

Nehemiah 02 - Nehemiah Proposes the King Send Him to Jerusalem; King Agrees; Nehemiah Sees Condition of City, Rallies Leadership; Work to Rebuild the Wall Begins; Opposition

I. Rebuilding of the wall (Neh 1:1—7:73)

(1) Nehemiah returns from Susa to Jerusalem (Neh 1:1—2:20)

(B) Nehemiah's commission to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city's walls (2:1-20)

(a) Nehemiah obtains from Artaxerxes permission to leave and supplies for rebuilding effort (2:1-8)

(b) Nehemiah arrives in Jerusalem to the displeasure of Sanballat and Tobiah (2:9-11)

(c) Nehemiah secretly inspects the dilapidated wall (2:12-16)

(d) Nehemiah organizes the rebuilding effort (2:17-20)

(i) Nehemiah challenges the people to rebuild the city (2:17)

(ii) The people initially cooperate (2:18)

(iii) Nehemiah answers the intimidation posed by Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem (2:19-20)

Nehemiah 2

(B) Nehemiah's commission to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city's walls (2:1-20)

(a) Nehemiah obtains from Artaxerxes permission to leave and supplies for rebuilding effort (2:1-8)

1 And it came about **in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes**, that wine was before him, and I picked up the wine and gave it to the king. Now **I had not been sad in his presence.**

1 And it came about in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, that wine was before him, and I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence.

1 It came about in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, during the month of Nisan, the king was about to drink some wine that I was preparing for him. Now I had never looked troubled in his presence.

1 And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence.

- "...in the month Nisan" - Nehemiah prayed for four months about the conditions in Jerusalem before he spoke to Artaxerxes about them (Cf. 1:1). Nisan corresponds with late March/early April.

- "...in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes" - 444 BC (see note on 1:1)

- "...I had not been sad in his presence" - in all the time he spent with the king, Nehemiah had never displayed a complexion of sadness in the king's presence...until this day.

2 So the king said to me, "Why is your face sad, though you are not ill? This is nothing but sadness of heart." **Then I was very much afraid.**

2 So the king said to me, "Why is your face sad though you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of heart." Then I was very much afraid.

2 The king asked me, "Why do you look so troubled, since you're not ill? This cannot be anything else but troubles of the heart." Then I was filled with fear.

2 Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid,

- As Nehemiah was going about his usual duties, the king noticed something different about Nehemiah's countenance. He was sad. The king was immediately curious since this was the first time he had seen his cupbearer dejected.

- "...Then I was very much afraid" - Nehemiah was terrified because Artaxerxes could have interpreted his sadness as dissatisfaction with the king. Being sad in the king's presence was a serious offense in Persia (Cf. Esther 4:2), sometimes punishable by death.

- Nehemiah realized that this was the moment for him to ask Artaxerxes to revise his official policy toward Jerusalem. He had previously issued a decree that rebuilding in Jerusalem should cease (Cf. Ezra 4:21).

— Nehemiah had been praying for God's mercy for this moment for four months (Cf. 1:11; 2:1)

3 And I said to the king, "May the king live forever. Why should my face not be sad when **the city, the site of my fathers' tombs**, is desolate and its gates have been consumed by fire?"

3 I said to the king, "Let the king live forever. Why should my face not be sad when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies desolate and its gates have been consumed by

fire?"

3 I replied to the king, "May the king live forever. Why shouldn't I be troubled, since the city where my ancestral sepulchres are located lies waste, with its gates burned by fire?"

3 And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?

- Nehemiah was careful in replying. In fact he was even afraid. A servant was never to let his negative emotions show before the king, for it might suggest dissatisfaction with the king. To do so might jeopardize his position or even his life.

- "...the city" - Jerusalem (Cf. v5,8,11)

— Nehemiah had a burden for the city of Jerusalem and its natural fortifications, not for the temple (it had already been rebuilt). The entire book of Nehemiah records this desire and Nehemiah's rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, despite great opposition.

— Nehemiah was burdened that the city of Jerusalem had no walls, thus no defense. The decree will be given by Artaxerxes for Nehemiah to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (in those days, if you didn't have walls for defense, you didn't have a city).

- "...the site of my fathers' tombs" - respect for ancestral tombs was universal in the ancient Near East, especially among royalty

Nehemiah knew that his request was a bold one. A few years earlier this king had stopped the rebuilding of Jerusalem and now Nehemiah was going to ask that the order be reversed. The cupbearer was risking his life! But his response was wise, no doubt reflecting the fact that he had been thinking about this opportunity, should it come, for a number of months.

