

“I Went...”

Nehemiah 2:11-16

This message was originally entitled, “As Christians...” This text before us shows, in Nehemiah’s life, a view to what a true Christian, a true servant of God really is, and what that servant is to do, as a Christian.

I. HE WENT WHERE HE WAS NEEDED – VS. 11

A. *“So I came” – once he received the report about how dire the circumstances were in Jerusalem, Nehemiah set out to follow the Lord’s leading and do what needed to be done to help those in need.*

B. *“And was there three days” – this would have been to rest from the long journey they had just made. Ezra did the same when he came to Jerusalem.*

Ezra 8:32

³² And we came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days.

C. *Verse eight records that “the good hand” of God was upon him, and with that confidence, Nehemiah knew he would be successful if he simply followed the leading of the Lord.*

D. *We need to learn this valuable lesson that Nehemiah both learned and demonstrated in his actions. If we know that our life is right with God, and we are in the right spirit to be led by Him, then He will guide us to where we are needed*

– to where He wants us, and we will have the same understanding Nehemiah did that “the good hand” of God will be upon us, and our work, as well.

II. HE WENT FOR THE LORD, NOT FOR THE GLORY OF MAN – VS. 12

A. He, and the few men that were with him, went at night for at two reasons – security (which is probably why he took someone with him) and secrecy. His goal was to ascertain what needed done without having to spend any amount of time explaining it all to a host of people.

B. “Neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem” – this shows his humility and the simple fact that he was doing this for the Lord and not for the praise of men.

1 Corinthians 10:31

³¹ Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

Matthew 6:2

² Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

Matthew 23:5–7

⁵ But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,

⁶ And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues,

7 And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.

Luke 16:15

15 And he said unto them, **Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.**

III. HE WENT TO WORK – VS. 13-16

A. He defines for the reader the places he went to view the destruction and the despair it caused.

1. "I went out by night by the gate of the valley" – he left the city through ("by") the gate of the valley, or the Valley Gate – one that seems to have opened up into the Valley of Hinnom. "The valley-gate is the modern gate of the city leading to the valley of Gihon, and situated at or near the present Jaffa gate" (K&D). This valley "skirted Jerusalem to the west and south" (Barnes). This valley (and the gate that led to it) have an important place in Scripture, but not for a good reason.

The following image was found here:
<https://medium.com/@allthebigtrees/a-history-of-hell-gehenna-beyond-1f88863c7131>



The following is from Ray Vander Laan, as found at the following web address: <https://www.thatttheworldmayknow.com/jerusalem-s-hinnom-valley>

Jerusalem's Hinnom Valley marked the western and southern edges of Jerusalem, beginning along the Western Hill and ending where the Tyropean and Kidron Valleys meet. In the Old Testament, it was often the site where people of Judah sacrificed their children to Baal (2 Kings 23:20; 2 Chron. 28:3,4; Jer. 7:31; 19:5, 6; 32:35).

King Manasseh of Judah added to the negative reputation of the Hinnom Valley by sacrificing some of his own sons in Baal worship there (2 Chron. 33:6). He also practiced sorcery and witchcraft in defiance of God's law. King Josiah, Manasseh's grandson, later destroyed many of these pagan structures and practices. But by that time, Israel was so

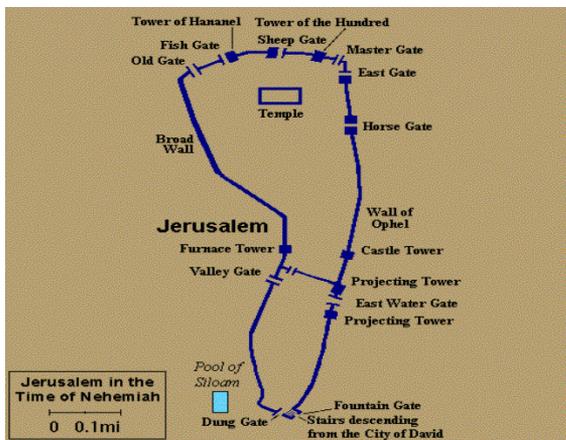
involved in paganism that God's judgment soon fell upon the people.

