



NEHEMIAH

pray plan build

Daily Worship Booklet

Week 9

God tells us that Ezra read from the book of the Law, day after day and the people of God were filled with joy!

Friday – Nehemiah 7:70-73 – What will you do with what God gives you?

In verse 70, we read that the heads of the families and the governor are commended for their liberal contributions to the work. We are talking about a lot of money.

Verse 73 seems like an innocuous summary of what has already been stated, but it is more than that. It says that while there was a phenomenal contribution to rebuilding the walls and repairing the gates, the focus is on what it will lead to regarding the right worship of God. Moreover, as we have seen, those named in this verse are central to realizing that. Formerly, the priests and Levites had been assigned special towns to live in by Moses (See Numbers 35:1-8 and Joshua 21); now, Nehemiah had chosen to move them into Jerusalem because of the demands and the situation.

It was now the seventh month, and again, that is significant because it was in this month that Israel celebrated the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Booths (Leviticus 23:23-44). There is no better time for Nehemiah to call the people together in an assembly before God and His Word, as we shall see next week as we enter chapter eight.

Leaders and people make a community, but what matters is what that community does concerning God. To use a quip, I sometimes use, ‘a blind man on a galloping horse could see’ that there is a direct correlation between how an individual, a household, a village, a town, a city, a province, or a nation worships God and the choices they make in life, which impacts their own and other’s lives. When people, you and I, are in the right relationship with God, when we fear God and worship Him in Spirit and truth, then that will be reflected in the choices and decisions we make for good or ill. The “tree is known by its fruit” (Matthew 12:33), and what impacts the tree is the soil it is in and the water it receives. “but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law, he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.” (Psalm 1:2,3).

God works through people, and people who love God and delight in what He tells them to do will be blessed by Him. Moreover, God does not hold back when he blesses His adopted children.

Q1. Why is verse 73 important?

Q2. What is the significance of the seventh month?

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**The book of Nehemiah focuses on the work involved in labouring to see
Christ build his church.**

Thursday – Nehemiah 7:5-69 – The ten groups listed!

There are ten groups listed:

1. Verse 7 -The leaders who returned with Zerubbabel, the governor. These twelve men, probably elders of the people who helped Zerubbabel establish the nation, may have represented the twelve tribes of the pre-divided Israel, even though the ten northern tribes had been assimilated by the Assyrians when the northern kingdom of 'Israel' was captured in 722 BC. (Note that the Nehemiah listed here is not the author of this book since the men listed lived nearly a hundred years from the events recorded here.) **2.** Verses 8-25 – The families and clans are named. **3.** Verses 27-38 – The list of people according to their village. One commentator writes, "It is worth noting that these returned exiles had maintained their identification with their native towns and villages." **4.** Verses 39-42 – The priests. **5.** Verse 43 – The Levites. **6.** Verse 44 – The temple singers. The book contains at least eighteen references to the 'singers,' who play an essential role in the community's revitalized worship. Many things marked the exile of God's people in Babylon, including a lack of singing praise to God (See Psalm 137). Now, Temple worship would be truly revived. **7.** Verse 45 – The gatekeepers. We have considered their role on Tuesday, so there is no need to repeat it here. **8.** Verses 46-60 – Temple servants who had various tasks within the temple. **9.** Verses 61-65 – This list of people gives the names of those who could not prove their lineage. It included some priests, which was a serious matter for them since they depended on their lineage for access to temple ministry and the living provided for them through it. No proof of genealogy meant no temple service, and no temple service meant no food. **10.** Verse 67 – We have a list of over 7,000 various servants, which shows that more than a sixth of the population was in service, given that the total number of people in the assembly was 42,360 (verse 66).

(As well as the lists of people, we also have a record of the number of animals in verses 68,69, which shows how important agriculture was to the economy.)

All these people show what? The diversity of people and gifts God uses in His Church to glorify Him.

Again, we are faced with a discrepancy in the numbers – add up all the names listed, and the numbers cited, and it comes to 37,400, whereas Nehemiah says the total is 42,360. So? Well, God has not told us everything, but He has told us what we need to know, and we are told to live not by sight but by faith and "every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4).

Q1. How many lists are there?

Q2. What about the discrepancy in the numbers?

Monday – Nehemiah 7:1-4 – Phase one is done. Now on to the next phase!

The walls had been completed in 52 days, and the gates were restored, but Nehemiah's work was not finished. Just as a house is more than bricks and mortar, it is the family who lives in it, so a city is more than the wall that protects it from attack; it is the community that dwells within it. Moreover, what is true of a house and a city is true of a church; it is more than its name, creed, testimony or constitution; it is the people who own that creed, the testimony or the constitution that make the church the community it is. Having addressed the issue of the city walls, Nehemiah's task now is to lead the reconstitution of the community that will dwell in the city.

The first step in reconstituting anything is choosing the right leadership. Get that wrong, and you are simply wasting your time, energy, and money. God had chosen Nehemiah to lead the work of physically rebuilding the city, and now he was going to do the same for the community's spiritual life. In turn, Nehemiah chooses carefully when it comes to the men with whom he will share the burden. One could say he is engaging in nepotism when he appoints his brother Hanani as one of his assistants. It is usually not wise to appoint family members to key roles, but it is not always wrong. In this case, Hanani had shown himself as a God-fearing, faithful character. We got a glimpse of something in chapter one, as he, along with others, had travelled from Jerusalem to Susa to inform Nehemiah of the start of the walls and, more importantly, the terrible plight of the remnants who had survived the exile. A journey and a conversation which clearly showed where his heart was in matters of life and the needs of others. So, Nehemiah looks past any snide comments coming his way for this appointment and proceeds with it regardless. It is not always the popular guys or the men who have been around the longest who are the best for a job; the best person for the job is the one who has demonstrated where their heart lies in relation to the matters that concern God the most. Nehemiah's brother had shown that he feared God, really feared God, regardless of what others may have thought or even ventured to say to his face. Such men are worth their weight in gold in any situation, especially in the Bride.