In Nehemiah's response he avoided naming Jerusalem, perhaps so that he would not touch a sensitive political nerve in the king. He appealed to the king's sense of respect—his sense of "rightness" regarding proper respect for the dead. Nehemiah said the city where his ancestors were buried was in ruins and the gates had been burned (Cf. 1:3). This was a sad state of affairs for the Jewish city. Seventy years before (in 515 BC), the temple had been rebuilt. The year was now 444 BC, yet the city itself still needed much rebuilding.

4 Then the king said to me, **"What would you request?" So I prayed to the God of heaven.**

4 Then the king said to me, "What would you request?" So I prayed to the God of heaven.

4 The king answered, "What do you want?" So I prayed to the God of heaven

4 Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven.

- "...What would you request?" - immediately Nehemiah knew that God had given him favor with the king. Four months of prayer was answered by this question.

— God had prepared Artaxerxes' heart to respond favorably to Nehemiah's statements. So he asked Nehemiah what the king might do about the situation.

- "...So I prayed to the God of heaven" - Nehemiah's walk with God and dependence upon Him is evident in that while on the hot seat with the king, Nehemiah was praying to the King.

— This is a great example of spontaneous prayer. Nehemiah always resorted to prayer (Cf. 1:4-11; 4:4,9; 5:19; 6:9,14; 13:14).

Quick prayers are possible and valid if one has prayed sufficiently beforehand. In this case Nehemiah's prayer is evidence of a life lived in constant communion with God. Nehemiah had prayed for months, but he knew he was completely dependent on God's work in the king's heart at this moment. [Breneman]

5 Then I said to the king, "**If it pleases the king**, and if your servant has found favor before you, *I request* that you **send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it.**"

5 I said to the king, "If it please the king, and if your servant has found favor before you, send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it."

5 and I replied to the king, "If it seems good to you, and if your servant has found favor with you, would you send me to Judah, to the city where my ancestral sepulchres are located, so I can rebuild it?"

5 And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it.

- "...If it pleases the king" - notice the courtesy and humility in which Nehemiah approaches the king (Cf. v7). This appears elsewhere only in Esther 1:19; 3:9; 5:4,8; 7:3; 8:5; 9:13.

- "...send me" - many Christians in a high-ranking position would have simply complained about the condition of things in Jerusalem, like they complain about many conditions inside the church today. But Nehemiah purposed and proposed to do something to correct the bad situation, at great personal cost to his comfort and security.

- "...Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs" - again, Nehemiah avoided mentioning Jerusalem specifically, but instead mentioned "Judah" (a Persian province) and appealed to the king's respect for ancestral tombs.

- "...that I may rebuild it" - this is a key detail that pinpoints this decree by Artaxerxes as the starting point (*terminus ad quo*) of Daniel's 70 Weeks prophecy.

— Dan 9:25 specifically states that it is the city of Jerusalem, and the wall, that was to be rebuilt, not the temple. By the time of this decree (444 BC), the temple had already been rebuilt (about 70 years earlier).

Dan 9:25: So you are to know and understand *that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem*, until Messiah the Prince, *there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with streets and moat*, even in times of distress.

— An attempt to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem had already been made at least once. A letter from the Samaritans to Artaxerxes (Cf. Ezra 4:6-23) urged the king to stop construction of the wall and city. Artaxerxes responded to the letter with an order to this effect, and the work stopped.

6 Then the king said to me, with **the queen** sitting beside him, "**How long will your journey be, and when will you return?**" So **it pleased the king to send me**, and I gave him a definite time.

6 Then the king said to me, the queen sitting beside him, "How long will your journey be, and when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me, and I gave him a definite time.

6 With his queen seated beside him, the king asked me, "How long will your journey take, and when will you return?" The king thought it was a good idea to send me, so I presented him with a prepared plan.

6 And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him,) For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time.

- "...the queen" - Damaspia. The fact that the queen was seated there suggests this was a private gathering, since it was not customary for queens to appear at formal banquets.

- "...How long will your journey be, and when will you return?" - Nehemiah responded with a specific time frame, again indicating forethought on his part. He returned 12 years after the king had appointed him governor of Judah (5:14; 13:6).

