

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 1/19/11 Wednesday evening

Series: *“Facing the Past, Moving Ahead for God’s Honor: Nehemiah”*

Current study: Nehemiah 11 “The Solution to the Population Problem”

Strange names. Every so often we come to a passage in God’s Word that includes a list of names that sound odd to our ears. I’m not talking about names like Abraham, Moses, and Paul. We recognize those names and know about those individuals. I’m talking about Athaiah, Amariah, Hazaiah, Joiarib, and Meshullam. What are we supposed to do when we read a list of names like those names found in Nehemiah 11? Why did the Lord include them in the Bible, especially since there’s very little if any detail provided about those individuals. Just their names.

What’s the point? There is a point, as we’ll see.

Do you like unfinished projects?

Tonight, in Nehemiah 11, we see an unfinished project and what the people of God did about it. It had to do with a population problem.

The Setting: Nehemiah is about the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem. The first half of the book describes that project.

After the walls were completed, there was a problem that faced the fifth century Jews living in the Promised Land. What was the problem? We saw it earlier in 7:4...

The city was large, but relatively few people lived in it due to the rubble. Now that the walls were in place, it was time to clean things up and get life going again.

Note: This was more than a matter of repopulating any ordinary city. How so? This was Jerusalem. And Jerusalem was the place God chose to be His “dwelling place” in earth. God’s reputation was on the line in connection with Jerusalem.

In chapter 11 we see the solution to the problem introduced in 7:4. We’ll see it in this study. Chapter 11 answers two questions for us...

I. What was the solution? (1-2)

The solution involved three parties...

A. The leaders settled in Jerusalem (1a).

Q: Why would they do so?

B. One-tenth of the rest settled in Jerusalem (1b).

Q: How were they selected?

1. *They were chosen by casting lots.*

Q: What happened to the rest?

2. *The remaining nine-tenths stayed in their own towns.*

See map

I get the sense that most didn’t want to stay in Jerusalem. Why not? Life was hard there. They didn’t want to leave their present homes.

C. Some people volunteered to live in Jerusalem (2).

These people were commended by the rest.

Discuss: Why do you think they stayed?

II. Who was a part of the solution? (3-36)

In verses 3ff. we find the names and locations of the people who were a part of the solution. The list of names is very similar to the list in 1 Chronicles 9. These were the first people to return to Judea after exile in Babylonia.

Q: Where did they settle when they returned, according to verse 3? Some lived in the towns of Judea and others in Jerusalem, “each on his own property...”

Let’s look at the individuals according to the categories Nehemiah used in presenting them. First we meet the leaders.

A. We meet the leaders who lived in Jerusalem (3-19).

Verse 3 says the first list includes “the provincial *leaders* who settled in Jerusalem.”

1. *Some were descendents of Judah (3-6).*

Q: Who was Judah?

Q: How many descendants of Perez (one desc. of Judah) were there?

2. *Some were descendents of Benjamin (7-9).*

Q: Who was Benjamin?

Note: Only two of the original twelve tribes are mentioned in the list (other than the Levites later). Why only two?

3. *Some were priests (10-14).*

Q: What did the priests do? See verse 12 where we’re told that part of their responsibility included carrying on “work for the temple.” What kind of work?

4. *Some were Levites (15-18).*

Q: What did the two men in verse 16 do? They “had charge of the outside work of the house of God.”

Q: What did Mattaniah do, according to verse 17? “The director...”

5. *Some were gatekeepers (19).*

Q: How many men were gatekeepers? 284

Q: What is Jerusalem called and why in verse 19? The “holy city”

B. We learn that some lived in their ancestral towns (20).

Q: Where? On his “ancestral property”

C. We learn what other key people lived in Jerusalem (21-24).

1. *The temple servants did (21).*

Q: Who was in charge of them?

2. *The chief officer did (22).*

Q: Who was he? Uzzi

3. *The singers did (23).*

Q: Who gave them their orders? The king

4. *The king’s agent did (24).*

Q: What was his name? Pethahiah

D. We learn where else the Jews lived (25-36).

A number of places are mentioned—for the people of Judah (in verses 25-30) and the people of Benjamin (31-35). Finally, the Levites were mentioned (36).

But why did God give us this list? The answer is related to a fundamental question...

Implications: What do we learn about God from this?

1. God takes His name seriously.

How is this illustrated by this list? Think about it. The people took great pains to rebuild and repopulate Jerusalem. Why? What was special about it?

Discuss: How would our lives be different if we were gripped by how significant God's name is to Him? Think about it. We have His name. We are His children. We're called "Christians." His name is affected by how we live. Give an example.

2. God is faithful to His covenant promises.

For reasons similar to point #1. Israel was the apple of God's eye. *Jerusalem* was the city where the temple was placed. He sees the brokenness we're experiencing and it matters to Him. He has committed Himself by covenant to care for His own.

To do: List some passages in the Bible in which He makes covenant promises to His people.

Matthew 16:18 "I will build my church..."

Heb 13:5 "I will never leave you..."

Romans 8:28 "All things work together for good..."

Phil 1:6 "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion."

3. God is concerned about the details in the lives of His people.

We see many details here in chapter 11. Like people's names, where they lived, and what they did occupationally. These details are not just "filler" in this Scriptural text. They were and are important.

Discuss: How does that encourage you?