Jerusalem's Hinnom Valley also became the perpetual burning-garbage dump and city sewer. Residents sometimes called it the "valley of the sewer" or "the valley of the pagans."

By Jesus' time, the Greek translation of Hinnom Valley, *gehenna*, became a synonym for hell. Thus the English versions of the Bible translate "Valley of Hinnom" in the New Testament as "hell." With its pagan history and its burning sewer stench, Jerusalem's Hinnom Valley serves as a vivid metaphor for both the Christian and Jewish concept of hell.

2. "Even before the dragon well, and to the dung port"

The following image was found here:
<http://tentstakeministries.net/tag/valley-gate/>



- a) The words for “even before” - אֶל-פְּנֵי - could read “even toward,” or “in the direction towards” (K&D). They left the city through the Valley Gate in the direction of these other two locations.
 - b) “The dragon well” – only time this is mentioned in Scripture and its exact location is unknown, but by its reference here between the Valley Gate and the dung gate, “it is either identical with the well of Gihon...or situate in its immediate neighborhood.”
 - c) “The dung port” – the word for “port” here is the same for “gate” and is translated as “port,” in all likelihood, because it was not a gate you would pass through but a hole in the wall for refuse to pass through. This would have been the main sewer line, so to speak, taking all the refuse out of the city toward the brook Kidron and the Hinnom valley.
 - d) It may be he chose this location because it would give him a real sense of the work that needed done.
3. “And viewed the walls of Jerusalem” – from this perspective, he could have seen the worst of the problem and it gave him a first-hand look at what his brother had told him had happened.
4. “Which were broken down” (the walls), and the gates thereof were consumed with fire” – the gate he went through as well as the dung-gate (port) – a complete collapse of the protection the city needed.

5. Vs. 14 continues the location description:

- a) "Then I went on to the gate of the fountain" – "a gate on the eastern side of the Tyropoeon valley, not far from the pool of Siloam" (Barnes). It seems he was circling the city to view the damage.
- b) "And to the king's pool" – it's not certain to what this is referring. Some place it as the Pool of Siloam (or Siloah), while others have it as "probably the aqueduct made by Hezekiah, to bring the waters of Gihon to the city of David" (Clarke).

2 Chronicles 32:30

³⁰ This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works.

- c) "But there was no place for the beast that was under me to pass" – there was too much rubbish in the pool and blocking the gate for him to pass.

6. Vs. 15 finds Nehemiah and the group he was with finishing their survey trip and returning to the city by the same gate they exited. It seems, by this verse, that he had made a circuit around the city and was able to view, at least in the moonlight, the destruction that needed repaired.

B. Verse 16 points back to verse 12 and reiterates that no one knew he had gone to view the damage – not even the leadership of the city. He simply followed the Lord's leading – and nothing else.

C. With what he had just seen, Nehemiah would have been overwhelmed (and the next portion of chapter two shows this) with the utter devastation of what he saw. The sheer task that lay ahead would have been insurmountable to most, but Nehemiah had such confidence in his God that he didn't hesitate to "jump right in" to the task at hand. He went to work and work he did.

Conclusion: There are numerous lessons that can be learned by the believer today from this text. Both those mentioned in this message plus some more that spiritualize the text yet teach an important truth. When I first penned an outline for this text, as mentioned at the beginning, it was entitled, "As Christians..." In that message I made several observations that apply this text to the life of the New Testament believer.

1. As Christians, we must go where the Lord wants us to go – vs. 22 – "So I came..."
2. As Christians, we must be sincere in our work for the Lord – vs. 12.
3. As Christians, we must know what our job is – vs. 13.
4. As Christians, we must get the "rubbish" out of the way before God can work – vs. 14-16.

How are we at being a Christian, as represented in this episode in the life of Nehemiah?