

Nehemiah: Building a City Within the City, week 11

Multitudes and Money (Nehemiah 7:5–7:73)

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... rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

— Jesus (Luke 10:20)

After finishing the wall surrounding the city of Jerusalem in just fifty-two days, people were finally allowed to inhabit the city that had previously lain in ruins for 141 years. Most of Nehemiah 7 is a repetition of the same list of people mentioned in Ezra 2:1–64. While many commentators skip altogether this section of inspired Scripture, it shows us how a great deal of ministry revolves around caring for multitudes of people and stewarding money.

⁵Then my God put it into my heart to assemble the nobles and the officials and the people to be enrolled by genealogy. And I found the book of the genealogy of those who came up at the first, and I found written in it:

⁶These were the people of the province who came up out of the captivity of those exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried into exile. They returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his town.

Senior Leaders

⁷They came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, Baanah.

While we are not well informed of each of these leaders, Scripture does tell us that Zerubbabel was a prominent civil leader and that Jeshua (or Joshua) was a noted religious leader from whom descended fourteen successive generations of high priests. Both men figure prominently in the minor prophets Haggai and Zechariah. The equivalent of this group at Mars Hill is our Executive Elder team.

People of God

The number of the men of the people of Israel: ⁸the sons of Parosh, 2,172. ⁹The sons of Shephatiah, 372. ¹⁰The sons of Arah, 652. ¹¹The sons of Pahath-moab, namely the sons of Jeshua and Joab, 2,818. ¹²The sons of Elam, 1,254. ¹³The sons of Zattu, 845. ¹⁴The sons of Zaccai, 760. ¹⁵The sons of Binnui, 648. ¹⁶The sons of Bebai, 628. ¹⁷The sons of Azgad, 2,322. ¹⁸The sons of Adonikam, 667. ¹⁹The sons of Bigvai, 2,067. ²⁰The sons of Adin, 655. ²¹The sons of Ater, namely of Hezekiah, 98. ²²The sons of Hashum, 328. ²³The sons of Bezai, 324. ²⁴The sons of Hariph, 112. ²⁵The sons of Gibeon, 95. ²⁶The men of Bethlehem and Netophah, 188. ²⁷The men of Anathoth, 128. ²⁸The men of Beth-azmaveth, 42. ²⁹The men of Kiriath-jearim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, 743. ³⁰The men of Ramah and Geba, 621. ³¹The men of Michmas, 122. ³²The men of Bethel and Ai, 123. ³³The men of the other Nebo, 52. ³⁴The sons of the other Elam, 1,254. ³⁵The sons of Harim, 320. ³⁶The sons of Jericho, 345. ³⁷The sons of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, 721. ³⁸The sons of Senaah, 3,930.

This lengthy list records regular people who returned to the city to help rebuild it as an act of worship to the God of the Bible. The equivalent of this list are simply those who are Christians and living their faith out in our city.

Priests

³⁹*The priests: the sons of Jedaiah, namely the house of Jeshua, 973.* ⁴⁰*The sons of Immer, 1,052.* ⁴¹*The sons of Pashhur, 1,247.* ⁴²*The sons of Harim, 1,017.* ⁴³*The Levites: the sons of Jeshua, namely of Kadmiel of the sons of Hodevah, 74.*

Nehemiah lists just over 4,000 priests who were descendants of Moses' brother Aaron. Listed with them are the Levites, who descended from one of the twelve patriarchs in Genesis and assisted the priests in doing the pastoral work of caring for people. The equivalent of these roles at Mars Hill are our pastors who, along with the deacons, minister in the care of people.

Worship leaders

⁴⁴*The singers: the sons of Asaph, 148.*

The singers who lead worship in the city (2 Chronicles 25–26) are referenced at least eighteen times in the book of Nehemiah. In this we see the importance of musical worship that includes singing among God's people. The equivalent of the worship leaders at Mars Hill is our large worship department with many musicians, bands, songwriters, and such who help lead us in corporate worship.

Gatekeepers

⁴⁵*The gatekeepers: the sons of Shallum, the sons of Ater, the sons of Talmon, the sons of Akkub, the sons of Hatita, the sons of Shobai, 138.*

The gatekeepers were leaders chosen to oversee the various neighborhoods in the city where the gates were located. Through these gates people would pass in and out of the city. The gates served in a very real way as a door into the Old Testament church where God could be met and worshiped. The equivalent of the gatekeepers at Mars Hill are our campus pastors who lead the mission of our church in the various neighborhoods of our city where we have opened our doors to welcome people in to meet and worship Jesus Christ.