The other man Nehemiah appointed was Hananiah, and we are told he was in charge of the 'castle' or palace. It was a building in the temple area strategically located to guard the city's north wall, which was especially vulnerable to attack. So, he must have shown himself competent in his management of the affairs surrounding the building of the wall in that area. Is he the same Hananiah referred to in Chapter 3, verse 8? Probably.

So, Nehemiah chooses carefully and wisely who he will work with when it comes to the next significant reconstitution step.

Q1. Is Nehemiah's work finished? What is next on 'his plate?'

Q2. Who does Nehemiah choose to help him? Why these men?

Tuesday – Nehemiah 7:1-4 – Gatekeepers are essential!

I am jumping back a bit today, back to verse one (as well as considering verses 3 and 4), where Nehemiah says that having built the walls and set up the doors, he appointed the gatekeepers, singers, and Levites. These are significant roles.

The gatekeepers – a gatekeeper was not simply a man who opened and closed the gates into the city, although he did do that, as we shall see. It was King David who had entrusted the gatekeepers with the task of guarding the gates of the Lord’s House and, with it, the responsibility for the treasuries and rooms, as well as other tasks (See 1 Chronicles 9:17-34). Through Hanani and Hananiah, these men are given specific instructions by Nehemiah as to when the gates are to be kept closed and when they are to be opened. Why do you think the gates were not to be opened until the sun was hot? Probably so that the people, and as Nehemiah tells us, there were not many of them, would not be caught off guard if an attack were to be launched. Hanani and Hananiah were also to appoint guards in two locations: some at specific guard houses and others in front of their homes.

The point is simple—we will not expose ourselves to the possibility of losing the work we have done. We are going to guard it from any and every potential threat. The Elders in the church are responsible for acting as guards to protect her from any potential threat, whether from those who would seek to attack her from the outside or seemingly well-intentioned folk from the inside (see Acts 20:28-31). The church is where she is today in her nation because godly men failed to either perceive the threats that existed or did perceive them. What is the cause of this? Men are frequently caught up in the choice, as they see it, of speaking directly into a situation or staying silent to protect their image as kind men with whom everyone can agree. So, the seedlings of real and present danger are allowed to take root.

As we shall see, *the singers and the Levites* are integral to the church's worship life, and by appointing them early in the process of reconstituting the community, Nehemiah is sending a strong signal as to the importance of the worship of God in this process. Worship is a truly phenomenal reality that is often misunderstood and seriously underestimated in the church. It has largely descended into being something “I go to, to get something from” when the reality is that it is a wonderful privilege to give praise and glory to Almighty God.

Q1. What was significant about the appointment of the gatekeepers?

Q2. Who are the gatekeepers of the church today?

Wednesday – Nehemiah 7:5-69 – The genealogy!

Nehemiah, as was his life practice, did what he believed the Lord was leading him to do. On this occasion, to enroll or take a census of the nobles, officials, and people by genealogy. It is not the first time it has been done, for there are genealogies in Genesis 5:1-31, Genesis 11:20-26, Genesis 25:20-26, Exodus 6:16-25, 1 Chronicles 1:1-9:44, Ezra 2, Ezra 10:18-24 and, of course, the two genealogies of the Lord in Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23-28.

As he sets out to do so, he tells us that he “found the book of the genealogy of those who came up at first.” This is the genealogy that Ezra had taken (Ezra 2:1-64) of those who had returned to the region and Jerusalem from exile in Babylon under the leadership of Zerubbabel and the others named in verse 7. Now, when you compare the Ezra 2 genealogy with the one Nehemiah presents here, there are issues in the sense that not all names are identical. For example, Ezra 2:2 states that there were eleven leaders, while Nehemiah 7:7 gives the names of twelve men, adding the name Nahamani. Another example, ‘Nehum’ also found in Nehemiah 7:7, is probably Rehum in Ezra 2:2. This is something that liberal scholars and those who follow their lies will frequently point to and say, “If you want proof that the bible has errors in it, here is your proof in black and white.” There is no denying that there are discrepancies. So, how do we answer that? One writer suggests that “the list in Ezra’s book was prepared in Babylon of those who expected to return, while the one given by Nehemiah was made in Jerusalem itself of those who actually did return.” I do not know about that, but my preferred response is, what else would you expect when people write down a list of names? God used men to write down His breathed-out Word; those men took great care not to make mistakes when transcribing it from one generation to another. Nevertheless, I don’t care how much care you take; you will always find human error when doing something like this. It is just inevitable. It does not mean that God’s Word is not true. It means that God’s true Word was written down by godly men who made mistakes when copying or making lists of names. In reality, it proves the authenticity of the Scriptures.

However, why is there a need for a census at all? Well, it is not just about these people living here and now in Jerusalem. This historical redemptive account will find its culmination in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. So, in the taking of this census, there is a recording of the line that would eventually lead to the Messiah King, the One whom the prophets of God had prophesied about throughout time. You see, it is all about the Lord Jesus Christ, and that will always be the case from now throughout eternity.

Q1. Does the Bible have mistakes in it? Can it be trusted?

Q2. Why were censuses taken in the Bible?