

Recap

Nehemiah teaches us that scattered stones can become a wall

* As **mission** is not a what but a who, **justice** isn't a what but a who

Often justice is seen as **external** to us, something others do or don't do. This is not how the bible envisions it

Recap

So I continued, “What you are doing is not right. **Shouldn't you walk in the fear of our God** to avoid the reproach of our Gentile enemies? I and my brothers and my men are also lending the people money and grain. But let us stop charging interest! Give back to them immediately their fields, vineyards, olive groves and houses, and also the interest you are charging them—one percent of the money, grain, new wine and olive oil.” **vs 9-11**

Recap

Lessons From Chapter Five

There is no **hierarchy** within the kingdom

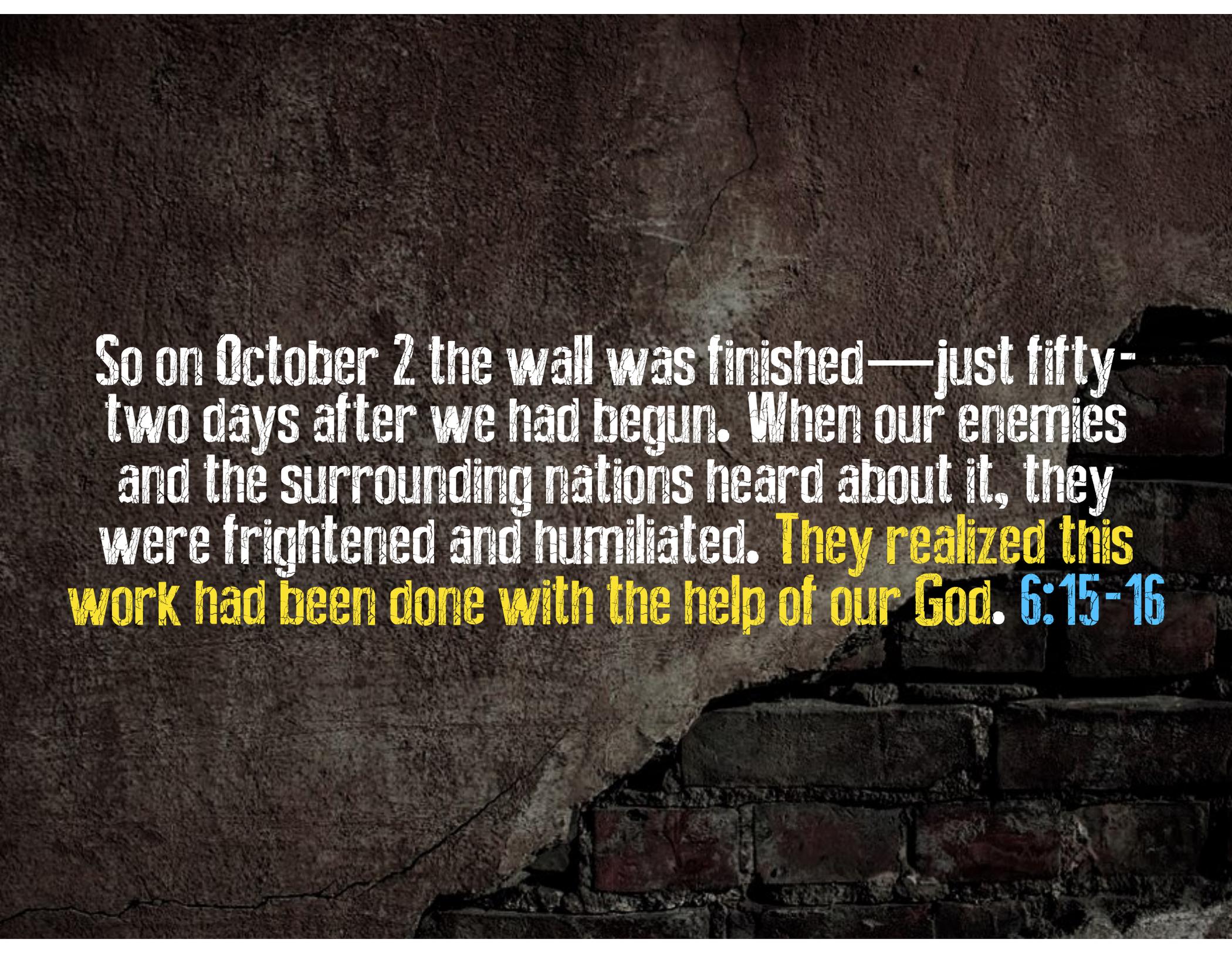
What we do with our **resources** matters to God

Justice is **transcendent**

How do you **return** to God?

Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians in **722 B.C.E.**, whereas Judah, though severely damaged, narrowly escaped the dreadful onslaught of the Assyrian war machine. But Judah's escape from imperial domination would be brief. Jerusalem eventually fell to the Babylonian Empire and was destroyed in **586 B.C.E.**

Nehemiah takes place between **445 B.C.E.** and **432 B.C.E.**

The background is a dark, textured surface, possibly a wall or a cave. On the right side, there is a section of a stone wall made of large, dark, rectangular blocks. The lighting is dramatic, with some areas being brighter than others, creating a sense of depth and texture.

