

## Nehemiah Chapter 3

### (The gates of spiritual progression)

**Nehemiah 3:1 (KJV)** Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep gate; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel.

**Nehemiah 3:32 (KJV)** And between the going up of the corner unto the sheep gate repaired the goldsmiths and the merchants.

In between these two verses is a detailed description of the rebuilding of the walls around the city and tonight I want to try and show you how this account in Nehemiah relates to those who have professed Christ as their Lord and Savior.

**Several years ago, I taught a series on Wednesday nights here at NHBC on the Jerusalem Gates of Nehemiah 3 which took several weeks to present. For tonight, I have tried to condense the study to fit within our time and I pray that God's Word will minister the truths of this message to your hearts for out of the heart flow the issues of life.**

Nehemiah, Chapter 3 concerns itself with the rebuilding of the walls and specifically the ten gates that separated each section of the wall. I do know that the Bible also speaks of twelve gates but we want to concern ourselves with the gates mentioned here in Nehemiah 3. Another important fact which stands out in this passage is the names of the people that God has recorded as doing the work, although we won't have time to cover the significance of that tonight.

So, what truths can we take from a chapter such as this? Well, quite a few.

From my studies of this passage, it is my personal belief and understanding that each of the gates speak of different experiences in our Christian Walk and as such are a picture of the Christian's life from beginning to end.

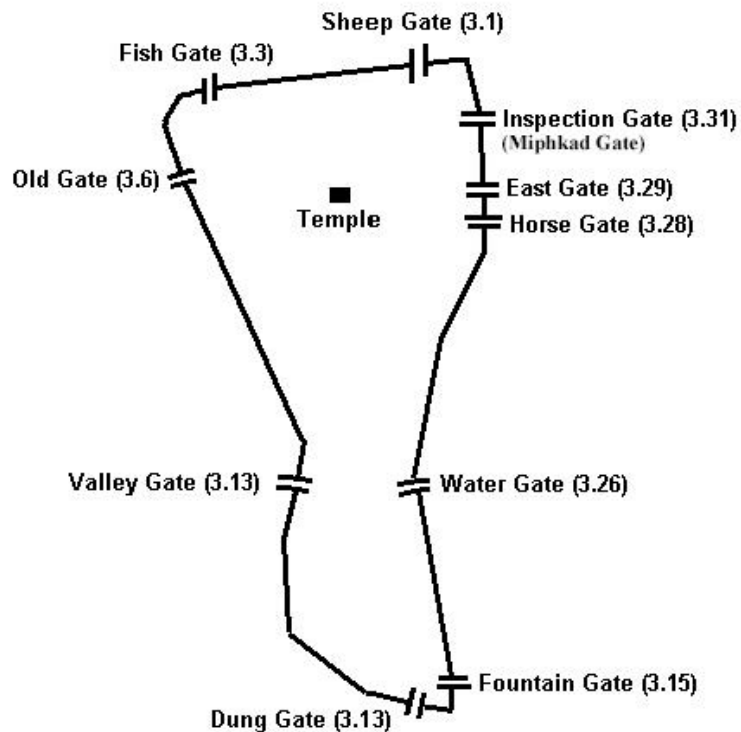
The order of the gates as listed here and the information given about each gate is very specific and I firmly believe it gives us insight into the journey that God takes each of His children on and should help us understand more about what we can expect in our Christian walk.

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## Note the order of the Gates in Nehemiah 3.

1. The Sheep Gate (verse 1)
2. The Fish Gate (verse 3)
3. The Old Gate (verse 6)
4. The Valley Gate (verse 13)
5. The Dung Gate (verse 14)
6. The Fountain Gate (verse 15)
7. The Water Gate (verse 26)
8. The Horse Gate (verse 28)
9. The East Gate (verse 29)
10. The Miphkad Gate (verse 31)

### Nehemiah's Jerusalem



## **The meaning of the ten gates of Jerusalem.**

There are 10 gates mentioned in this passage of Scripture and this number is of great significance. There is also significance in the numerical order of the listing of the gates. May I make note at this point that **the number 10 signifies completeness of order, marking the entire round of anything. It implies that nothing is wanting; that the number and order are perfect; that the whole cycle is complete.** With that information in mind let us look at the Gates of Jerusalem as recorded in Nehemiah 3 and make application to our lives today! Please make note that the gate name most likely is derived from the activity taking place there.

The Gates are doors to the city. The gates are located along the walls of the city and are the passage ways to enter the city from outside. If you study this passage closely you need to make note of the gates which mention locks and bars and the gates which do not mention having locks and bars. I believe it is of great significance that locks and bars are mentioned 2-6 but none are mentioned on gates 1, the Sheep Gate or on gates 7-10.

