

**“Resettle”**  
**Nehemiah 11:1-12:26**  
**Mercy Hill Church | October 29, 2023**

**Big Idea: *The church (i.e. Christians) is called to faithful obedience by being faithfully present – despite significant inconvenience(s) – as faithful witnesses of God’s glory (the Gospel)!***

**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

**Introduction**

- After the walls had been rebuilt (Nehemiah 7) and the people had been reformed by God’s Word (Nehemiah 8), returned back to God through confession and repentance (Nehemiah 9) and renewed their commitment (covenant) with God (Nehemiah 10), what was next – what was left to do?
  - To repopulate or resettle back into the city of Jerusalem (cf. Nehemiah 7:4)
  - What good is a city without people? What use are the walls if no one is inside of them? What good if the city of God is rebuilt but one is there to worship Him?

**1. The Leaders Lead By Example (11:1a)**

- Before the majority of the people started to move in and resettle in Jerusalem, who previously had already resettled and lived in the city of Jerusalem? The “leaders” – or “chiefs, princes” (v.1a)
  - Unclear exactly who these “leaders” referred to – possibly, “...the priests, the nobles, the officials and the rest who were to do the work.” (cf. Nehemiah 2:16)?
- What is clear is that the leaders, whether formally in title or not, had already been living in Jerusalem – even though no one else had or desired to do so.
  - If these leaders, presumably, were also the ones who helped rebuild the walls of Jerusalem or took part in some form or fashion, these folks not only helped rebuild the city of Jerusalem physically but also helped refill the city with people as well.
- We see these leaders led by example – before asking folks to move back and live in the city of Jerusalem, they were already living there.
  - While no leader is perfect, yet the apostle Paul (who considered himself the chief of sinners) also had no hesitancy as a leader in saying in:
    - 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1: <sup>31</sup>So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. <sup>32</sup>Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, <sup>33</sup>just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved. *Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.*
      - NIV: <sup>1</sup>Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ

**2. The Faithful Obedience & Sacrifice of God’s People (11:1b-2)**

- “One out of ten” – “tithing” (cf. Leviticus 27:30) – instead of a tithe offering of fruit or livestock, it was a “tithing” offering of people.
- The language used here of “to bring” (v.1b) is the same word used in Nehemiah 10:34-39 as the people of Israel in their covenant renewal promised “to bring” tithes and offerings to the Lord.
- In essence, the people are bringing themselves as a tithe offering, a sacrifice to God (cf. Romans 12:1-2)

- Just as important, they do so out of a willing obedience (v.3 – “who willingly offered to live in Jerusalem.” Presumably, those that were called could decline.
- Side Note: “casting lots” – used throughout Old Testament by the people of God to make decisions or for allocation purposes (cf. Joshua 14:2 – “Their inheritance was by lot...” )
  - Listen to or read Nick’s sermon on Acts 1:15-26 titled, “The Upper Room (Part 3): Rollout” on May 21, 2023 where he explains and clarifies casting lots:
    - “But Biblically, we know that casting lots was a legitimate means of discerning God’s will sanctioned in the Old Testament.
    - A. It was used on the Day of Atonement to determine which animal would be offered in one way or another (Lev. 16:8).
    - B. It was used to divide up the promised land between the various tribes (Num. 26:55).
    - C. It was used to select people for special duties in the temple and things (1 Chron 24:7; 25:8; Luke 1:9).
    - We don’t know how exactly they did it, but we do know at least two things . . .
      - 1. First, we know God used it to disclose his will to his people. Prov. 16:33: “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.” God is sovereign. He can reveal his will to his people however he chooses.
      - 2. But then here’s the second thing we know: we know that, after this scene in Acts 1, casting lots as a means of discerning God’s will it’s never mentioned again. This is it. This is the last time in Scripture that we see it. And that, brothers and sisters, is not by accident. Because you know what’s coming next—in the very next verse, in fact? The day of Pentecost”
- Why was this a sacrifice and why did it require an acts of faithful obedience?
  - The condition of the city of Jerusalem was not great. Remember as a city it had been devastated and conquered. They only just rebuilt the walls – this was not a top of the line, remodeled house with all the latest amenities and modern futures. This was a beat-up, old house with termites, cockroaches and rats in the house with leaky faucets and toilets which are constantly getting clogged.
  - In addition, by moving into Jerusalem, the returnees would face (potential) loss of agricultural income as well as leaving their ancestral (inheritance) land.
  - So this move, this resettling was an act of faithful sacrifice and faithful obedience
    - Cf. 1 Samuel 15:22 when the prophet Samuel confront King Saul:
      - “Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.”
    - Keith Green’s “To Obey Is Better Than Sacrifice” song based on 1 Samuel 15:22
      - “To obey is better than sacrifice  
I don't need your money  
I want your life...
      - To obey is better than sacrifice  
I want more than Sunday and Wednesday nights  
Cause if you can't come to Me every day  
Then don't bother coming at all”
  - Ultimately what God desires is not sacrifice (re: a transaction, quid pro quo) but willing, heartfelt, joyful obedience to Him!