- "...it pleased the king to send me" - this decree was issued on March 5, 444 BC [Harold W. Hoehner, "Daniel's Seventy Weeks and New Testament Chronology"]. This date marks the beginning date of the first 60 Weeks of Daniel's 70 Weeks prophecy.

— Sixty-nine of those 70 weeks (173,880 days) were literally fulfilled when Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey and presented Himself as Israel's Messiah, which occurred on March 30, 33 AD. This prophecy was fulfilled to the very day (Luke 19:40-42).

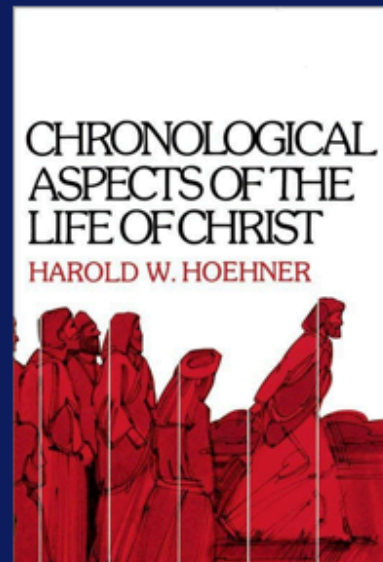
— The 70 Weeks prophecy was given to Daniel 94 years before this decree. See extensive notes in Dan 9:25.