One of the other facts we need to note is that the Hebrew language is written from and read from right to left and I want you to keep this in mind as you view the pictorial diagram of the gates of Jerusalem in Nehemiah's day as we follow that same order in the diagram.

**Starting at the top of the diagram from right to left we find that the first gate mentioned is:**

### **1. The Sheep Gate (vs 1,32) –**

Note that the number 1 is a primary number and, in all languages, it denotes or symbolizes UNITY. It is only through Jesus we are brought into unity with all persons of the Godhead as well as with each other.

The very first gate mentioned is the sheep gate. It was called the sheep gate because this was the gate which the sheep and lambs used in the sacrifice were bought through. This speaks to the fact of the very first experience we must have— that is, a realization that Jesus was the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. Picture in your mind coming through this gate and seeing the lambs being offered for sale there to be sacrificed in the temple for your sins and then picture Jesus on the Cross as the LAMB sacrificed for you. **NOTE THAT IT IS AT THE VERY TOP RIGHT OF THE DIAGRAM OF THE GATES MENTIONED HERE IN NEHEMIAH 3. PLEASE NOTE THE ABSENCE OF ANY MENTION OF LOCKS AND BARS.**

The sheep gate then speaks to us of the cross and the sacrifice that was made for our sins. **It is the starting point of everything in our Christian life, but you will also notice if you read the entire chapter that the sheep gate is also mentioned at the very end in verse 32. That is because everything starts with Jesus (Genesis 1:1) and ends with Jesus' (Revelation 22). He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending as well as everything in between.**

It is my opinion that **the absence of any mention of locks and bars on this gate signifies the openness of salvation to all peoples**, and it also proclaims the truth of **John 14:6 (KJV)** Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

It also proclaims the truth of: **Acts 4:12 (KJV)** Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

**John 10:1-10 (KJV)** 10:1 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. 2 But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 **To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.** 4 And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. 5 And a

stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. 6 This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them. 7 Then said Jesus unto them again, **Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.** 8 All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. 9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, **he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.** 10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: **I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.**

**So the 1<sup>st</sup> Gate, the Sheep Gate can be linked to the book of Genesis, the beginnings.**

**2. The Fish Gate (vs 3) – the 2<sup>nd</sup> gate in our study.**

Again, we might note the numerical significance of the number of this gate. It is the first number which we can divide another and as such it speaks of division or difference...such as the division between the saved and the lost.

It was called the fish gate because the fisherman of Galilee would bring their catch in through this gate to be sold. For us, it speaks of evangelism as we have been called to be ‘fishers of men’. It is a natural progression in our Christian life after we are “born again” that we want to tell others about it.

Surveys have shown that believers who have been saved less than two years win the most people to the Lord. Their simple testimony of what Jesus has done in their lives qualifies them to be great ‘fishers of men.

Please note that this gate has **locks and bars, which can only be opened from inside the city, so it can only be opened by the porter of that gate (Jesus).** **NO ONE can be saved without Jesus calling them to salvation.**

**John 10:7-9 (KJV)** 10:7 Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. 8 All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. 9 **I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.**

**So the 2<sup>nd</sup> Gate, the Fish Gate can be linked to the book of Exodus, the release of the Israelite Nation from the bondage of Egypt.**

**3. The Old Gate (vs 6) – the 3<sup>rd</sup> gate in our study.**

As we look at this gate we need to keep in mind the significance of the number 3 in scripture. The number 3 signifies that which is solid, real, substantial, complete, and entire.

Therefore, the Old gate speaks to us of the old and established truths. A young Christian having experienced the sheep gate, then the fish gate, soon sees the need for experiencing the old gate. This means learning the truths of God's Word never change. They are eternal stand forever, from Genesis 1:1 through Revelation 22:21.

Jeremiah 6:16 states 'Thus says the Lord, Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is and walk in it; **And you will find rest for your souls.**

**Psalms 119:89 (KJV) -- For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.**

**1 Peter 1:25 (KJV) But the word of the Lord endureth for ever.** And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

This tells us that the Old Testament Scriptures are just as important to us as those in the New Testament and we ought to become well acquainted with all of them. **2 Timothy 3:16 (KJV)** All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

**So the 3<sup>rd</sup> Gate, the Old Gate, can be linked to Leviticus, the giving of the Law and the Word of God.**

#### **4. The Valley Gate (vs 13) – the 4<sup>th</sup> gate**

As we look at this gate it we need to be aware of the significance of the number 4. It is the number of creation and significant of man and his relation to the created world.

