

Messages From the Gates of Jerusalem
Lesson #6 - Broad Wall - Part I

Nehemiah 3:8 Next to him Uzziel the son of Harhaiah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs. Also next to him Hananiah, one of the perfumers, made repairs; and they fortified Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall.

In the rubble that filled the Jerusalem streets following the 1967 Six-Day War, archaeologists scrambled to see what the bombs had unearthed before the bulldozers came through and smoothed over the past once again. One group found a very, very old wall, buried so deep below the present day city that it could hardly be called a wall anymore. This wall, far older than the Ottoman Old City wall or the Wailing Wall, dates back over 2700 years to the reign of King Hezekiah. Once it had been an enormous wall; the foundations that remain today are 20 feet wide and 10 feet tall in some places. Today the wall is partially exposed in a small courtyard below apartment buildings and shops in the Jewish Quarter

Is there a message for us from the Broad Wall?

Questions: Who was instrumental in constructing the Broad Wall? What were the conditions in Judah to spark the construction? What is the significance of the Broad Wall?

1. Who was instrumental in the construction?

Throughout the books of Kings and Chronicles, we read that kings did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. Hezekiah's father, Ahaz (pro-Assyrian), a king of Judah, was one such king. He had defiled the temple, ultimately closed its doors and stopped the Levitical ministry. This action had brought discipline to Judah, including invasions by Syria, Edom and Philistia. Assyria was knocking on the door.

Hezekiah ruled as king of Judah from 715 BC - 687 BC. Hezekiah, "the Lord strengthens," stands out as one of the few kings who did what was right in the sight of the Lord.

He was 1 of 3 kings that were commended for being like David. (13th out of 20)

II Chron. 29:1-2 Hezekiah began to reign when he was 25 years old and reigned 29 years in Jerusalem. He did what was right in the sight of the Lord, just as David had done.

II Kings 18:5-7 He trusted in the LORD God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him. For he held fast to the Lord; he did not depart from following him but kept the commandments that the Lord commanded Moses. The Lord was with him; wherever he went, he prospered. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and would not serve him.

When King Hezekiah came to the throne in about 715 BC, it was a very dark time for Judah; they were in deep trouble. Isaiah and Micah prophesied during his reign. It had been nearly 300 years since David was king over a united Israel.

- a. Israel split into two nations: tribes of Judah (and Benjamin) followed Rehoboam, the son of Solomon. The other 10 tribes of Israel became a separate nation under Jeroboam.
- b. In the 300 years since David, there were few kings in Judah and none in Israel who did what was right in the eyes of the Lord.

Hezekiah witnessed the destruction of the northern Kingdom of Israel by Sargon's Assyrians in 720 BC. They Assyrians are now posing a serious threat to take Judah

Hezekiah as a Reformer: Early in his reign, Hezekiah returned Judah to the sole and true worship of Yahweh. II Chron. 29-30 relates the sweeping religious reforms of Hezekiah to set "*the service of the house of the Lord ... in order* (2 Chron. 29:35)." He will be instrumental in the building of a strong physical as well as spiritual BROAD WALL.

II Chron. 29:3-11

3. In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them. His father Ahaz had neglected God's house.

4-5. He brought in the priests and Levites...,"Listen to me, Levites! Sanctify yourselves, and the house of the Lord, the God of your ancestors, and carry out the filth from the holy place.

6-7. Our ancestors have been unfaithful and have done what was evil in the sight of the Lord our God; they have forsaken him, and have turned away their faces from the dwelling of the Lord, and turned their backs. They also shut the doors of the vestibule and put out the lamps, and have not offered incense or made burnt offerings in the holy place to the God of Israel.

8-9. Therefore the wrath of the Lord came upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he has made them an object of horror, of astonishment, and of hissing, as you see with your own eyes. Our fathers have fallen by the sword and our sons, daughters and wives are in captivity.

10. Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with the Lord, the God of Israel, so that his fierce anger may turn away from us.

11. My sons, do not now be negligent, for the Lord has chosen you to stand in his presence to minister to him, and to be his ministers and make offerings to him."

Fourteen men are chosen to be the example and lead the way to revive Temple worship.

The 1st day of the 1st month > they begin to clean.

- a. They began in the Holy of Holies and then the Holy Place. They were to cleanse and sanctify the Temple (from the inside out) and then the Porch. They removed the pagan altar and replaced it with the altar of the LORD.
- b. They cleansed the vessels and instruments used in the temple services and put them in the proper place.
- c. They collected all the trash and relics of the pagan worship, took it to the Kidron Valley and burned it.
- d. The complete cleansing took 16 days. They missed Passover because everything was not cleansed, sanctified and ready.

Ponder: We need a renewed cleansing to extract the "religious rubbish" that accumulates. Start with our heart and our devotion to the Lord. "Search my heart; try me and see if there be any wicked way in me." Wiersbe: It is not by doing some unique new thing that we experience blessing from the Lord, but by returning to the "old things" and doing them well. We are to confess our sins, light the lamps, burn the incense (picture of prayer), and offer ourselves as living sacrifices. Create an environment of praise, adoration, thankfulness, and devotion for God's dwelling place.