**MESSIAH MUST PRESENT HIMSELF
TO ISRAEL ON MARCH 30, A.D. 33**
(Daniel 9:25)



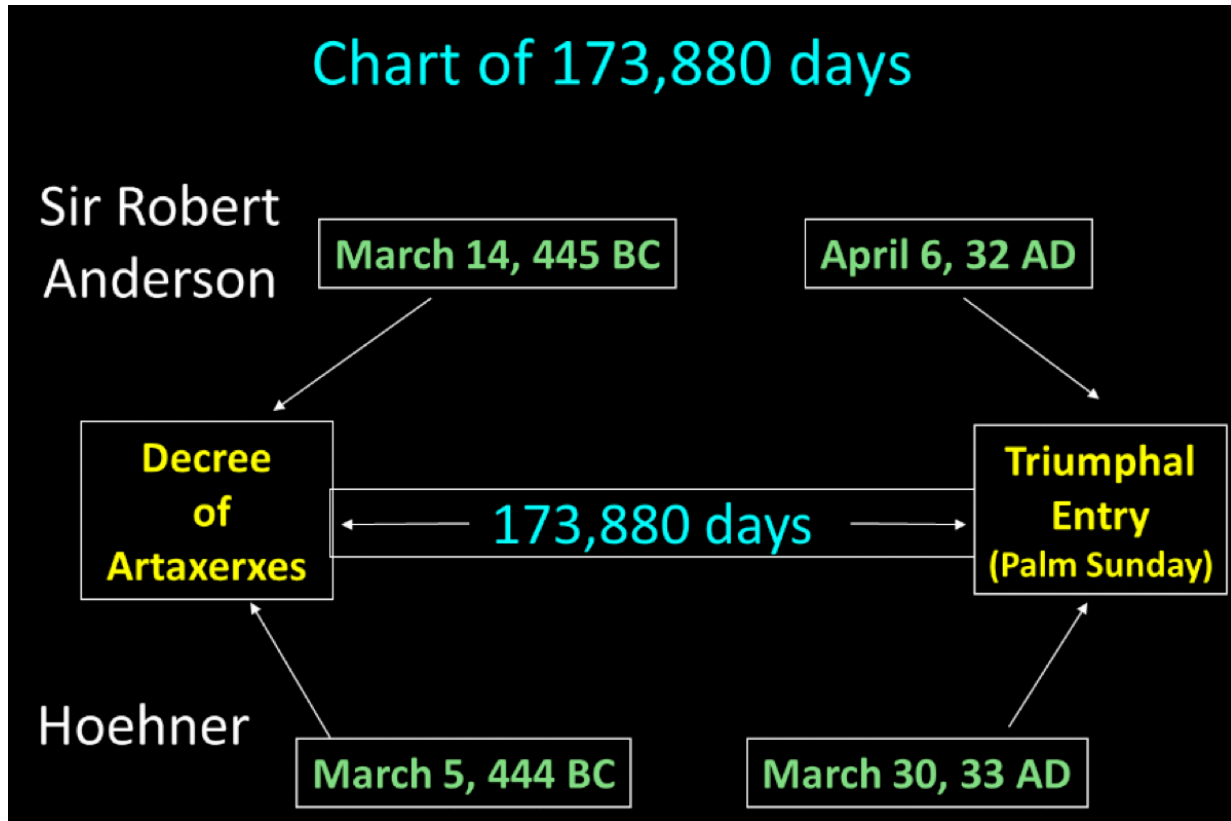
BIBLICAL MATHEMATICS

444 B.C. – (*Artaxerxes decree of Nehemiah 2*)
 +33 A.D. – (*Triumphal entry of Luke 19:28-44*)
 = **477 years**
 -1 – (*1 B.C. to A.D. 1 = 1 year, not 2 years*)
 = **476 years**
 x 365 days
 = **173, 740 days**
 + 25 days – (*March 5 to March 30*)
 = **173, 765 days**
 +115 days – (*leap years*)
 = **173, 880 days**



Harold W. Hoehner is the foremost scholar who has looked at and calculated the timeframe and dates of Daniel's 70 weeks prophecy. The other primary scholar who has looked at and investigated this prophecy is Sir Robert Anderson. In his work *The Coming Prince*, he lays out his calculation of this prophecy. Until Hoehner came along more recently, Anderson was considered the the premier researcher on this subject.

Hoehner's calculations differ from Anderson's because of new archeological information that came to light in the 20th century, after Sir Robert Anderson's death. These findings shed additional light on the year that Artaxerxes took the throne, which was actually 464 BC vs Anderson's 465 BC.



7 And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, let letters be given me for the governors of the provinces beyond the River, so that they will allow me to pass through until I come to Judah,

7 And I said to the king, "If it please the king, let letters be given me for the governors of the provinces beyond the River, that they may allow me to pass through until I come to Judah,

7 I also asked the king, "If it seems good to you, order that letters of authorization be given me for the Trans-Euphrates governors, so they will allow me to pass through to Judah,

7 Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into Judah;

- Nehemiah then asked for the biggest favor yet. Knowing he would face opposition from his enemies, he requested letters of permission from the king to allow him to pass through the various provinces in the Trans-Euphrates, the large area west of the Euphrates River

8 and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, so that he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of **the citadel** which is by the temple, for the wall of the city, and for the house to which I will go." And the king granted *them* to me because the good hand of my God *was* on me.

8 and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress which is by the temple, for the wall of the city and for the house to which I will go." And the king granted *them* to me because the good hand of my God *was* on me.

8 along with a letter to Asaph, the royal Commissioner of Forests, so that he will supply me with timber to craft beams for the gatehouses of the Temple, for the city walls, and for the house in which I will be living." The king granted this for me, according to the good hand of my God.

8 And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertained to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me.

- Nehemiah knew he would need access to timber for rebuilding the gates and the wall and other parts of the city. Artaxerxes willingness to not only allow Nehemiah to go, but to provide letters from his own hand to make the journey easier, more secure, and successful was over and above what Nehemiah had originally prayed for.

— It also meant that the king officially sanctioned this endeavor, and that it wasn't just Nehemiah going rogue. God can move the heart of powerful rulers to achieve His redemptive goals.

- "...the citadel" - a fortress just north of the temple; it was the forerunner to the Antonia Fortress that Herod the Great build and to which Luke referred to (Cf. Acts 21:37; 22:24)

(b) Nehemiah arrives in Jerusalem to the displeasure of Sanballat and Tobiah (2:9-11)

9 Then I came to the governors *of the provinces* beyond the *Euphrates* River and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen.

9 Then I came to the governors *of the provinces* beyond the River and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen.

9 So I went to the Trans-Euphrates governors and gave them the king's letters of authorization. The king also sent army officers and cavalry to accompany me.

9 Then I came to the governors beyond the river, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me.

- The journey to Jerusalem, even though Nehemiah probably took the shortest route possible, would have taken at least two months. Ezra's trip, 14 years earlier, took four to

five months (Ezra 7:8-9).

- On the way Nehemiah showed the governors of the provinces the king's letters of authorization. The king even provided a military escort for him! Nehemiah's official position called for a military escort (see notes on Ezra 8:22).

— These soldiers remained in Jerusalem for his protection (4:23), and also reinforced the credentials of Nehemiah to the neighboring governors, making it clear that there had been a change in royal policy.