Four also speaks of division....

4 elements—earth, air, fire, and water

4 seasons --- spring, summer, autumn, and winter

4 regions of the earth – North, South, East, and West

4 divisions of the day --- morning, noon, evening, and night

4 divisions of mankind --- lands, tongues, families, nations

Could Numbers being the 4<sup>th</sup> book of the Bible also be of great significance?

If you examine the map of the city, notice that there is a long distance between the Old Gate and the Valley Gate.

I see this as the Lord allowing a ‘honeymoon’ type period, as He teaches new Christian’s great truths, while His presence is very strong in their life. This can go on for some time as indicated by the positioning of the old and valley gates. But sooner or later the valley gate must come and it does come into the life of every Christian.

**These valley experiences used by the Lord for our personal growth.**

These are never easy but the Christian needs to remember that in the natural nothing really grows on the mountain tops, but it certainly does down in the valleys.



This is also true in the spiritual realm. The trials and tribulations we go through in this life are never a welcome and easy experience but God will always use them to produce fruit in and through our lives.

The Valley Gate also warns us of the dangers of being involved in worldly activities. We are admonished by the Scriptures:

**John 17:14 (KJV)** I have given them thy word; and **the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.**

**1 Corinthians 2:12 (KJV)** Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

Every Christian, bar none, is going to go through this Valley Gate Experience. **Romans 3:23 (KJV)** For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

So, the 4<sup>th</sup> Gate, the Valley Gate, can be linked to the book of Numbers, rebellion against God and other sins of the nation.

**Because that is true, you should be able to see the significance and order to the next gate mentioned here in Nehemiah 3.**

## **5. The Dung (Refuse) Gate (vs 14) – the 5<sup>th</sup> gate of our study**

When we go out into the world (the Valley Gate) elements of the world (sins) begin to erode our walk with the LORD and cleansing is necessary to remove the taints of the world.

Note also there is a considerable distance between the Valley Gate and the Dung Gate. This, I believe, indicates, unfortunately, the valley experience can carry on for some time.

But the result of that experience is clearly seen in this gate – the dung gate.

This is the gate that they would take all the refuse and rubbish out of Jerusalem, down to the valley of Hinnom to be burned. This is what happens in our own life. Valley experiences are used by the Lord to clear away the rubbish **so that true faith, refined by the fire, can come forth and produce fruit.**

Clearing away the rubbish in our lives is never easy but the benefits of this experience can be seen in the next gate. You will notice also that at this point of your Christian life there is a dramatic ‘turning of the corner’ that takes place.

From the map handout you have, make note that up until this point we have been moving downward in the diagram. The experiences have been hard, but having come to this point there is a sharp turn in the road and we begin to move upward again. Now, make note of the shorter distance between the Dung Gate and the Fountain Gate.

### **Five is the number of Grace.**

Make note of the significance of the number 5 as we look at this Gate. Note these 5 great mysteries: 1. Father, 2. Son, 3. Spirit, 4. Creation, and 5. Redemption. Five therefore is the number of GRACE. It signifies man, in all his weakness and helplessness (4), plus ONE, (in the beginning was GOD (1), and **thus represents man plus the addition of DIVINE INTERVENTION and STRENGTH.**

**Could it also be of great significance that Deuteronomy just happens to be the 5<sup>th</sup> Book of the Bible which magnifies the Grace of God.**

**After our Valley experience, it is comforting to know that God, in His Wisdom has provided the way for us to deal with the sins that creep into our lives after our salvation and to remind us that we did not save ourselves.**

**Ephesians 2:8-10 (KJV) 2:8** For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: **9** Not of works, lest any man should boast. **10** For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

So, the 5<sup>th</sup> Gate, the Dung Gate, can be linked to the book of Deuteronomy which magnifies the Grace of God.

## **6. The Fountain Gate (vs 15) – Gate #6**

### **Quote: E. W. Bullinger, Number in Scripture**

“Six is either 4 + 2, i.e. man’s world (4) with man’s enmity to God (2) brought in: or it is 5 + 1, the grace of God made of none effect by man’s addition, perversion, or corruption of it; or it is 7-1, i.e. man’s coming short of spiritual perfection. In any case, therefore, it has to do with man; it is the number of imperfection; the human number; the number of MAN as destitute of God, without God, without Christ.”

### **Unquote:**

**Ephesians 5:18 (KJV)** And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

**This gate has locks and bars mentioned which I believe signifies that the filling of the Spirit can only be experienced by true believers, those who have entered through the sheep gate.**

You will notice from the picture that the fountain gate is located much closer to the previous gate, and also the fact there is some distance involved to the next Gate, the Water Gate.

