

Nehemiah Chapter 7

V: 1-2 The wall is built, the doors / gates are hung, the door keepers are in place, all the workers are appointed to their tasks.

- Part of setting things in order was the setting up of or delegating responsibility to those who would over see the work.
- Two men are appointed, Hanani - Nehemiah's brother who initially brought him the report on the situation in Jerusalem, to cover the city and Hananiah to be the ruler over the palace / citadel (At North wall by the Temple).
- Their primary qualifications: faithful men who feared God "above many."

Proverbs 9:10 "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding."

- If they feared God "above many", that means they had wisdom and understanding; above many, good qualifications for leadership.

V: 3 Nehemiah gave them clear direction as to the security of the city. The gates weren't to be opened too early - so that people could be properly identified.

- He set others as watchmen on the wall - each taking turns near their homes on a rotating shift kind of basis. He knew that the attacks of the enemy would continue, that they would never stop.

Ephesians 6:13 "... and having done all to stand..."

2 John 8 "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."

- We're all called to be "watchmen" on the walls, particularly near our homes.

Isaiah 62:6 "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence."

- We need to be vigilant, watching the gates, seeing, discerning what comes through those gates. We need to be watching on top of the walls, looking out prepared to warn others of impending attacks and the dangers from without.
- Gates and walls are only as good as the men who guard them. The great wall of China was penetrated by the enemy at least 4 times, and each time the guards were bribed.

V: 4 The city was large and mostly un-inhabited. Most of the city still lay in ruins and the present population was much smaller than it was before. They had more space to cover on the wall than they had people to cover it.

V: 5-6 God put it in Nehemiah's heart to take a census of who was there in Jerusalem.

- They had found the record of those who came at the first with Zerubbabel - and started from there.

V: 7-73 The specific listing of the children of Israel who made the initial trek from Babylon to Jerusalem, being led by Zerubbabel & Jeshua.

- The Israelites are listed and numbered by their families, then some are listed by their cities (V:25-38), then the priests, the Levites, the singers, the porters, the Nethenim, and the children of Solomon's servants.
- There were those who couldn't prove their genealogies then finally there is a listing of their horses, mules, camels, and donkeys.
- This listing is an exact duplicate of the listing recorded in **Ezra Ch. 2** - which we've already read and studied through, and having examined it I don't see a particular need to do so again.
- I believe that we have already faithfully covered this portion of the scripture so we will move onto the next.

Nehemiah Chapter 8

- Up to this point Nehemiah has taught the people through his example how and when to pray. Now he teaches them how to study God's Word!

V: 1-2 All the people gathered themselves together as one into the street that was before the Water Gate:

Map / diagram:



- The water gate: Water represents the Word of God.

John 15:3 "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you."

Ephesians 5:26 "That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word."

- They spoke unto Ezra the scribe - the people initiated, they wanted to hear the Word of God. This appears to have been a moving of the Holy Spirit.

Deuteronomy 31:10-12 “¹⁰And Moses commanded them, saying, at the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, ¹¹when all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which He shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. ¹²Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law.”

- Ezra seemingly complied and brought the Word of God, the Law before the people, the congregation both of men and women and all that could hear with understanding, meaning there were kids there as well.
- Question: is Ezra a scribe or a priest? Yes. Ezra was the perfect man for this task, prepared ahead of time and called of the Lord to it.

Ezra 7:10 “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.”

- “Understanding” the scriptures is spoken of 6 times in this chapter.
- This took place on the 1st day of the seventh month: 1st of Tishri (Sept / Oct) which is “Rosh Hoshana” or the “Feast of Trumpets.”

V: 3 Ezra begins to read, and read for quite a while: from the morning until midday. 6 hours a day for each of the 8 days... dedication!

- There was a mixed crowd of men and women, and younger people who were attentive to the Law.
- I don't have the answer to this question but I'm curious as to why they didn't gather in the Temple courts.
- They're at the water gate, near the pool of Siloam where most of the city gets it's water.

V: 4-5 Ezra, along with the other priests was on a raised platform so the people could see him, and he had a pulpit upon which to rest the scrolls as he read.

- A wooden pulpit as opposed to a plexiglass one...
- As Ezra opened the book of the Law to read from it, the people stood up in reverence for the Word of God, to honor God.

They knew they weren't hearing just the words of a mere man:

1 Thessalonians 2:13 "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received is not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."

V: 6 As Ezra prepared to read the Word of God, he blessed the Lord - he prayed.

- The people agreed, responding "Amen, amen" - "so be it Lord."
- The people lifted up their hands in worship, with their faces to the ground in humility.
- There are some people who at times get a little more emotional during worship, or perhaps more engaged in worship. There is a balance in this, but at the same time it's not in-appropriate to raise our hands in worship - as we see in our passage it is scriptural.