10 And when **Sanballat the Horonite** and **Tobiah the Ammonite** official heard *about it*, it was very displeasing to them that someone had come to seek the welfare of the sons of Israel.

10 When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard *about it*, it was very displeasing to them that someone had come to seek the welfare of the sons of Israel.

10 But when Sanballat the Horonite and his servant Tobiah the Ammonite heard of this, they were greatly distressed because someone had come to do good for the Israelis.

10 When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.

- As soon as Nehemiah arrived, he began to face opposition...

- "...Sanballat the Horonite" - he was from Beth-Horon, a few miles northwest of Jerusalem (Cf. Joshua 10:10-11); he was the governor of Samaria (according to the Elephantine papyri, 400 BC). As governor of Samaria, he would have been Nehemiah's superior.

- "...Tobiah the Ammonite" - his name means, "Yahweh is Good"; he was from Ammon, east of Judah, and was an associate of Sanballat. He was a Persian official who ruled the Ammonite region as a type of "godfather". His family was very influential and intimidating.

- When Sanballat and Tobiah heard that Nehemiah had arrived on the scene to help Israel, they were very displeased. Immediately they began to plan how to stop Nehemiah from achieving his goal.

— Their displeasure arose from personal spite as well as political power. They were local rulers who had benefited from the diminished status of Jerusalem. A rebuilt Jerusalem threatened to realign regional authority.

— Their opposition also reveals a timeless truth: God's work often sparks resistance from those whose interests do not align with God's purpose of redemption and restoration. The frustration of these two demonstrates the reality of spiritual conflict, frequently displayed as tangible political struggles. But Nehemiah had faith that no earthly opposition could thwart God's purposes (Cf. Rom 8:31).

11 So I came to Jerusalem and was there for three days.

11 So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days.

11 I arrived in Jerusalem and remained there for three days.

11 So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days.

(c) Nehemiah secretly inspects the dilapidated wall (2:12-16)

12 And I got up in the night, I and a few men with me. I did not tell anyone what my God was putting into my mind to do for Jerusalem, and there was no animal with me except the animal on which I was riding.

12 And I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. I did not tell anyone what my God was putting into my mind to do for Jerusalem and there was no animal with me except the animal on which I was riding.

12 Then I got up at night, along with a few men with me. I had not confided to any person what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem. Furthermore, there was no other animal with me except for the one I was riding.

12 And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon.

- After taking time (three days, v11), presumably to think, pray, and get acquainted with some people there, he took a few men he could trust

— Nehemiah wanted to survey the damage to Jerusalem and the walls secretly because had he been observed in public, the opposition may have stirred up the non-Jewish people of the land to oppose him.

— Nehemiah wanted to plan for the reconstruction without the enemy's knowledge, then build it so quickly that the work would be finished before the opposition could successfully appeal to the king to stop construction again.

You will often find it best not to commit your plans to others. If you want to serve God, go and do it, and then let other people find it out afterwards. You have no need to tell what you are going to do, and, I may add, there is no need for you retelling what you have done, for very, very frequently God withdraws himself when we boast of what is being done.

[Spurgeon]

If someone took a tour of your life the same way Nehemiah took a tour of Jerusalem, they might notice many broken down portions in the figurative walls of your life. Prov 25:28 says: *Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls.* Many lives are like a city with broken walls—living with a constant sense of fear, poverty, and insecurity. We should not hide our eyes from these broken down places; God wants to change them and make the first steps of change right away.

13 So I went out at night by the **Valley Gate** in the direction of the Dragon's Spring and on to the **Dung Gate**, and I was **inspecting** the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which had been consumed by fire.

13 So I went out at night by the Valley Gate in the direction of the Dragon's Well and on to the Refuse Gate, inspecting the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were consumed by fire.

13 So I went out during the night through the Valley Gate toward Dragon's Well, and from there to the Dung Gate, inspecting the walls of Jerusalem that were broken down and burned by fire.

13 And I went out by night by the gate of the valley, even before the dragon well, and to the dung port, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire.

- Then he made a careful survey of the walls to analyze the problem he faced. He did so at night, apparently to avoid letting others know his plans before they were firmly fixed in his mind.