So on October 2 the wall was finished—just fifty-two days after we had begun. When our enemies and the surrounding nations heard about it, they were frightened and humiliated. **They realized this work had been done with the help of our God. 6:15-16**

what's their purpose, the law

In October, when the Israelites had settled in their towns, all the people assembled with a unified purpose at the square just inside the Water Gate. They asked Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had given for Israel to obey. 7:73-8:1

So on October 8 Ezra the priest brought the Book of the Law before the assembly, which included the men and women and all the children old enough to understand. He faced the square just inside the Water Gate from early morning until noon and read aloud to everyone who could understand. All the people listened closely to the Book of the Law. 8:2-3

Ezra stood on the platform in full view of all the people. When they saw him open the book, they all rose to their feet. vs 5

Then Ezra praised the Lord, the great God, and all the people chanted, “**Amen! Amen!**” as they lifted their hands. Then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. **vs 6**

Amen has the same Hebrew root as emunah (**faith**) and is also connected with the word emet meaning “**truth.**” The idea expressed is of firm trust, acceptance, and reliability.

The Levites—Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, and Pelaiah—then instructed the people in the Law while everyone remained in their places. They read from the Book of the Law of God **and clearly explained the meaning** of what was being read, **helping the people understand each passage.** vs 7-8

Knowledge is the accumulation of **information**, wisdom is the ability to discern and **apply** it to your life

Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were interpreting for the people said to them, “Don’t **mourn or weep** on such a day as this! For today is a sacred day before the Lord your God.” **For the people had all been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. vs 9**

However you understand the law, it is first and foremost a **revelation** of who God is and what His **purpose** is for His people

And Nehemiah continued, “Go and celebrate with a feast of rich foods and sweet drinks, and share gifts of food with people who have nothing prepared. This is a sacred day before our Lord. Don’t be dejected and sad, for the joy of the Lord is your strength!” vs 10

And the Levites, too, quieted the people, telling them, “Hush! Don’t weep! For this is a sacred day.” So the people went away to eat and drink at a festive meal, to share gifts of food, and to celebrate with great joy because they had heard God’s words and understood them. vs 11-12

repentance is sacred to God

On October 9 the family leaders of all the people, together with the priests and Levites, met with Ezra the scribe to go over the Law in greater detail. As they studied the Law, they discovered that the Lord had commanded through Moses that **the Israelites should live in shelters during the festival to be held that month.** vs 13-14

And the Lord said to Moses, “Give the following instructions to the people of Israel. Begin celebrating the **Festival of Shelters** on the fifteenth day of the appointed month—five days after the Day of Atonement. This festival to the Lord will last for seven days. **Leviticus 23:33-34**

For seven days you must live outside in little shelters. All native-born Israelites must live in shelters. **This will remind each new generation** of Israelites that I made their ancestors live in shelters when I rescued them from the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God. **vs 42-43**

He had said that a proclamation should be made throughout their towns and in Jerusalem, telling the people to go to the hills to get branches from olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees. **They were to use these branches to make shelters in which they would live during the festival, as prescribed in the Law. vs 15**

So the people went out and cut branches and used them to build shelters on the roofs of their houses, in their courtyards, in the courtyards of God's Temple, or in the squares just inside the Water Gate and the Ephraim Gate. **So everyone who had returned from captivity lived in these shelters during the festival, and they were all filled with great joy!** The Israelites had not celebrated like this since the days of Joshua son of Nun. **vs 16-17**

God can **transform** suffering into a profound sacred event

Ezra read from the Book of the Law of God on each of the seven days of the festival. Then on the eighth day they held a **solemn assembly**, as was required by law. **vs 18**

The word **môw'êd** is also used for a solemn assembly, denoting a special, **appointed time set apart for liturgical purposes**. It occurs with the connotation of a solemn assembly on one of the high holy days

The precise Hebrew word for solemn assembly (**'ăsar**) indicates “a day of restraint” [from work]. The root of the word, however, **connotes the keeping of tradition**. The image associated with the word is that of keeping something restrained or held fast (like a child holds a favourite stuffed animal close to his heart)

There are not less than twelve revival movements in the Old Testament. While each of these revivals is very different from the others, there are at least **four factors** preceding each revival which they all hold in common; a tragic declension, a righteous judgment from God, the raising up of an immensely burdened leader or leaders, **a solemn assembly.** **Richard Owen Roberts**

up until this point of time they were simply surviving, this is the moment when they became God's people again

Nehemiah's purpose was to bring the people **back** to God. He accomplishes this by teaching the **law** and remembering the **rituals** of faith

Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God, **for your sins have brought you down.** Bring your confessions, and return to the Lord. Say to him, "Forgive all our sins and graciously receive us, so that we may offer you our praises. Assyria cannot save us, nor can our warhorses. Never again will we say to the idols we have made, 'You are our gods.' No, **in you alone do the orphans find mercy.**" **Hosea 14:1-3**

The Lord says, "Then I will heal you of your faithlessness; **my love will know no bounds,**" **4a**