

**“(in)Completion”**  
**Nehemiah 7:1-73**  
**Mercy Hill Church | July 30, 2023**

**Summary of Nehemiah Chapters 1-6**

- Nehemiah 1: “Conviction” – Nehemiah’s conviction for God’s purposes leads him to pray in response to the dire circumstance of God’s city (Jerusalem) and God’s people even though Nehemiah is nearly a thousand miles away from Jerusalem in Susa.
- Nehemiah 2:1-8: “Mission” – Nehemiah’s conviction becomes a clear mission through prayer, planning, and steps of faith under God’s sovereignty while serving as the cupbearer to King Artaxerxes of Persia.
- Nehemiah 2:9-20: “Preparation” – Before actual rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, Nehemiah personally inspects and evaluates the task at hand. Subsequently, Nehemiah calls God’s people to rebuild the walls together for God’s glory – despite rising opposition from Sanballat and others.
- Nehemiah 3: “Construction” – Presented is the list of names of all who helped rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Beyond this list of names, we see the unity and diversity of God’s people, the availability and adaptability of God’s people, and the heart and humility of God’s people.
- Nehemiah 4: “Opposition” – As Nehemiah and the people of God rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, they face several waves of opposition – a wave of verbal opposition and a wave of physical opposition. This leads to some internal opposition as some doubt and dissension rises among the people. Nehemiah and the people are ultimately able to persevere and withstand the opposition by turning to the Lord in prayer, responding in action and supporting one another.
- Nehemiah 5: “Division” – Nehemiah not only faces external opposition but also internal division as it comes to his attention some of the injustices committed by his own people against his own people. Instead of compromising or ignoring, Nehemiah confronts the people which leads to repentance. In addition, we see Nehemiah’s integrity as a leader in self-sacrifice and generosity for others in light of the some of the injustices which had been committed.
- Nehemiah 6: “Opposition, part 2” – As Nehemiah nears completion of the rebuilding of the walls, the opposition (Sanballat and company) launch their final attempts to stop the rebuilding of the walls, but this time with a change in tactics – primarily through deception. They focus specifically on Nehemiah and resort to distraction, false accusations, and manipulation. However, Nehemiah, knowing God’s Word and through prayer, remains focused and exercises discernment as he (and the people of God) complete the walls...

**Theme of Nehemiah:** Rebuilding a City & People for God

- Chapters 1-7 Rebuilding the Walls of Jerusalem
- Chapters 8-13 Rebuilding (Reforming) God’s People

While the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem were completed, Nehemiah’s work wasn’t completely finished. Nehemiah needed to...

**1. ...Remember God's Glory (v.1)**

- While Nehemiah 1-6 chronicles the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, the purpose of rebuilding the walls wasn’t just to rebuild the walls – ultimately it was for God’s glory and the good of God’s people!

- After the doors (gates) had been set up, Nehemiah's work wasn't finished. Nehemiah appoints gatekeepers, singers and the Levites (v.1) – formal OT temple worship!
  - John Piper's *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions* quote:
    - "Missions is not the ultimate goal of the Church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever. Worship, therefore, is the fuel and goal of missions. It's the goal of missions because in missions we simply aim to bring the nations into the white hot enjoyment of God's glory. The goal of missions is the gladness of the peoples in the greatness of God. "The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad!" (Ps 97:1). "Let the peoples praise thee, O God; let all the peoples praise thee! Let the nations be glad and sing for joy!" (Ps 67:3-4). But worship is also the fuel of missions. Passion for God in worship precedes the offer of God in preaching. You can't commend what you don't cherish. Missionaries will never call out, "Let the nations be glad!" who cannot say from the heart, "I rejoice in the Lord...I will be glad and exult in thee, I will sing praise to thy name, O Most High" (Ps 104:34, 9:2). Missions begins and ends in worship."
  - New City Catechism Q4:
    - Q: How and why did God create us?
    - A: God created us male and female in his own image to know him, love him, live with him, and glorify him. And it is right that we who were created by God should live to his glory.
  - Westminster Shorter Catechism Q1:
    - Q: What is the chief end of man?
    - A: Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever
  - Nehemiah's heart was gripped by God's glory, lived to worship God and desired others to see His glory – a conviction that led him to take a leave of absence from his job, to take risks in travelling to a place he's never been, to take on a project he had no prior experience in – ultimately for God's glory!
    - Nehemiah continues to keep the glory of God in mind – not abstract or theoretical but real in his heart (v.5)
  - **Worship matters to God**
    - God doesn't want us to busy doing things – serving, leading, coordinating, reading the Bible, prayer, attending a worship service, etc. – but wants us to be doing things for Him – because we see that He is worth it – worship! Out of love for Him and for others!
      - Not just one aspect of our lives – but the totality of our lives (cf. Romans 12:1-2, 1 Corinthians 10:31)
      - Worship = "worth" + "quality" (i.e. "sportsmanship", quality of being a good sport)
    - Tim Keller Quote: "Only if your god can outrage and challenge you will you know that you worship the real God and not a figment of your imagination...If your god never disagrees with you, you might just be worshiping an idealized version of yourself."
      - "How do you change your behavior? Change what you worship"
- 2. ...Recognize & Raise Up Leaders (vv.2-3)**
- Nehemiah knew that all this work wasn't just about him – for the work to continue needed to recognize and raise up leaders