— During these night hours he gained perspective and, as outlined in Neh 3, developed an effective plan to accomplish the task he had come to Jerusalem to perform

- "...Valley Gate" - probably on the western side of the city of David

- "...Dung Gate" - at the city's southern tip; led to the city dump

- "...inspecting" - *śābar*, a medical term used to describe probing a wound to see the extent of its damage (Cf. v15)

— For the first time, Nehemiah saw with his own two eyes what had been described to him previously (Cf. 1:1-3), and what God called him to repair. There is no way he could've been seeing this in person with dry eyes (Cf. 1:4), seeing the extent of the damage, the fear of the people, the poverty, and the insecurity due to broken down walls.

We deceive ourselves if we only look at what is good. Some have no trouble with this; they *always* find it easy to see what is wrong. They are full of criticism. They believe they have the unique spiritual gift of pointing out what is wrong.

But Nehemiah teaches us by example—we must look at the broken down walls, and carefully study what is wrong—but only if we have the heart, the prayer, the vision, the passion to be used of God to set it right. God has little use for those who offer advice without really knowing first-hand the nature of the problem.

14 Then I passed on to the **Fountain Gate** and the **King's Pool**, but **there was no place for my mount to pass.**

14 Then I passed on to the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but there was no place for my mount to pass.

14 I proceeded to the Fountain Gate, and then to the King's Pool, but there wasn't sufficient clearance for the animal I was riding to pass.

14 Then I went on to the gate of the fountain, and to the king's pool: but there was no place for the beast that was under me to pass.

- Nehemiah's route took him only to the southern and eastern parts of Jerusalem's wall because those were the only sections still standing. When Nebuchadnezzar attacked and destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BC, 142 years earlier, he attacked from the north (where Jerusalem was most vulnerable). Thus, there was little preserved in the north of the city.

- "...Fountain Gate" - evidently led to a spring called En-rogel near the southeastern corner, where the Hinnom and Kidron Valley's meet

- "...King's Pool" - may be the Pool of Siloam, which was near the king's garden (Cf. 3:15), or it may have been south of the Pool of Siloam

- "...there was no place for my mount to pass" - by noting that he couldn't continue his circumnavigation of the city due to rubble, we see how devastating the neglect of structures actually was. Rubble and collapsed walls made portions of the walls around the city impassable.

15 So I was going up at night by the ravine and inspecting the wall. Then I entered the Valley Gate again and returned.

15 So I went up at night by the ravine and inspected the wall. Then I entered the Valley Gate again and returned.

15 I traveled the valley by night to inspect the wall, returning through the Valley Gate.

15 Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall, and turned back, and entered by the gate of the valley, and so returned.

- Apparently the rubble there kept him from proceeding on his mount so he went up the valley (probably the Kidron Valley east of the city). Because he reached a point impassible point, he retraced his steps from the eastern wall and went back into the city at the Valley Gate.

Nehemiah took the time to count the cost before starting the work. He had a heart, he had faith, he had a vision—but before that vision could become reality, he must see exactly what has to be done and what it would cost him in terms of time, effort, money, and leadership (Cf. Luke 14:28-30).

16 However, the officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing; nor had I as yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, or the rest who were doing the work.

16 The officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; nor had I as yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials or the rest who did the work.

16 The local officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done—I informed neither the Judeans, nor the priests, nor the nobles, nor the officials, nor any of the rest who would be doing the work.

16 And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did; neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work.

- Nehemiah kept his plans close to his chest to prevent self-serving or faithless individuals from derailing the mission before it even began. He also likely wanted to formulate a plan before the Jews could marshal arguments why they could not rebuild the wall.

— The time also offered space for him to follow God's guidance, free from outside interference, until the time came to gather the community to action.

(d) Nehemiah organizes the rebuilding effort (2:17-20)

(i) Nehemiah challenges the people to rebuild the city (2:17)

17 Then I said to **them**, "**You see the bad situation we are in**, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates have been burned by fire. **Come, let's rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a disgrace.**"

17 Then I said to them, "You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned by fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a reproach."

17 Later I told them, "You all are watching the predicament we're in, how Jerusalem lies desolate, with its gates burned by fire. Let's rebuild the Jerusalem wall so we're no longer a disgrace."

17 Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach.

- "...them" - the "Jews [i.e., common people], priests, nobles, officials" of v16. Nehemiah had to approach the leaders of Jerusalem; he could not do the job himself, and he was in a lot of trouble if the leaders didn't support him.

— While the text doesn't say it, from what we know of Nehemiah's character, he obviously prayed that God would prepare the hearts of the leaders to support the work that God had called him to.