In the NT, in 1 Timothy:

1 Timothy 2:8 "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting."

In several places in the Psalms - the first church hymnal.

Psalm 63:4 "Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name."

Psalm 141:2 "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice."

- The lifting of hands is proper, if in your heart this is just a way of expressing your worship of God. I can also see where the lifting of hands can become a problem if it is an attempt to appear more spiritual to others, or if it's an attempt to draw attention to ourselves.
- We have to be careful not to draw attention to ourselves during times of worship either intentionally or un-intentionally. Because it takes the focus away from the Lord which is where it should be.
- When people do something out of the ordinary, like when one person stands in the middle of a group of people that are seated. While their motives might be pure, it is a distraction to those around who see the movement, or just sense that someone is standing in front of someone else - it just naturally draws attention to whoever is standing - so I encourage either everyone to be seated together, or to stand together to eliminate or reduce the distractions.
- That's what we see in our passage, they all stood together - and they raised their hands in worshipping the Lord.

V: 7-8 14 men including Ezra, presumably priests are listed + the Levites: together they caused the people to understand the law as the people stood to hear it.

- They read the book of the Law of God, “distinctly” - meaning they read it word for word explaining it as they went.
- This sounds very much like what we do here every Sunday morning and every Wednesday night - it’s called expository teaching.
- Reading it, verse by verse. Then explaining it verse by verse - moving on then chapter by chapter, book by book all in the same manner - **I love it!**
- This is the cornerstone of our ministry, this is what we’re all about - the teaching of God’s Word. Simply teaching God’s Word simply!

Isaiah 28:9-10 “⁹Whom shall he teach knowledge? And whom shall He make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. ¹⁰For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little:”

John 17:17 “Sanctify them through thy truth, thy Word is truth.”

V: 9-12 Nehemiah’s title: Tirshatha, meaning the title of the governor.

“*Ezra the priest the scribe...*” I guess that answers my question from earlier.

- Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Levites - all work together to instruct the people, at this point they further guide them in the celebration of the “Feast of Trumpets” which will lead to the “Feast of Tabernacles” or “booths”, or “Succoth.”
- Because it is one of the feasts of the Lord they are not to weep.
- They were told not to weep, because they were weeping. When they heard the Law of the Lord read to them, and understood what it meant - they realized that they had broken God’s law, they were grieved over their own sin - just as we should be.

Romans 3:20 “... for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”

Galatians 3:24 “Wherefore the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”

- It is interesting that often people respond to the hearing of God’s Word by weeping, or to the worship of God by weeping, being in His presence.

- For the 1st several years that we were at CC Costa Mesa my wife would just weep and cry through so many of the services, she still does from time to time.
- So many times I've looked at her and her response to the moving of the Spirit in her heart and just kind of wondered what that was all about...
- I've seen it here when people are first exposed to God's word and they begin to weep - sometimes they're embarrassed, some times they say things like "is he ever gonna stop..."
- In our passage we see that the people were impacted by God's Word as it was read aloud to them.

Isaiah 55:11 "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

- Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet (wine / grape juice), share with those that don't have anything - this day is Holy unto the Lord.
- When the Spirit of God begins to work in the heart of the people through His Word, that means that God is working, and it's time to rejoice!

In the book of Acts as the Gospel is brought to Samaria and there is a move of the Spirit:

Acts 8:5-8 "5Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. 6And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. 7For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. (So this great move of the Spirit) 8And there was great joy in that city."

- Having understood the Word, the people went away rejoicing.

Psalm 19:8 "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart..."

V: 13-15 As they were reading in the Law, they discovered the feast of Tabernacles - which hadn't been observed since the days of Joshua.

- They were to take branches and thatches and make little booths or lean too's - like pup tents. This was to commemorate and remind them of how God took care of them in the wilderness years after having come out of bondage in Egypt.
- As the family lay there at night with the kids it was an opportunity to explain how their forefathers slept under the stars for 40 years, how God had guided them, and provided for their needs - and how God had given them the land that they now lived in, how God always keeps His Word.

V: 16-17 As they began to learn the Law, they realized that they were called to celebrate Succoth this way, and they began to do it - they did it for the first time since the days of Joshua, so they took action and did it!

James 1:22 "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."

"And there was very great gladness." - Fruit of the Spirit!

V: 18 They continued in the reading of God's Word from the first day to the last day, they kept the feast days, and they honored God!

- The 8th day was a solemn assembly:

John 7:37 "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, if any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink."

- During the feast of Tabernacles the priests would pour out pitchers of water upon the Temple pavement reminding them how God brought them water from the rock when they were thirsty.

Paul explains that Jesus was that Rock in the desert:

1 Corinthians 10:4 "And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."

- On the 8th day, the last solemn day, they would pour out empty pitchers demonstrating their inability to satisfy the thirst of the people. Just then Jesus stepped out and said "... if any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink."