

Nehemiah 11:1-20 and 12:27-47

Who was living in and settled in Jerusalem once the wall had been completed (vv. 1-2)? Some leaders, setting the example, had already chosen to live in Jerusalem (v. 1). Nehemiah initiated a lottery system to determine which one family out of ten, of those not living in the city, would move into it (v. 1). Additional immigrants volunteered to live there (v. 2). There was a cross section of leaders, therefore, who lived in Jerusalem, while other leaders lived in the other towns of Judah (v. 3).¹

Never underestimate the importance of simply being physically present in the place where God wants you. You may not be asked to perform some dramatic ministry, but simply being there can be a powerful testimony/ministry. The men, women, and children who helped to populate the city of Jerusalem were serving God, their nation, and future generations by their step of faith.²

Application: The leaders had no right to expect the people to live in Jerusalem if they themselves were not living there. Basic leadership principle – you don't ask your subordinates to do something that you wouldn't do.

Why were there only residents from Judah and Benjamin and not any other tribes (vv. 4-9)? The ten Northern tribes had been dispersed after the Assyrian captivity.

Who were the other groups that settled in Jerusalem (vv. 10-19)? Priests, Levites and gate keepers.

Where did the rest of the Israelites settle (v. 20)? The towns of their ancestors. Villages and their surrounding settlements (vv. 25-36).

Was moving to Jerusalem a desirable thing? What would have been some of the negatives?

1. To live in Jerusalem, you had to re-order your view of material things. You had to give up land in your previous region and take up some kind of new business in Jerusalem. Sell your house, take on a new job (wife also).
2. To live in Jerusalem, you had to re-arrange your social priorities, certainly leaving some friends and family behind in your old village. Leave your comfort zone.
3. To live in Jerusalem, you had to have a mind to endure the problems in the city. It had been a ghost town for 70 years, and was now basically a slightly rebuilt, somewhat repopulated ghost town. The city didn't look all that glorious and it needed work. Like living a life time in New York City and moving to Podunksville, Middle America.

What might have been some positives? New friends, satisfying sense of following God, challenge of being a pioneer, spiritual impact of a move.

The city walls have been rebuilt and the spiritual renewal of the people of Jerusalem is coming along well; now they need to get more people into the city. Why was it important to repopulate Jerusalem??

1. For a city to prosper and be great, it must be populated. And for more than seventy years, Jerusalem had been nothing but a ghost town. Now there is a new temple built (under Zerubbabel/Ezra) and the walls were rebuilt (under Nehemiah). But the city still needed more people.
2. Because God had a plan to return Jerusalem to its former state as the capital of Judah.
3. Nehemiah also knew that the bigger the population of Jerusalem, the greater the resources for defense and strength in battle. He didn't rebuild the walls just to see some conquering army come and break them down again!

The wall dedication ceremony.....They sought out the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem (12: 27). What was the job of the Levites? The Levites had many responsibilities in the life and worship of Israel and the temple business, but one of the most important jobs they had was to lead the people in songs of worship,

thanksgiving and praise to God. The singers were also gathered from villages around Jerusalem (v. 28). Together they were like a Jewish praise band and this was a time of celebration.

Nehemiah enlisted Levites from all over Judah to guarantee that the dedication service would be properly grand. The priests and Levites were the most important people who returned from exile because they reestablished worship in the land.

Then the priests and Levites purified themselves (v. 30). Why did they do that first? They could not effectively lead the people in worship of God unless they walked in purity before the Lord as He had prescribed. It was an act of obedience.

And they purified the people. Why did they do that? They brought cleansing to the people the way the scriptures said to, knowing that only a purified people could really worship and praise God. It gave the people assurance that they were doing things God's way.

Third, their surroundings, the gates, and the wall were purified. Why did they do that? Knowing that their surroundings were purified reminded them to walk in purity consistently. The homes and offices of many Christians could use a good purification and cleansing. **Have you ever prayed over your house? Your office? Your neighborhood?**

What is the application for us when it comes to preparing for worship? Purify our hearts for worship. Focus our minds. Confess our sins which get in the way of our fellowship with God (Colossians 3:1-2).

What were the elements/activities of the celebration (vv. 12:31-43)? Nehemiah assembled the leaders of Judah ... on the wall and divided them into two large thanksgiving choirs. They headed in different directions around the wall, with the singers in front and the people following behind their leaders until they met again at the temple.³ There the priests offered many sacrifices and the people rejoiced greatly (v. 43) The bottom line of what was going on was *worship*.

What can we see here is the purpose of worship? To give glory and honor to God. That's the same reason we go to church. The goal of worship isn't to give the people a good feeling (though that may happen). We may think it's a time of receiving but it's really a time to give of ourselves in worship.

The joy of Jerusalem was heard far away (v. 43). What was the message there? Their worship was a testimony to others, and what others heard was not so much the singing itself as the *joy*. What God wants to hear and what others should hear is not so much our singing, but our *joy* which is a reflection of the heart behind the singing.

This was a day of giving. What was their motivation for giving (vv. 44-47)? People brought their offerings, first fruits and tithes to the storehouse of the Levites, and they did so with joy because they enjoyed supporting the priests and Levites, the singers and gate keepers ministering on their behalf. This was the joy of obedience (John 15:10-11). The people had made a binding agreement to provide for the priests and Levites (10:37-39).

This was the greatest day in the history of the restoration community. Israel was now back in the land more securely and scripturally than it had been since the first exiles had returned. Nehemiah had succeeded in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, reestablishing the Mosaic Law as Israel's authority and reorganizing the temple ministry in harmony with God's will.⁴

¹ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Nehemiah, 2023 Edition (published by <http://planobilechapel.org/soniclight/>), 56.

² Ibid.

³ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 491.

⁴ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Nehemiah, 2023 Edition (published by <http://planobilechapel.org/soniclight/>), 60.