- Repaired and reopened the Jerusalem Temple closed by Ahaz.
Warning: Northern Kingdom had gone into captivity because they abandoned Temple worship. The action of Ahaz (king of Judah) had brought discipline to Judah, including invasions by Syria, Edom and Philistia. Assyria was knocking on the door.
- Removed pagan idols and vessels from the temple
- Resolved to abolish idolatry from Judah - II Kings 18:4 Destroyed the "bronze serpent" that had been made by Moses in obedience to God's command; it had become an object of idolatrous worship. Man will worship a religious relic that has no power, but will not trust and worship the Living God.
- Destroyed the "high places" of worship to the foreign gods established by his father and put an end to idol worship in the hills
- Centralized the worship of God at the Jerusalem temple - In Deut. 12, God had commanded there be 1 central place of worship > Jerusalem
- He established singers and musicians for praise and worship.
- He organized instruction in the laws of the Torah throughout the country,
- Returned Biblical forms of temple sacrifice
- He consecrated & dedicated the Temple with imposing sacrifices. (II Chron. 29:3-36)
 - a. Sin offering to atone for the sins of the people and priests - ALL ISRAEL
 - b. Burnt offering > Total dedication to the LORD
 - c. During the sacrifices, the singers and musicians offered praise to the LORD.
 - d. The People also brought sacrifices and cleansed themselves.
 - e. Time of great rejoicing for the King and the people, including many devout from Israel who had fled to Judah so they could worship the LORD.
- Restored the Passover pilgrimage (2nd month) and celebration (2 Chronicles 30:26) -
 - a. He sent messengers to invite the scattered tribes of ALL Israel to take part in the Passover feast which commemorated the release of the Jewish people from Egyptian bondage.
 - b. No Passover with a united people since days of Solomon. He wanted to unite the people spiritually. It was time to put the LORD first, forget past differences and celebrate. He continually used the words "return" and "turn again." They were met with ridicule and rejection > rejected the blessing God had waiting for them.
 - c. God gave ALL who came and worshiped and oneness of mind and heart.
The LORD was the center of the celebration - not an agenda.

d. God wants our hearts and not mere religious ritual.

e. The Passover was celebrated with great solemnity and such rejoicing as had not been in Jerusalem since the days of Solomon. The celebration lasted another week.

f. When the people left, he pronounced the benediction of God upon them.

Num. 6:25-27 "The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace."

"So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them."

g. The people carried the blessing home and destroyed the idols in Judah.

Thought: A great time of worship and praising is wonderful.

Do we return home and live like we have met the Lord?

- Restored and reorganized the Levite priests to all of their temple duties and services - He restored the daily services of the Holy Temple in all its splendor. He knew the blessings of 2 weeks would not last unless the people could be involved in regular ministry at the Temple. He set the example by providing the animals from his own flocks and herds. Scripture says he did everything for the LORD from his heart.
- Hezekiah was eager to renew the Feast celebrations to the Temple three times a year, as prescribed by the Torah, and he succeeded in doing so.
- Required a tithe of the crops - provided special chambers in the Temple to store the gifts. He appointed faithful men to oversee the distribution of the food. The tithes and offerings were far more than he expected > generous worshipping people
- 2 Kings 19:15 records that Hezekiah went to the Temple and there he prayed, the first king of Judah to do so in about 250 years, since the time of Solomon.

The service of the temple of the LORD was reestablished. Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced at what God had brought about for His people, because it was done so quickly. It is amazing when God decides to act in a person's or peoples' life/lives how quickly He can achieve His intended end. Many times He could have done it faster but it would've been a detriment to the humans involved. As He works through His chosen vessels He invariably leaves His mark in them. "No one touched by the Living God walks away unchanged. If they have walked away unchanged, it wasn't God touching them."

Hezekiah the Negotiator: He turned his attention to the reorganization of the army and the reconstruction of the fortifications that had been torn down by various enemies during Ahaz' weak reign. With his well equipped and thoroughly trained army, Hezekiah set out to recover the lost provinces. He defeated the army of the Philistines and took their stronghold Gaza. Judah had become a vassal state under Assyria during the reign of Ahaz. Between the death of the Assyrian king Sargon II, and the succession of his son Sennacherib, Hezekiah sought to throw off his subservience to the Assyrian kings. He ceased to pay the tribute imposed on his father, Ahaz, and "rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not," but entered into a league with Egypt (Isa. 30-31; 36:6-9).

Though Hezekiah expected the Egyptians to come to his aid, they did not come, and Hezekiah had to face the invasion of Judah by Sennacherib (2 Kings 18:13-16). Sennacherib's troops poured into Judah and captured a few cities. Then he set his sights on Jerusalem.

Egypt did not rush to Judah's aid, and Hezekiah found himself in a hopeless position facing the overwhelming invasion of the mighty Assyrian army. Under the circumstances, Hezekiah humbled himself and begged Sennacherib for a peace treaty. Sennacherib, greedy for treasure, exacted a considerable quantity of gold and silver as his price for the withdrawal of his troops. The price > 11 tons of silver and 1 ton of gold!

- a. Some of the wealth came from the king's own treasure.
- b. Disappointing > He took the rest from the temple of the Lord. (example of his father)
- c. King David didn't negotiate with his enemies or try to buy them off. He attacked & defeated.
- d. Naturally, Sennacherib retreats, but he has every intention of returning.

Hezekiah Suffers: 702 BC The next event in Hezekiah's life is his grave illness.

II Chron. 32:24 tells us that the king had become proud. Hezekiah humbled himself to the Lord. God answered his prayer by telling the prophet Isaiah how to bring about healing. God also gave Isaiah 2 great promises for Hezekiah.

1. The king would recover and worship at the temple within 3 days.
 2. When the Assyrians return, God would defend and deliver the city of Jerusalem.
- To give assurance of the promises, God gave him a miraculous sign > the shadow on the steps of Ahaz (large sundial) went back 10 degrees. Hezekiah promised to walk humbly for the rest of his life. He dedicated himself to praising the Lord.

Truth: God disciplines us because He loves us and wants to prevent us from disobeying Him and losing His blessing. He seeks to bring out the very best in us, for our Father wants us to be conformed to the image of His Son.