— In the accomplishment of any goal, especially a God-sized goal, there will always be certain people who are essential to accomplishing that goal. You must have their help.

- "...You see the bad situation we are in" - Nehemiah began by stating the obvious: the city, and it's residents and leadership, were in a really bad situation. Sometimes the obvious is the hardest thing for people to see.

— "we" - Nehemiah wisely did not come as if he was there to fix their problem. Nehemiah owned the problem as his also, even though it likely would've been easy not to. He didn't play the blame game. He didn't criticize their leadership, he simply identified with them regarding the problem.

— The residents and leaders of Jerusalem were not sitting around waiting for a hero to rebuild their walls. They had come to accept that it was an impossible job. They didn't believe anyone could fix a 100+ year old problem. Years ago when someone tried, their enemies simply stopped them. So they just lived with it.

- "...Come, let's rebuild the wall of Jerusalem" - then he challenged them to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem and remove the disgrace of their devastated city

— "let's" - "let us"; Nehemiah asked for their partnership with him in rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem. Nehemiah supposed that if God could move the heart of a pagan king to partner in this work, He certainly could move upon the hearts of His own people to join in. Nehemiah wasn't there to do it *for* them, but to partner *with* them in the job of restoring Jerusalem and its people.

- "...so that we will no longer be a disgrace" - this wasn't about bricks and mortar; it was about removing a condition of shame, fear, poverty, and insecurity among God's people. The hard work involving bricks and mortar would be worth it because it would have a real spiritual impact on the residents and community as a whole.

(ii) The people initially cooperate (2:18)

18 And I told them how **the hand of my God had been favorable to me** and also about the king's words which he had spoken to me. Then they said, "**Let's arise and build.**" So they put their hands to the good *work*.

18 I told them how the hand of my God had been favorable to me and also about the king's words which he had spoken to me. Then they said, "Let us arise and build." So they put their hands to the good *work*.

18 Then I told them how good my God had been to me, and about what the king had told me. They replied, "Let's get out there and build!" So they encouraged themselves to do good.

18 Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build.

- When Nehemiah issued the challenge, the people's negative feelings turned positive. Despair became hope. They responded and began the rebuilding process.

- "...the hand of my God had been favorable to me" - Nehemiah assured the leaders that this wasn't *his* project, it was *God's* project

— If people sense your vision is really all about *you*, and raising *you* up, and making *you* great, they will rightly be hesitant. But if it is from God, and they can see it, they will be

thrilled to partner with you.

— Nehemiah could say, "Look, you can know this is of God; the heart of the king of Persia has been touched by the LORD to support this project." If something has evidence of God's hand of blessing on it, many people will want to support it. If it looks like only the ambition or effort of man, supporters will rightly hesitate.

- Notice what Nehemiah *didn't* do; he didn't beg or make deals. He had a high calling from God and simply asked others to be part of that vision, but he never stopped treating it like a high calling.

— He didn't offer rewards, incentives, or vacations on the Sea of Galilee for the ones who got the job done. Those are all external motivations and aren't God's highest calling. Nehemiah simply said, "Let's take this seriously. We know there's a job to be done, and God is leading us to get it done now."

— He relied on the LORD and the leaders to create a true *inward* motivation. External motivation – manipulation, guilt, pressure, carnal rewards can work for a while but are never a part of God's vision for getting things done.

- The date Nehemiah rallied the people was August 1, 444 BC. Construction on the wall was completed just 52 days later, on September 21, 444 BC (Cf. 6:15).

- "...Let's arise and build" - the response of the leaders of Jerusalem was of God. This was even more remarkable considering the ways they might have responded—ways we might respond when we are challenged to partner in a work:

- They might have denied the *need* for the walls. "We have survived without those walls for a hundred years now, and we already have the temple."
- They might have seen the project as *too much work*. "Nehemiah, this is a fine work, and we hope it goes well for you, but we can't help you now."
- They might have seen the *opposition as too strong*. "Nehemiah, it is useless to begin this work because the last time, our enemies stopped us."

Someone has defined leadership as 'the art of getting people to do what they ought to do because they want to do it.' If that definition is true, then Nehemiah certainly was a leader!
[Wiersbe]

We know that Nehemiah was a great leader because people followed him. The people he was meant to lead were genuinely influenced by his leadership.

