

Community Builders 11

Bringing a Community to Life

Nehemiah 11 -12.26



Sunday 26 June 2005

Responding to God's Call

¹ Now the leaders of the people settled in Jerusalem, and the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of every ten to live in Jerusalem, the holy city, while the remaining nine were to stay in their own towns. ² The people commended all the men who volunteered to live in Jerusalem.

It's easy to imagine, that with the rebuilding of the city walls, you have an instant fully functioning city. Like any city the right infrastructures had to be put into place; because Jerusalem had been a city without walls and vulnerable to attack, most of the exiles who had returned to Israel lived around Jerusalem but not in it. Now was the time to repopulate it.

This was a follow on from the pledges made in 9.38- 10.39.

" ... We will not neglect the temple of our God." Nehemiah 10:39

This demonstrated a willingness on the part of the community to give themselves to the purposes of God as determined by lot and by volunteering.

Living in Holiness

¹ Now the leaders of the people settled in Jerusalem, and the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of every ten to live in Jerusalem, the **holy city**, ...

As the people had consecrated themselves to God, Jerusalem could once again become a holy city. The key distinguishing factors were that God was to be worshipped there and that God's people were to be holy.

I am building a temple to honor the LORD my God. It will be a holy place where my people and I will worship him by burning incense of fragrant spices, where we will present offerings of sacred bread to him continuously, and where we will offer burnt offerings every morning and evening, as well as on Sabbaths, New Moon Festivals, and other holy days honoring the LORD our God. He has commanded Israel to do this forever.

2 Chronicles 2:4

God continues to call us to be a holy people, those called to belong to His family and to live for his glory. It is only as we allow His Holy Spirit to fill our lives (Romans 8.9) and seek to live our lives inspired and directed by God's Word, that This can be so.

Acting on whose Authority

... though the daily choice of music and musicians was decided by royal decree of the Persian king. Nehemiah 11:23 (CEV)

It is surprising to note that Artaxerxes the Persian ruler by whose permission Nehemiah had been permitted to return to Jerusalem also directed the worship that was offered to God.

God is Sovereign over all the nations and Artaxerxes had been serving his purposes 2.8. However it is unclear what personal knowledge or relationship that Artaxerxes had with God. Here he is directing worship. This could imply a delegated authority as Jerusalem was quite a distance from where Artaxerxes lived. Clearly though there is active involvement on the part of the King.

For us in the 21st C this raises the whole question of a State Church and its place within the UK. As a Baptist Church we are independent of the state in our decision making, in that sense we are a "Free Church".

As citizens of the UK we of course are still subject to the laws of our land.

Being Remembered

11.1 - 12.26 especially 12.24 David the man of God.

We can see once again many names in these verses, leaders, priests, Levites, Temple workers, and others. They had committed themselves to serve God see 10.39.

What strikes me is that people are remembered! Here David, the great King of Israel, is described simply as "the man of God". What a great accolade, we know David wasn't perfect, yet clearly he had a heart for God. The people remember David as God's man. What a great tribute if people are able to say of us that we are indeed the people of God.

Our names will not be explicitly stated in the Bible, yet Jesus says even more than the ministries that we offer, the most crucial thing is that we are in God's family, that we love God and know him.

Be happy that your names are written in heaven! Luke 10:20

Studies for Small Groups Nehemiah 11.1-12.26

1. Initially these verses seem to have very little to say to us, but digging deeper helps us to discover important truths. Take time to read through these verses and see what speaks to you.
2. Share how you came to Swindon, and what it is that has caused you to stay. Are there any other places that God has placed particularly upon your heart? This could be a country, or a specific place.
3. What was it that made Jerusalem a holy city v1? What does holiness mean for us today?
4. The Persian king exercised authority even in the worship within Jerusalem. How do you view a state Church? Consider its benefits and disadvantages.
5. Consider the various groups that moved into the city. Consider their ministries. How aware are we of God's calling upon our lives to know Him and also to use the gifts that he has given to us?