

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPTEMBER 25TH - 26TH, 2021 // BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

## ESTABLISHING RESIDENCE (NEHEMIAH 11:1-36)

Even though the "leaders of the people" lived in Jerusalem (as it was the capital of the province), the city needed an influx of new citizens.

- Jerusalem was the holy city where Yahweh had set His name (2 Chron. 6:6), but it wasn't the easiest place to live.
- Living there jeopardized security and diminished prosperity in terms of real estate- so how do you convince people to live in a place like this?

### VERSES 1 TELL US,

"...the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to live in Jerusalem the holy city, while nine out of ten remained in the other towns."

- They basically drew straws, and those who drew the short straw had to live in the city.
- But there also seems to be a group who "willingly offered to live in Jerusalem" (vs. 2).
- These people were "commended" or "blessed".

The move to Jerusalem wasn't advantageous to them personally, but they willingly gave themselves over to God's program.

- The people who helped populate the city of Jerusalem were serving God, their nation, and future generations by their step of faith.
- The most Christ-like we will ever be is when we choose to do what no one else is willing to do to bring God glory and serve others.

From missionaries that serve in difficult and dangerous nations, to volunteers that work in nursery and kid's ministry, to healthcare workers that give themselves to physically and emotionally demanding careers - there are many Christians who faithfully serve God doing things most of us aren't willing to do.

- What matters more in your life - God's glory or your comfort?

Verses 3-24 give a roster of the leaders who lived in the city of Jerusalem, and verses 25-36 tell us of the Jewish people who settled in the villages and towns through Judea.

- And as unimpressive and dangerous of a place as it was, there were some who willingly chose to live in Jerusalem as a way of putting God's glory over their own individual desires.
- Are you and I willing to live our lives on mission? Or are we simply chasing the easy life?

## PRIESTS & LEVITES (NEHEMIAH 12:1-26)

Next, there are several lists from various time periods that are recorded to validate the religious authority of the priesthood in Jerusalem.

- Verses 1-11 record the priests and Levites who served in the days of Zerubbabel, the high priest.
- Verses 12-21 record the priests who served in the days of Joiakim.
- Verses 22-26 record the Levites during the reign of Darius the Persian.

### "WHY IS THIS IN MY BIBLE???"

Legitimacy was important in establishing this community of God's people during such unstable, uncertain times after the exile.

- These lists document the genuineness of the Jewish faith community and its religious authority.
- During turbulent cultural times, the ministry of God in the house of worship must be pure.

God gave the Jews directions about who (the Levites and priests), what, where, and how worship should happen in the house of God.

- Cultural influences of pagan nations were sometimes a threat to the purity of worship in the house of God.
- As N.T. believers, God has given us instructions for how worship should be done in His Church and in our lives.
- We live in extremely turbulent, uncertain, and confusing times.
- Culturally, we have decided that truth is completely subjective, and emotions/feelings take precedence over facts.
- Confusion abounds over things like human sexuality, the sanctity of life, the exclusive claims of Jesus, and the right way to deal with our ideological opponents from the "other" tribe.

During these turbulent cultural times, the ministry to God in His house of worship must be pure.

- We gather together in the house of God not to be entertained, catered to as consumers, debate ideological opinions on secondary cultural issues, or load up our guns in order to blast our unbelieving neighbors.
- We gather to worship the LORD, read His Word, and seek Him through prayer.

During these turbulent cultural times, our testimonies and the witness of our lives as followers of God must be pure also.

- Legitimacy and authenticity is important if we're going to claim the name, "Christian".
- Are we marked and identified by lives that reflect how the Scriptures call us to live?
- When people come looking for God, will they find Him in our lives and in our church?

## DEDICATION OF THE WALL (NEHEMIAH 12:27-43)

The repopulation of Jerusalem, along with the establishment of the priests and Levite's legitimacy lead us to this point of dedication of Jerusalem's walls.

