

Nehemiah 10-11

- Last week I offered the structure that united Chapters 8-10
 - Chapter 8 saw the people assembled for a reading of the Torah
 - Perhaps for the first time, they all heard the entirety of the Law
 - They came to understand the Covenant their forefather's agreed to on their behalf
 - They now recognize the way this Covenant regulates every aspect of their life
 - Then, in Chapter 9, we saw the people gather in a joyous celebration of prayer and worship
 - They were so moved by the reading of God's Word that they initially wept
 - But Nehemiah said this occasion was one of joy in the faithfulness of the Lord
 - So the people moved from mourning to feasting, celebrating the Feast of Booths, as required in the Law they only recently learned
- At the end of Chapter 9, their joyful celebration of the feast gave way to an awareness that Israel was still suffering under the Lord's chastisement for past sins under the Covenant
 - The nation was still under Gentile authority, which the Lord promised would be their punishment for breaking this Covenant
 - In the Law, the Lord proclaimed this outcome would come to pass for disobedient Israel

[Lev. 26:14](#) 'But if you do not obey Me and do not carry out all these commandments,
[Lev. 26:15](#) if, instead, you reject My statutes, and if your soul abhors My ordinances so as not to carry out all My commandments, and so break My covenant,
[Lev. 26:16](#) I, in turn, will do this to you: I will appoint over you a sudden terror, consumption and fever that will waste away the eyes and cause the soul to pine away; also, you will sow your seed uselessly, for your enemies will eat it up.
[Lev. 26:17](#) 'I will set My face against you so that you will be struck down before your enemies; and those who hate you will rule over you, and you will flee when no one is pursuing you.

- If the nation rejected the Law, then it would see itself suffering under a variety of curses, including being struck down by enemies
- The nation in Nehemiah's day was still experiencing the consequences of those curses
 - Every generation of Israel would experience the consequences of the Covenant, regardless of individual performance
 - Because the Covenant was a national agreement that bound the entire nation to its terms
 - If the entire nation met the requirements of the Law, then they would see blessings
 - But if even one member of the nation failed in keeping the Covenant, then the entire nation would suffer the penalties
- And this Covenant bound not only the generation of the exodus, but also every generation that follows
 - Once again, we see this in the Law itself

Deut. 29:14 "Now not with you alone am I making this covenant and this oath, Deut. 29:15 but both with those who stand here with us today in the presence of the LORD our God and with those who are not with us here today

- Every generation of Israel has been under the requirements of the Law
 - Which means that they are all suffering under the penalties of the Law as well
- So here in Nehemiah's day, the people are still bound by the Covenant
 - During the reading of the Covenant, the people came to learn that every facet of their daily lives was under the jurisdiction of the Law
 - They knew the burdens
 - They understood the blessings for obedience
 - And they realized the penalties that were promised for disobedience

- This new awareness introduced the third and final phase of restoration
 - The people recommit to obedience under the Covenant
 - They know of their ancestors' failings
 - But they are determined not to repeat them
- So the people, through their leaders, sign a pledge to obey the Law
 - In Chapter 10, we'll begin reading the names of those who signed on behalf of the people of Israel
 - And in the latter half, we hear their personal summary of the Law's requirements

Neh. 9:38 "Now because of all this

We are making an agreement in writing;

And on the sealed document are the names of our leaders, our Levites and our priests."

Neh. 10:1 Now on the sealed document were the names of: Nehemiah the governor, the son of Hacaliah, and Zedekiah,

Neh. 10:2 Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah,

Neh. 10:3 Pashhur, Amariah, Malchijah,

Neh. 10:4 Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch,

Neh. 10:5 Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah,

Neh. 10:6 Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch,

Neh. 10:7 Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin,

Neh. 10:8 Maaziah, Bilgai, Shemaiah. These were the priests.