Temple Servants

⁴⁶*The temple servants: the sons of Ziha, the sons of Hasupha, the sons of Tabbaoth,* ⁴⁷*the sons of Keros, the sons of Sia, the sons of Padon,* ⁴⁸*the sons of Lebana, the sons of Hagaba, the sons of Shalmal,* ⁴⁹*the sons of Hanan, the sons of Giddel, the sons of Gahar,* ⁵⁰*the sons of Reaiah, the sons of Rezin, the sons of Nekoda,* ⁵¹*the sons of Gazzam, the sons of Uzza, the sons of Paseah,* ⁵²*the sons of Besai, the sons of Meunim, the sons of Nephushesim,* ⁵³*the sons of Bakbuk, the sons of Hakupha, the sons of Harhur,* ⁵⁴*the sons of Bazlith, the sons of Mehida, the sons of Harsha,* ⁵⁵*the sons of Barkos, the sons of Sisera, the sons of Temah,* ⁵⁶*the sons of Neziah, the sons of Hatipha.* ⁵⁷*The sons of Solomon's servants: the sons of Sotai, the sons of Sophereth, the sons of Perida,* ⁵⁸*the sons of Jaala, the sons of Darkon, the sons of Giddel,* ⁵⁹*the sons of Shephatiah, the*

sons of Hattil, the sons of Pochereth-hazzebaim, the sons of Amon. ⁶⁰All the temple servants and the sons of Solomon's servants were 392.

While the priests ministered like our pastors thanks to the help of the Levites who were in some ways like deacons, the Levites were also assisted by the temple servants and sons of Solomon's servants. These servants worked faithfully in service to the Old Testament church and in that way are much like the members of our church who serve faithfully.

The Unknown

⁶¹The following were those who came up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addon, and Immer, but they could not prove their fathers' houses nor their descent, whether they belonged to Israel: ⁶²the sons of Delaiah, the sons of Tobiah, the sons of Nekoda, 642. ⁶³Also, of the priests: the sons of Hobaiah, the sons of Hakkoz, the sons of Barzillai (who had taken a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite and was called by their name). ⁶⁴These sought their registration among those enrolled in the genealogies, but it was not found there, so they were excluded from the priesthood as unclean. ⁶⁵The governor told them that they were not to partake of the most holy food until a priest with Urim and Thummim should arise.

There was also a list of people who arrived in Jerusalem claiming to be religious leaders and members of prominent families. But their claims could not be proven so they were not put into leadership without God's confirmation. In this we see that there are always people who position themselves as spiritual leaders, but unless their claims can be verified, they should not be empowered to lead.

The Totals

⁶⁶The whole assembly together was 42,360, ⁶⁷besides their male and female servants, of whom there were 7,337. And they had 245 singers, male and female. ⁶⁸Their horses were 736, their mules 245, ⁶⁹their camels 435, and their donkeys 6,720. ⁷⁰Now some of the heads of fathers' houses gave to the work. The governor gave to the treasury 1,000 darics of gold [perhaps 19 pounds], 50 basins, 30 priests' garments and 500 minas of silver. ⁷¹And some of the heads of fathers' houses gave into the treasury of the work 20,000 darics of gold [perhaps 375 pounds of gold, worth \$4 million today] and 2,200 minas of silver. ⁷²And what the rest of the people gave was 20,000 darics of gold, 2,000 minas of silver, and 67 priests' garments. ⁷³So the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, some of the people, the temple servants, and all Israel, lived in their towns. And when the seventh month had come, the people of Israel were in their towns.

The city, which was also in many regards a church, quickly grew very large. To underwrite all of the ministry, a great deal of money was given by God's people. Thankfully, the people not only gave generously but the most wealthy people also gave generously and were able to underwrite a great deal of the urban ministry expenses with gifts as large as roughly \$4 million.

At Mars Hill it is our prayer to expand our campuses so that we are a city within Seattle of more than 40,000 people. As God's providence would have it, we are in the midst of building our urban ministry much like Nehemiah's with campuses scattered around the region led by the same kinds of leaders he mentions and funded by the same types of generous people he was thankful for.

From this section of Nehemiah we learn many principles about God and people, including the following:

1. God made people and saves people because in His mercy He cares for us.
2. God knows us by name and keeps a record of His people (see also Jesus' words in Luke 10:20).
3. God cares for His people through leaders.
4. God appoints all of His people to serve the well-being of their church and city.
5. God being worshiped by His people in all things is the reason we were created and is the source of our joy.
6. God being worshiped includes generously contributing to funding the ministry.

For more free resources on Nehemiah, go to:

- o http://covenantseminary.inmotionhosting.com/OT230_Lecture_36.mp3 (for seminary lectures)
- o <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/nehemiah.pdf> and <http://reformedperspectives.org/search.asp> (for study notes)
- o <http://www.ccel.org/wwsb/Nehemiah/index.html> (for older commentaries and similar resources)

If you can only buy one commentary on Nehemiah, I recommend J. I. Packer's *A Passion for Faithfulness*.