusalem was hard to defend when it was not filled with the people of God. **Nehemiah 11:1-2** *Now the leaders of the people lived in Jerusalem, but the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to live in Jerusalem, the holy city, while nine-tenths remained in the other cities. And the people blessed all the men who volunteered to live in Jerusalem.* We need to be surrounded by people of God, loyal people. The people we have around us does really does matter. Nehemiah was adamant about operating in the light, lineage, and surrounding ourselves with godly people. We have the same challenge to operate in the light, to have a lineage to Christ, and to surround ourselves with godly people.

How have you brought something hidden to the light and experienced healing?

Do you need freedom from a bad relationship or ungodly people?

What can you do to have a gatekeeper or guard in your life?