- What we see in v.3 as the people who were chosen (by God via lots) willingly offered to live in Jerusalem.
- Sometimes obedience means making a change or move – “to go” (resettling back into Jerusalem) – other times it might mean remaining where you are – “to stay”:
  - Cf. Jeremiah 29:4-7: <sup>4</sup>“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: <sup>5</sup>Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. <sup>6</sup>Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. <sup>7</sup>But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.
    - Desiring God article: “Love the Place You Want to Leave” by Scott Hubbard (<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/love-the-place-you-want-to-leave>)
  - 1 Peter 2:11-12: <sup>11</sup>Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. <sup>12</sup>Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

### 3. The (List of) Returnees (11:3-36)

- Once again we have a list of names (cf. Nehemiah 3, 7, and 10, 1 Chronicles 9). Why another list?
  - In Nehemiah 3 we have a record/list of the names of those who rebuilt the wall
  - In Nehemiah 7 we have a record/list of the names of those who were the first people to return back to Jerusalem w/ Zerubabel
  - In Nehemiah 10 we have a record/list of the names of those signed the renewed covenant
- **Settlers in Jerusalem (11:4-24)**
  - (cf. 1 Kings 12:21-23)
  - Who are the returnees in Jerusalem?
    - People from the tribe of Judah & Benjamin (cf. 1 Kings 12:21-23 – Israel split into Israel – Northern Kingdom and Judah – Southern Kingdom, which included Benjamin) – vv.4-6, 7-9
    - Priests – All Priests were from the tribe of Levi (Levites) – vv.10-14
    - Levites – not all Levites were priests – vv.15-18
    - Temple Servants – vv.19-21
  - Mix of “religious” people and lay people
  - vv.6 & 14 – “...valiant men” and “...mighty men of valor” – commended for their bravery. While the walls were rebuilt, still had to be prepared for attacks while living in the city
- **Settlers in the Surrounding Villages (11:25-36)**
  - Those outside the city, but surrounding the city (cf. similar to the original allotment of land to the tribe of Judah as they settled into the Promised Land in Joshua 15)
  - Interestingly enough, it is interesting that only the locations/villages are mentioned – the where – but not the names of the people – the who.
- But regardless of whether one lived in the city of Jerusalem or in the villages surrounding Jerusalem, notice there’s a sense of unity and support in v.2 – “And the people – presumably those who were not drafted into living in the city of Jerusalem – *blessed (or honored) all the men who willingly offered to live in Jerusalem.*”

### 4. The Spiritual Heritage (12:1-26)

- Another list here – only of priest and Levites: some as family names, others as individuals

- Vv.1-9 Family names of the priests and Levites during the time of Zerubbabel -- ~538 B.C. after King Cyrus allowed exiles to return back to Jerusalem
- Vv.10-11 List of the High Priests, starting with Jeshua to Jaddua, ~538 B.C. return to ~400 B.C.
- vv. 12-21 List of Priests during the time of Joiakim, son of Jeshua, the High Priest during the first return in 538 B.C.
- Vv.22-26 List the Levites during the times “Eliashib, Joiada, Johahan and Jaddua” (v.22)
- Spiritual genealogy, the high priests, priests and Levites who went back to Jerusalem, resettled and restarted and continued the worship of God. Faithful men who sacrificed and obey despite majority of the people of God not being in Jerusalem.
- Recorded to remind the people of God of their spiritual heritage (cf. Hebrews 11:4-38, 12:1-2)

### Christ Connection

- The people of God who decided to willingly and faithfully obeyed and sacrificed to return to Jerusalem, to resettle in Jerusalem – not when it was on the top 10 list of best cities in the world, but rather worst cities in the world – reminds us and points us to someone who did something similar, but even greater – Jesus
- In Jesus’ incarnation (coming into this world), Jesus left all the comforts of heaven and come into this world. Jesus in His willing obedience and sacrifice left His heavenly home for an earthly shack? He did so faithfully, joyfully because He loved the Father, trusted the Father – and He loved and loves this world – the people in it, you and me – not because we’re so loveable, though we’re created in His image but marred by sin – but because of His gracious, merciful love for us. And we see Jesus willingly step into, step onto, the most inconvenient, uncomfortable, painful, excruciating cross which He was crucified on as an atoning sacrifice for your sins and mine so that we our guilt and shame, our remorse and bitterness, our pride and our selfishness, could be forgiven.
- And this gospel message, the good news of Jesus, is what also empowers us to do the same. Jesus sets an example for us!

**Big Idea: *The church (i.e. Christians) is called to faithful obedience by being faithfully present – despite significant inconvenience(s) – as faithful witnesses of God’s glory (the Gospel)!***

### Reflection/Application Questions

- Who are some of the leaders (parents, pastors, teachers, coaches, etc.) in your life who have set a good example for you? Who are some people in your life that are good examples to you in following Jesus (being a Christian)? Why?
- What are some of the areas in your life where it is difficult to obey (and sacrifice to) God? Why? In what area(s) in your life is God perhaps calling you to faithfully trust and obey Him – even though it might mean being uncomfortable? How are you able to follow God even when it’s inconvenient or difficult to?
  - What are some areas in your life where perhaps God is calling you to faithfully present – even though perhaps you’d rather be in a different situation (or place)?
- How familiar are you with the faithful examples of those older than you – or those from the past? Consider asking someone older in our church this week to share with you about God’s faithfulness to him/her!
- *Parent Corner:* Consider sharing, discussing and/or praying with your child(ren) about what it might look like for them to be faithful despite difficulties in their present lives.