

Week 8. Nehemiah 11-12: Worship Restoration

These chapters, along with chapter 10 are the real climax of the book of Ezra-Nehemiah. The aim all along has been the restoration of God's people. Has it been achieved here?!
(Spoiler alert: there's another chapter and the New Testament to come!!!)

God's plans are always in progress towards an awesome future for his people

Outline

11:1-36 Repopulating God's City

- The progress of God's plans may look unimpressive. But they're still God's plans!
- The city of Jerusalem in 'the holy city' (11:1) but it is basically unpopulated
- Living in the city was more dangerous and less prosperous than the countryside
- The people who move in are 'commended' (v2). What would that look like today?
- The names are worth pausing for: All ordinary people commended for serving God

- NB: v25-36 the resettlement also includes Judah's territory
 - o The boundaries here go beyond 'post-exilic' Judah towards pre-exile land
 - o The land promised to Abraham is reflected and God's promises recalled

12:1-26 Recalling God's People

- The next list powerfully links the post-exilic generations of God's people
 - o From the first returners (Ezra 1-6) with Zerubbabel and Joshua
 - o To the generation of Ezra-Nehemiah: united as God's people in God's work
- How can we helpfully reflect on our unity with previous generations of God's people?

12:26-43 Rejoicing at God's Faithfulness

- Here's the climax. The temptation is to jump to this section. Don't do that!
- Nehemiah organises a praise party on the walls with imagination and passion
 - o This would have been deeply memorable. Something worth re-living
- 2 choirs of God's people is reminiscent of 2 choirs as they enter the land (Josh 8:30-35)

- v43: Joy/Rejoice appears *five times*: *"On that day they sacrificed great sacrifices, and they rejoiced because God caused them to rejoice with great rejoicing, and the women and children also rejoiced, so the rejoicing of Jerusalem could be heard a long way away."*

12:44-47 Restoring God's Worship

- Why are these verses here? Wouldn't 12:43 have been a good place to stop?
- These are more than boring logistical arrangements!
 - o They've examined Scripture closely & provide for the temple accordingly (v46)
 - o They are enacting the promises to provide for the temple made in chapter 10
- **God's people aren't waiting for a moment but a reality**
 - o The New Jerusalem is often imagined as a moment of triumphant worship
 - o God's plans are to call us into an ongoing life of worship, not a moment
 - o We don't have to fear reaching that moment and then thinking 'what next?'

Suggested Questions

- 11:1-3. What could it look like for you to ‘volunteer to live in Jerusalem’ today?
- 11:2-36. What might it look like for us to commend those who do this?
- 12:1-26. *Nehemiah links previous generations with the current one in serving God’s restoration plans*
How can we helpfully reflect on our unity with previous generations of God’s people?
- 12:27-43. *God’s people express great rejoicing at God’s work to restore them*
How can you creatively and memorably rejoice at God’s great work?
- 12:27-47. *Why does Nehemiah 12 not end with verse 23? What’s the deal with all the logistics?!*
What’s the difference between living for a future moment versus a future reality?
- How can you live in anticipation of serving God in worship in the new Jerusalem?

Intro Talk Outline

Ever feel God’s work in world seems unimpressive? Ordinary people making little progress?
God’s plans are always in progress towards an awesome future for his people

Jerusalem a long way from Persian capital. But it’s finished. Walls rebuilt! But: problem.
Practically uninhabited. Walls finished. City rebuilt. Covenant renewed.
Never about buildings and structures: always about people.
God’s place without God’s people is empty and fruitless. v1: holy city like Eden without A+E!

Plan: Move God’s people in. Lots...commissioned by God...volunteer: willing to go (v2)
Commended: Disadvantage. Move home, change work, less land. ↓ Prosper ↑ Danger

Restoring God’s people takes God’s people making God’s plans more than their own comfort
Us: Mission? Plants? Unseen inglorious service which enables God’s people worship & grow

Rest 11-12:26 lists. Ordinary people honoured—in Bible! Previous generations linked.

12:27: Climax! Finally. Memorable loud celebration of joy. v43 rejoice x5...

“On that day they sacrificed great sacrifices, and they rejoiced because God caused them to rejoice with great rejoicing, and the women and children also rejoiced, so the rejoicing of Jerusalem could be heard a long way away.”

Why not end chapter there? Why v44-47? Boring logistics!

Few reasons. Most: God’s plans never culminate in a moment. We’re made for momentum!
SO important. Mustn’t picture New Jerusalem as moment: Heaven, praise, now what?!!
New life of eternal worship! Pictured for us in restoring of old Jerusalem. Headed for now!