- Nehemiah appoints 2 leaders: Hanani and Hannaniah. Previously, Rephasiah & Shallum each oversaw a half-district of Jerusalem (3:9, 12)
    - Hanani – Nehemiah’s “brother” (cf. Nehemiah 1:2-4)
    - Hananiah – previously governor of the castle (not Hananiah the perfumer in 3:8, nor Hananiah son of Shelemiah in 3:30)
  - What qualification did Nehemiah look for?
    - Faithful & God-Fearing (v.2); Capable & Character, “Reliable & Reverent”
      - Faithful = True, trustworthy
      - Exodus 18:21 Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are **trustworthy** and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens.
      - Psalm 15:2 He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks **truth** in his heart;
    - In contrast to other supposed “men of God” like Shemaiah the prophet who was bribed (cf. Nehemiah 6:10-13)
  - **Faithfulness matters to God**
    - cf. 1 Timothy 3:1-13, 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, Luke 11:39-52)
    - “Not just ability, but humility!”
- 3. ...Recall the Past (vv.4-73)**
- While the walls of Jerusalem have been rebuilt, the city of Jerusalem remains unoccupied and empty
    - “In the first half of the book, the people existed for the walls; but now, the walls must exist for the people” Warren Wiersbe
  - Nehemiah discovers the old records (genealogy) and reminds them of the past:
    - 722 B.C. Assyrians conquered Israel (Northern Kingdom)
    - 586 B.C. Babylonians conquer Judah (Southern Kingdom – including Jerusalem)
    - 539 B.C. Persians led by Cyrus conquered Babylon. Cyrus allows conquered people to return back to Jerusalem, if they desired. However, Jerusalem lay in ruins...
  - Nehemiah 7:6-73 || Ezra 2:1-3:1 – original list of exiles who returned to Jerusalem
    - In Ezra, the list of names is those who chose to return from Babylon under Zerubbabel’s leadership to Jerusalem. The list (document) served as a record of those who were the true people of God. In Nehemiah, almost 100 years later (~444 B.C.), the list of names serve as a reminder, encouragement and challenge to the people of their personal and corporate identity as God’s people and to live as such!
  - Nehemiah recalls the past to serve as an encouragement and challenge to the present people
    - These were individuals and families who could have stayed comfortably where they were – but didn’t. They left security by returning to the ruins of Jerusalem. More importantly they remembered who they were and who they belonged to – not Babylon nor Persia but to God.
      - They responded in faith but also in generosity (vv.70-72)
      - Testimony of their lives in worship of God, their faithfulness to God
      - Not just in words or in their hearts but in their lives and life choices
  - cf. Deuteronomy 4:9, 32:7, Psalm 145:4
  - **People matter to God**
    - Whenever we read a list of names or genealogies in the Bible, we can easily just skip or speed through it. People’s names are recorded in the Bible – people matter to God!
      - Each name has a story, a history, a testimony!
    - Cf. Luke 15: Parable of the Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, Lost Son

- Christ died on the cross, endured our punishment for our sins, not just for people in general – but for individuals, specifically for you!
- The Scriptures, the entire Bible, is the story of God and humanity, and the lives of those who have gone before us (cf. Hebrews 11 – 12:1-3).

**Big Idea:** *Whatever God calls us to, we do so with His people by faith for His glory!*

### **Reflection Questions**

- Why is it so easy for us to do things for God and yet forget about God in the process?
- In what ways have you perhaps lost sight of why you're doing what you're doing -- and for who you're doing it for?
- What might it look like for you to worship God (re: keeping God's glory as the focus) in the different areas of your life (i.e. work/school, home, leisure, relationships, etc.)?
- What are some differences between how the world views and evaluates leaders vs. what the Bible teaches?
- How have you been encouraged by the faithfulness of others -- from the past or those around you?
- In the face of difficulties, are you more (or less) tempted to sin? Why? Are you more susceptible to temptation and sin when things are going well or not?
- How does the life of Jesus -- and the gospel message -- give you encouragement in light of this passage?