Here, I believe we see after a valley type experience where rubbish in our lives is revealed (Dung Gate) revealing the need for cleansing which

is accomplished through Grace, and then an empowerment through the Holy Spirit which is represented by the Fountain Gate.

The Fountain Gate represents the fullness of the Holy Spirit in our lives. It is only after a thorough cleansing that the Fountains of Living Water really begin to flow in and through our lives and it doesn't take long!

This Gate speaks to us of the living waters of the Holy Spirit that cleanse our lives and empowers us for our Christian life. It also prepares us for receiving and understanding the deeper truths of the Word of God. **1 Corinthians 6:11 (KJV)** And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

## **7. The Water Gate (vs 26) – the 7<sup>th</sup> gate of our study.**

The next gate we arrive at is the water gate. Note that there is some distance between this gate and the Fountain Gate. Let me quote E.W. Bullinger on the significance of the number 7:

“We come now to the great number of *spiritual perfection*. A number which, therefore, occupies so large a place in the works, and especially in the Word of God as being inspired by the Holy Spirit.” (Number in Scripture: Its Supernatural Design and Spiritual Significance.)

The water gate then is a picture, I believe, of the word of God and its effect in and on our life.

Eph 5:26 states ‘... having washed her by the water of the word.’

There are no locks or bars mentioned concerning this gate, which I believe shows us the Power of the Word of God which is unlocked to those who truly believe.

It is no coincidence that this gate was located next to the fountain gate as the two often go together. The Holy Spirit is the one who makes the

word of God alive to us personally, allowing cleansing, encouragement and direction to take place in our life.

It is only after thorough cleansing and the filling of the Holy Spirit, that we are enabled to utilize the Sword of the Spirit against the onslaught of the enemy. This Gate represents man's empowerment by the Word of God and his coming to the fuller understanding of that Word.

**Zechariah 4:6 (KJV)** Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This *is* the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, **Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.**

**8. The Horse Gate (vs 28)** – the 8<sup>th</sup> gate is the gate of warfare.

It is not just coincidence that the Horse Gate, number 8 (7 + 1), is the next gate in the list of the gates. Seven is the number of “spiritual perfection and 1 is a primary number ..there is only one God..” Thus this gate reveals to us the truth of: **John 15:5 (KJV)** I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: **He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.**

Without the Holy Spirit in our lives who brings back to our memory the Word of God, we are powerless to fight the battles before us.

It is through the Holy Spirit that we begin to understand more fully the Word of God which enables us to ward off the attacks of the enemy and it also shows us the authority that has been given us to “storm” the gates of hell. **The gates of Hell cannot and will not prevail against us.**

The horse gate speaks to us of warfare as horses were used in battle and became a symbol of war. **There are no locks and bars mentioned with this gate and in my opinion shows us a prophetic look into the future not only concerning the battles we will experience in this life but also the last great and final battle of Armageddon.**

Revelation 19:11 ‘I saw Heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness does He judge and make war.’

Spiritual warfare, as we will see in this entire study on Nehemiah, is a requirement of every Christian because we are all in a battle whether we know it or not. We will be involved in this spiritual warfare until Jesus comes for His church and we will be involved again when He comes at His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming at the battle of Armageddon.

The last three gates, I believe, are not only prophetic of Christian experiences but also to the end times return of Jesus Christ. These three gates mention no locks and bars. You will notice that all three gates are very close together **as are the events which I believe they symbolize.**

This brings us now to the East Gate.

### **9. The East Gate (vs 29) – the 9<sup>th</sup> gate**

The East gate has been set-aside especially by God and is known by the Jews for one particular event: the coming of the Messiah!

Ezekiel 44:1-3 ‘... the gate that looked toward the East, and it was shut. The Lord said to me, ‘This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it, for the Lord God of Israel has entered by it.’

The East gate opens and looks toward the Mount of Olives and we know that when Jesus returns He will return to this mount. (Zech 14:4). He will then enter Jerusalem by the East gate. The East gate then speaks of the return of Jesus Christ.

The experiences we have in our Christian life shows us of our need to live with this hope and to long for His return. A specific crown is even given to those who do this (2 Tim 4:8).

Prophetically this gate is very close to the horse gate because the day of God's wrath ends with the coming of the Lord Jesus as described in Revelation 19.

The next and final gate in this chapter 3 from Nehemiah is the Inspection Gate or the Miphkad Gate.

