

'Building Blocks of Faith Series'

Sermons in the Book of Nehemiah

Message 20 - 'Urban Renewal' Nehemiah 11:1 - 12:26



As Nehemiah's work begins to come to a conclusion, the people have been acting in response to a great movement of God amongst them. Following this, they undertook a serious covenant to live in a manner pleasing to the Lord. This involved placing themselves under the authority of the Scriptures, separating themselves unto the Lord, and renewing their support for the house of God. Following this, Nehemiah repopulated the city of Jerusalem for the glory of God. As they did this, we can see that the work was done to plan in the following ways:

1. Repopulation - It would seem that as you do the maths (according to a majority of commentators), that the total number of adult males is 3044. Add to that the women and children and the estimate of the population of Jerusalem following the repopulation is around 10,000. As this is intended to be one-tenth of the population, the total number of Jews in Judah would have been around 100,000.

2. Organisation - This was not to be some ad-hoc movement of a rabble, rather his planning was such that it was an effective resettlement. The people knew their ancestry and their position. Jerusalem had a very clear government. Even the Jews who settled elsewhere did not just settle randomly, rather they tried to settle in their ancestral homes. The leaders are mentioned very clearly and show a clear structure.

3. Participation - When we continue to look at the planning and characteristics of this resettlement, we can see that the people were actively involved. It was leader and people co-operating towards a common purpose. The picture is of an arrangement on which the people as a whole agreed. It was not the case of a forcible uprooting and migration. Rather the attitude is that the people wanted the city to prosper and so willingly moved there.

4. A Religious Foundation and Focus - The fourth major aspect of the plan was Nehemiah's effort to revitalise Jerusalem was that he had a God-centred base. Nehemiah knew how essential it was that a community is bound together by some higher allegiance or priority, and that the one without compare and the only true and adequate base of such unity, for real brotherhood or community amongst people is devotion to the Lord. Jerusalem had a right focus on the Lord, a right religious base, and as a result there was cohesion and a strong sense of purpose.

Four lessons presented themselves to believers from the verses we considered last week in the light of this urban renewal:

1. **Put Yourself at God's Disposal**
2. **Each Person is Important in the Lord's Work**
3. **There is a Work for the Lord that You Can Do**
4. **As a Church we Must be a Christ-centred, Grace-fuelled, Bible-based Community in our Urban Situation**



Penzance Baptist Church

'Upholding the Ordinary Means of Grace'

Pastor Jonathan Stobbs