NEHEMIAH'S MOTIVATIONAL TECHNIQUES	
Step 1	He gathered the facts (2:12-16).
Step 2	He created a need in his hearers (2:17).
Step 3	He reviewed past success (2:18a).
Step 4	He revealed adequate resources (2:18b).
Step 5	He secured his hearers' commitment (2:18c).

(iii) Nehemiah answers the intimidation posed by Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem (2:19-20)

19 But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard *about it*, they mocked us and despised us, and said, "What is this thing that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?"

19 But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard *it*, they mocked us and despised us and said, "What is this thing you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?"

19 But when Sanballat the Horonite, his servant Tobiah the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they jeered at us and despised us when they said, "What is this thing that you're doing? You're rebelling against the king, aren't you?"

19 But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king?

- Apparently word spread quickly regarding the Jews' response to Nehemiah's challenge. As soon as their enemies heard the news they stepped up their efforts to hinder the process. They used every demoralizing technique they knew, beginning with ridicule and the suggestion that they were rebels.

— Joining Sanballat and Tobiah (Cf. v10) was Geshem (Cf. 6:1-2,6) the Arab. Sanballat and Tobiah were Jewish—fellow brothers—of Nehemiah and the residents of Jerusalem. You would think they'd support this work, but they didn't. Opposition is always difficult, but when it comes from brothers, it is mixed with the pain of betrayal as well.

The Bible makes it clear we have enemies and opponents also, but chiefly they are spiritual enemies: *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against...spiritual hosts of*

wickedness in heavenly places (Eph 6:12). However, we also realize that attacks from spiritual enemies can come through flesh-and-blood people (Matt 16:23). We can experience spiritual attack on a direct inward level from spiritual enemies, or through people who are, wittingly or unwittingly, being used as tools by our spiritual enemies.

20 So I answered them and said to them, "The God of heaven will make us successful; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but **you have no part, right, or memorial in Jerusalem.**"

20 So I answered them and said to them, "The God of heaven will give us success; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no portion, right or memorial in Jerusalem."

20 In reply to them, I said, "The God of Heaven will prosper us. That's why we're preparing to build. But as far as you're concerned, there exists no ancestral heritage, no legal right, nor any historic claim in Jerusalem.

20 Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem.

- Nehemiah was ready for their insidious attack, but wasn't put on the defensive by their mocking. He affirmed that the God of heaven (Cf. 1:4-5; 2:4) would enable them to succeed.

— The Jews, God's servants, would rebuild, but the three opponents had no share or claim (present) or historic (past) right to the city

— Notice that Nehemiah did not refute or rebut their attacks about the lack of support from the king (they would've claimed it was a forgery), he simply proclaimed his confidence in God.

— Notice also that Nehemiah didn't stop work in order to respond to the attacks. He wasn't going to allow the enemy to sidetrack them. He had work to do and he was going to do it. If you allow the opposition to get you to stop what you are called by God to do, the enemy has won.

- "...you have no part, right, or memorial in Jerusalem" - Sanballat and Tobiah may have been Jewish by birth and legal citizens of Jerusalem, but their hearts showed they had no heritage, right, or memorial in Jerusalem.

- Once again Nehemiah brought the task—both in the eyes of Judah and his enemies—into clear focus. Their dependence was not to be on their abilities, human resources, or personal genius. Their hope was in the God of heaven! Nehemiah exhibited many characteristics necessary for effective leadership.

This opposition did not immediately melt away. We often wish that if we did everything right, as Nehemiah did here, then the opposition would just go away. But it didn't. These two opposed the work all the way until it was finished. *But they didn't stop it.* God's work got done, and they were proved completely wrong.

21 factors that made Nehemiah a good leader:

1. He established a reasonable and attainable goal.
2. He had a sense of mission.
3. He was willing to get involved.
4. He rearranged his priorities in order to accomplish his goal.
5. He patiently waited for God's timing.
6. He showed respect to his superior.
7. He prayed at crucial times.
8. He made his request with tact and graciousness.
9. He was well prepared and thought of his needs in advance.
10. He went through proper channels.
11. He took time (three days) to rest, pray, and plan.
12. He investigated the situation firsthand.
13. He informed others only after he knew the size of the problem.
14. He identified himself as one with the people.
15. He set before them a reasonable and attainable goal.
16. He assured them God was in the project.
17. He displayed self-confidence in facing obstacles.
18. He displayed God's confidence in facing obstacles.
19. He did not argue with opponents.
20. He was not discouraged by opposition.
21. He courageously used the authority of his position.