- The walls were just walls, but what the rebuilt city of Jerusalem symbolized was Israel's purpose and distinction.
- Levites and singers from surrounding areas were brought in for this ceremony (vs. 27-29).

Before the service began, the priests and Levites, "purified themselves" (vs. 30)- we can't effectively lead people in worship of God unless we ourselves walk in purity before the Lord.

- Then they, "purified the people" - they brought cleansing to the people the way God had commanded, knowing that only a purified people could really worship and praise God.
- Without purity, we can't worship God in spirit and in truth, like Jesus commanded us (John 4:24).

## THE PROCESSION (VS. 31-39)

In total, in this passage singing is mentioned 8 times, thanksgiving 6 times, rejoicing 7 times, and musical instruments 3 times.

- Two huge choirs of worshippers processed through the city to the temple, essentially walking through the work that had been done and praising God for all of it.
- The enemy had said the walls would be so weak a fox would knock them down (4:3), and now the people are marching on top of them!

## THE DEDICATION (VS. 40-43)

Then the two choirs that gave thanks took their places in the house of God.

- They then offered great sacrifices and rejoiced so loudly that "the joy of Jerusalem was heard far away" (vs. 43).
- The walls were the gift, but the people ended up in the temple - signifying that the Gift Giver is **always** to be the focus.

Some of us feel very silly and don't seem to connect with the "singing" part of church.

- The word "sing" appears in the scriptures over 400 times and at least 50 of those are commands to sing.
- N.T. believers are commanded to sing with, "thankfulness from our hearts" to God (Col. 3:16).
- The Gift Giver has invited you to reflect on His faithfulness through song - will you humble yourself to make Him your focus, not yourself?

## THE WORK CONTINUES (NEHEMIAH 12:44-47)

This was a day of worshipping the Lord through giving - people brought in their offerings, first-fruits, and tithes to the storehouse of the Levites (vs. 44).

- This was also a day of purity- the singers and the gatekeepers kept the service of purification before God (vs. 45).
  - This was a day of separation unto God - things were set apart for the Levites (vs. 46-47).
- None of these things (giving, purification, & consecration) were meant to be one-time events.
- These things were to be ongoing concerns of the people of God as they lived lives of worship unto the Lord each and every day ("gave the daily portions", vs. 47).
  - We can easily confuse milestones in our journey with God as final destinations.

Salvation and baptism are an important milestones - but those are the beginning of our journey of discipleship, not the destination!

- Until Jesus returns or we go to be with Him in glory, there is always work to be done in us, through us, and around us.
- For the people of God in Jerusalem, the journey was just beginning- being faithful to God in their every day lives was the mission.

Sometimes living for Jesus seems a lot harder than dying for Jesus.

- After God does His work of revival in us, making sure our lives are faithful to Him in the big and the little things is a lot easier said than done.
- Our ongoing concern should be to focus more on what it means to live daily lives of worship before the Lord, not simply looking for ways to express worship to Him through events.

## CHOOSING TO LIVE IN GOD'S PROGRAM (CH.11)

The most Christ-like we will ever be is when we choose to do what no one else is willing to do to bring God glory and serve others.

- When comfort, convenience, and safety become our gods, we become selfish, wimpy, and ineffective for the Kingdom.
- When's the last time you took a risk to bring God glory and serve someone else?

## AUTHENTICITY AS THE PEOPLE OF GOD (12:1-26)

During these turbulent cultural times, our testimonies and the witness of our lives as followers of God must be pure.

- When people who don't know God come looking for Him in your life and in our church, what will they find? What marks us?
- Are we committed to truth, grace, love, and the Gospel above EVERYTHING else?

## DEDICATION & FAITHFULNESS (12:27-47)

It's right for us to stop being so self-centered and self-conscious and celebrate and reflect on what God has done through singing and rejoicing.

- Making sure our lives are faithful in the little things every day is just as important as the big moments of worship and surrender.
- The health of any relationship is defined by the love, affection, connection and faithfulness communicated every day.
- **Prov. 23:26**