

Repopulating the City # 28

Nehemiah 11: 1-36

In our text this evening we find that the month long pause in the reconstruction efforts have concluded. This was not a waste of time for the people, nor was it a hindrance to the work of Nehemiah in Jerusalem. Clearly this was a beneficial time in the lives of the people. It allowed them to refocus on their commitment to the Lord and experience a time of spiritual renewal. If they were to be successful in their endeavors in Jerusalem, they would need a closeness with God.

As the month long festivities conclude, Nehemiah once again focuses on the task of restoring Jerusalem. They had successfully completed the reconstruction of the walls and now they needed to focus upon repopulating the city. This was a concern for Nehemiah and the leadership of Jerusalem. [Neh. 7:4 – Now the city was large and great: but the people were few therein, and the houses were not builded.](#)

As we look at this passage, we might wonder what the significance of repopulating the city would be. Why was it necessary? Why was Nehemiah so concerned with getting people to dwell within the city? There are a couple of likely reasons. First of all, the security and welfare of the city depended in large part on its residents. More people would ensure greater security for the city. There would be more to defend against attack, more to keep watch over the city, and more to serve as a deterrent to any who might desire to overtake the city.

That was certainly an important aspect of the repopulation, but I believe Nehemiah desired Jerusalem to be filled with people in order to honor the Lord. This was the holy city; the Temple was there, and he was concerned with Jerusalem becoming a city that worshipped and honored the Lord again. He sought to restore the city to some resemblance of her former glory.

The text points out several details concerning the continued work in Jerusalem. I want to consider those [details](#) as we think on: [Repopulating the City](#).

I. The Sacred City (1-19) – Here Nehemiah records the repopulation of Jerusalem itself. This was considered the [holy city](#), [V.1](#), and all who dwelt in Judah had a fondness for Jerusalem due to its spiritual significance. Notice what the text reveals about the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

A. The Rulers of the City (1a) – [And the rulers of the people dwelt at Jerusalem](#). Jerusalem was not only the holy city; it was also the capitol city. The rulers of the people were already dwelling in Jerusalem. They wanted to position themselves in the best place possible, and Jerusalem was the natural choice. If they were to lead and govern according to the will of God, they would be better equipped to do so residing in Jerusalem.

- We need that same commitment from our leadership today. America doesn't have a "spiritual city" where the nation gathers for worship, but I fear that many of our leaders are unconcerned with the ways of God and have no desire to lead in a biblical way. We are obligated to pray for them, and we need to seek the Lord to raise up some godly leaders in our day!

B. The Reluctant of the City (1b) – [the rest of the people also cast lots, to bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem the holy city, and nine parts to dwell in other cities.](#) Here we discover an interesting scenario concerning the population of Jerusalem. Apparently Nehemiah had sought those who would commit to living within the city, and there weren't enough to meet the demands. He devised a lottery or drawing among the people to see who would dwell in Jerusalem. Out of every ten, one was chosen to dwell there. (We can discern their reluctance by the blessing that was offered to those who volunteered in [V.2.](#))

- As we consider all that had been accomplished at Jerusalem and the recent spiritual renewal they had experienced, it seems unthinkable that Nehemiah would have had trouble finding willing volunteers to dwell within the city. Apparently the people lacked genuine commitment to the task at hand. Some may not have wanted to dwell in the holy city, near the Temple, possibly feeling they would be closely watched and scrutinized in their walk with God.
- We find the same problem in our day as well. One of the greatest hindrances to the church is a lack of commitment. Many churches have folks who attend regularly on Sunday morning, but they are unwilling to make a real commitment to the work of God. We need those who will commit to the Lord.

C. The Reverent of the City (2) – [And the people blessed all the men, that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem.](#) Many were reluctant to dwell in Jerusalem, but not all. There were those who willingly offered to live within the city and support the necessary work there. They were recognized for their willingness and the people blessed them for it. I am sure that God also rewarded their faithfulness to Him and the great work in Jerusalem.

- This is where we ought to make a distinction in our day. Very few will even recognize your commitment to the Lord, but that should not hinder our dedication to Him. We are not here to serve men or receive their praise. Your service unto the Lord will likely go unnoticed by the world, but I can assure you that God will notice and He will honor your faithfulness. [Luke 9:23 – And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.](#) We must be willing to follow the Lord at all costs, whether anyone else chooses too or not.

D. The Registry of the City (4-19) – In these verses Nehemiah records those who dwelt within Jerusalem. He lists five individual groups. Notice:

1. The Judeans (4-6) – These were all descendants of Judah, the sons of Perez, [V.6](#). That may seem an insignificant detail, but Perez is listed in the lineage of Christ our Lord, [Matthew 1:3](#). The sovereignty of God was at work, preserving the lineage for the coming Messiah.

- The sons of Perez were recognized as [valiant men, V.6](#), literally men of “*courage, strength, and valor.*” These could be counted on to stand strong in the face of adversity. Surely we need those who will stand for truth in our day as well.
- Another interesting fact concerning the Judeans was their standing with the king. [Neh.11:24 – And Pethahiah the son of Meshezabeel, of the children of Zerah the son of Judah, was at the king's hand in all matters concerning the people.](#) One of their own stood at the hand of the king, serving as their representative. Aren't you glad that we have an Intercessor that stands before God on our behalf?

2. The Benjamites (7-9) – Nehemiah records those who were descendent from Benjamin. We don't have a lot of information on this group, other than the fact that they stood in places of authority, [V.9](#). Joel was listed as the overseer and Judah was listed as second over the city.