### **10. The Inspection Gate (Miphkad) (vs 31) –**

The final gate is the inspection gate. This gate speaks to us, in my opinion, of the bema seat of Christ where our lives are inspected and rewarded appropriately. In our Christian experiences, we should be living our lives with this in mind.

We are called to live our lives with eternity in view, caring more for the things of eternity than the temporal things around us.

Prophetically I believe this gate also speaks of the judgement of the nations that takes place when Jesus returns. I believe this is recorded as the sheep and the goats' judgement as written in Mathew 25:31-46.

Note now **Nehemiah 3:31-32 (KJV) 3:31** After him repaired Malchiah the goldsmith's son unto the place of the Nethinims, and of the merchants, over against the gate Miphkad, and to the going up of the corner. **32** And **between the going up of the corner unto the sheep gate repaired the goldsmiths and the merchants.** Note the full circle. We began with the Sheep Gate and now we end the chapter with the Sheep Gate.

In conclusion, we might look back through Nehemiah 3 and gather some thoughtful insights. These are truths which will help us live our lives out here on earth while we patiently wait for our Lord's return and the fulfilment of His Word.

**The lives and attitudes of the workers.**

There are a few more important points that can come out of a chapter like this, which should be stated. So far, we have looked at the gates and their spiritual meaning, but there are other points from the lives of the workers that we can learn from.

## 1. Team Effort

Reading through the chapter, one of the first things that we see is that the whole process was a team effort. If the walls and gates were going to be rebuilt, then everyone would have to play their part. Now this is a picture of how the church is meant to operate. Note, the pastor is not meant to be a one-man band that does everything while the others rest and sit in their padded pews. We all have different gifting's but it is for the edification of all.

Eph 4:11-13 'And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.'

You will notice that the gifting's that people have are for the equipping of the saints in their works of service. This is what we learn from Nehemiah. Some may be gifted in specific areas and they did work in those areas **but all helped in whatever way they could.**

## 2. Everyone had something to offer

'And next to him Hananiah, one of the perfumers, made repairs, and they restored Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall.'

Maybe you are unsure of your gifting and what God is calling you to do with your life. Maybe you don't think you have anything to offer. If that is you then remember Hananiah! You see, he was a perfumer by trade and yet he was still willing to get in there, get his hands dirty and help



do his part by repairing part of the wall. Now if a perfumer can build a wall then you also can help in some way in the building of the church!

### **3. Rebuilding often began at home**

Vs 10,23,30 ‘Next to them Jedaiah the son of Harumaph made repairs opposite his house... After them Benjamin and Hasshub carried out repairs in front of their house... After him Hananiah the son of Shelemiah, and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired another section. After him Meshullam the son of Berechiah carried out repairs in front of his own quarters.’

One of the things which that the chapter reveals is that often the workers began rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem outside their own home first. They did think of others and knew that collectively they would contribute to the wall as a whole; yet individually they still wanted to make sure their own home had a solid wall of protection surrounding it. **The principle for us is to make sure we have taken care of our lives at home first before we are used to help others.** We must make sure that we are not different people inside and outside of the church, nor should we be any different when we are at home alone when no-one can see us. One of the things that Jesus hated the most was the play-acting of the Pharisees. The Pharisees liked to be seen as ‘spiritual’ among the people, while in reality, they were white washed tombs according to Jesus.

Let us all mimic Nehemiah’s men and make sure that our home life is taken care of first before any ministering or service to others is under taken.

### **4. The work was voluntary**

No one got paid or were even coerced into rebuilding the walls. They all volunteered knowing that the glory of God’s name was at stake. And what’s more they didn’t expect to be rewarded for their work! I heard Charles Swindol speak on the radio recently and he mentioned that ‘one

of the biggest areas of discouragement comes when Christians think that they get their rewards in this life.’ I would have to agree with that. We should check our motives in the work that we do to ensure we are not doing it to receive temporal rewards here and now. We should all live with eternity in view. This brings me to the last but very encouraging point.

## 5. God is a recorder of names

What else can we get when we read a chapter such as this? **Well, we can be encouraged that God takes the time to record names.** He’s a recorder! **The Bible doesn’t just say ‘and lots of people made repairs to the wall.’ No, it specifically names each person that made repairs and that has been recorded for all of eternity!**

I love the verse in Malachi that says

‘Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard *it*, **and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name.** “And they will be Mine,” says the LORD of hosts, “on the day that I prepare *My* own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.” Mal 3:16,17

**Our lives and actions are recorded by the Lord for our rewards in the life to come.**

Nothing is done for the Lord in vain on this earth, even if no one else sees it. In closing I encourage you to not lose heart in your work for the Lord knowing that ‘God is just and will not forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.’