- We need people of character and commitment to serve in places of leadership and authority today. Many seek power, but are unwilling to serve others. The church needs servant leaders, those who are willing to serve the Lord and others as they lead.

3. The Priests (10-14) – We also find reference to those who served as priests within Jerusalem. They are recorded as those who did the work at the house of God. Seraiah, one of the priests, was the ruler of the house of God, [V.11](#). He would have supervised the other priests in their day to day activities. Many of the priests were also recognized as mighty men of valor, [V.14](#).

- We have already discussed leadership, but we must recognize its importance at the house of God as well. The church will never rise above the leadership. Church leaders need to possess the attributes that the priests did. We need those who are willing to engage in the work of the Lord, lead the people without compromise, and stand for the truth of God's Word.

4. The Levites (15-18) – Nehemiah lists the Levites that dwelt in Jerusalem. As we've discovered in past studies, the Levites served an essential role among the people. All priests were Levites, and although all Levites were not priests, their service was essential nonetheless.

- The Levites served in supportive roles for the priests. [Shabbethai and Jozabad were entrusted with the oversight of the outward business of the house of God, V.16](#). The priests were responsible for the daily ministrations of the Temple, but much of the other work was given to the Levites. They served in other capacities so the priests could concentrate on their work within the Temple.
- The Levites were also recognized for the offering of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord, [V.17](#). Nehemiah and the others sensed the need for praise and thanksgiving, and the Levites were honored with this duty.
- Also we find that some of the Levites were appointed of the king to sing each day, [V.23](#). These were responsible for singing the praises of God. This must've brought joy to the hearts of the people as they heard praises sang unto the Lord each day.
- This serves as a reminder that we all can contribute to the work of the Lord. We all don't share the same position, but we all have something to offer that benefits the church and honors the Lord. I pray that we will find our place and serve the Lord with gladness!

5. The Porters (19) – Again Nehemiah makes reference to the Porters, those who kept the gates. We have discussed them at length in previous studies, but we need to be reminded of their significance. This was not a particularly honorable job, but it was of great importance. They likely received little recognition, but they served the Lord in the position they had received.

- Many today need to learn the humility of the Porters. Most want to start out at the top, unwilling to do certain tasks. I am convinced that God will honor faithfulness in whatever capacity we serve Him, but He will likely not promote those who are unwilling to serve at His leisure.

I. The Sacred City (1-19)

II. The Satellite Cities (20-36) – These verses deal with the cities surrounding Jerusalem. All of the people could not dwell within Jerusalem and many of them dwelt in the smaller cities, towns, and villages throughout Judah. Notice Nehemiah mentions:

A. The Inheritance (20) – [And the residue of Israel, of the priests, and the Levites, were in all the cities of Judah, every one in his inheritance](#). Many of them returned to the city of their ancestry. The

Babylonians had carried all of Judah away captive, and when they returned, many of them desired to dwell in the city of their fathers.

- There is something to be said about our inheritance, our lineage in the Lord. I am thankful for my heritage. I am thankful for the example that I have been given. I appreciate my raising and each one who helped me in the faith. My life has been touched by many people and I want to leave a heritage for the coming generation!

B. The Inhabitants (3, 20) – V.3 – Now these are the chief of the province that dwelt in Jerusalem: but in the cities of Judah dwelt every one in his possession in their cities, to wit, Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon's servants. Nehemiah records those who dwelt within the outlying cities as well: the priests, Levites, Nethinims (temple slaves), and Solomon's servants. These served in areas outside Jerusalem, but even there the work of God needed to carry on. They didn't receive the recognition many others received, but they served the Lord faithfully in the place where they dwelt.

- As I considered this I was reminded of the vastness of God's work. There are some large churches that do a great work for the Lord, but there are a lot of small churches throughout the world with little recognition that are doing a great work as well. They may not be reaching the masses of humanity, but they are serving faithfully where God has placed them. We need to be content to serve where the Lord desires until He chooses to move us.

C. The Identification (25-36) – The closing verses list the names of the smaller cities throughout Judah. Let's take just a moment to consider them.

- **Kirjath-arba** – better known as Hebron. Abraham lived here for many years. It was here that he pleaded with God to spare the city of Sodom. Centuries later, Caleb requested and conquered this area during the days of Joshua.
- **Beer-sheba** – one the southernmost towns of Judah and of Israel which is why it is involved in the saying-"from Dan [northern most boundary] to Beer-sheba. Abraham also lived there for some time.
- **Ziklag** – famous for David's association with it. It was given to David by a Philistine king. Later it was burned to the ground by some Amalekites when David was unwisely with the Philistine army when they were about to attack Israel.
- **Adullam** – famous for the cave of Adullam where David hid from Saul for some time.
- **Michmash** – associated with Jonathan's great victory over the Philistines. The victory occurred in spite of the careless leadership of Jonathan's father Saul.
- **Bethel** – mentioned many times in the Bible. From Abraham and Jacob to Elisha and later Amos, this town was the scene of many significant events in Israel's history.

- **Anathoth** – where the great prophet Jeremiah was born and where he performed some of his prophetic ministry.
- **Nob** – where over eighty priests were slain by Doeg the Edomite because of the wicked orders of Saul. ¹

This has been an interesting passage in our study of Nehemiah. It has focused on commitment unto the Lord and a desire to fulfill the work He has given us to accomplish. I trust that we have been challenged in our walk with the Lord and have sensed the need to remain faithful in service to Him. Many today have lost their commitment and are being used little of the Lord. I pray that we will seek to serve Him and develop a hunger to do more than we've done in the past.

¹ Bible Biography Series - Bible Biography Series – Nehemiah: The Wall Builder.