Neh. 10:9 And the Levites: Jeshua the son of Azaniah, Binnui of the sons of Henadad, Kadmiel;

Neh. 10:10 also their brothers Shebaniah, Hodiah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan,

Neh. 10:11 Mica, Rehob, Hashabiah,

Neh. 10:12 Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah,

Neh. 10:13 Hodiah, Bani, Beninu.

Neh. 10:14 The leaders of the people: Parosh, Pahath-moab, Elam, Zattu, Bani,

Neh. 10:15 Bunni, Azgad, Bebai,

Neh. 10:16 Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin,

Neh. 10:17 Ater, Hezekiah, Azzur,

Neh. 10:18 Hodiah, Hashum, Bezai,

Neh. 10:19 Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai,

Neh. 10:20 Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir,

Neh. 10:21 Meshezabel, Zadok, Jaddua,

Neh. 10:22 Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah,

Neh. 10:23 Hoshea, Hananiah, Hasshub,

Neh. 10:24 Hallohesh, Pilha, Shobek,

[Neh. 10:25](#) Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah,

[Neh. 10:26](#) Ahiah, Hanan, Anan,

[Neh. 10:27](#) Malluch, Harim, Baanah.

[Neh. 10:28](#) Now the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple servants and all those who had separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the law of God, their wives, their sons and their daughters, all those who had knowledge and understanding,

[Neh. 10:29](#) are joining with their kinsmen, their nobles, and are taking on themselves a curse and an oath to walk in God's law, which was given through Moses, God's servant, and to keep and to observe all the commandments of GOD our Lord, and His ordinances and His statutes;

[Neh. 10:30](#) and that we will not give our daughters to the peoples of the land or take their daughters for our sons.

[Neh. 10:31](#) As for the peoples of the land who bring wares or any grain on the sabbath day to sell, we will not buy from them on the sabbath or a holy day; and we will forego the crops the seventh year and the exaction of every debt.

[Neh. 10:32](#) We also placed ourselves under obligation to contribute yearly one third of a shekel for the service of the house of our God:

[Neh. 10:33](#) for the showbread, for the continual grain offering, for the continual burnt offering, the sabbaths, the new moon, for the appointed times, for the holy things and for the sin offerings to make atonement for Israel, and all the work of the house of our God.

[Neh. 10:34](#) Likewise we cast lots for the supply of wood among the priests, the Levites and the people so that they might bring it to the house of our God, according to our fathers' households, at fixed times annually, to burn on the altar of the LORD our God, as it is written in the law;

[Neh. 10:35](#) and that they might bring the first fruits of our ground and the first fruits of all the fruit of every tree to the house of the LORD annually,

[Neh. 10:36](#) and bring to the house of our God the firstborn of our sons and of our cattle, and the firstborn of our herds and our flocks as it is written in the law, for the priests who are ministering in the house of our God.

[Neh. 10:37](#) We will also bring the first of our dough, our contributions, the fruit of every tree, the new wine and the oil to the priests at the chambers of the house of our God, and the tithe of our ground to the Levites, for the Levites are they who receive the tithes in all the rural towns.

[Neh. 10:38](#) The priest, the son of Aaron, shall be with the Levites when the Levites receive tithes, and the Levites shall bring up the tenth of the tithes to the house of our God, to the chambers of the storehouse.

[Neh. 10:39](#) For the sons of Israel and the sons of Levi shall bring the contribution of the grain, the new wine and the oil to the chambers; there are the utensils of the sanctuary, the priests who are ministering, the gatekeepers and the singers. Thus we will not neglect the house of our God.

- The chapter begins with the names of the heads of 21 priestly families

- Then, it continues to the names of 17 Levites who are not priests
- Then it moves to 44 heads of other families, probably elders in the nation at that time
- All together, these names represent the whole of Israel, terms of leadership
 - This is representative governing, which is something that has existed in Israel since the beginning of this Covenant
 - A few leaders were responsible in the time of Exodus for binding all Israel to the Covenant
 - Later, in Jesus' time, a few religious leaders are responsible for condemning all Israel for rejecting their Messiah
 - All through the history of the nation, the Lord has allowed the leadership to speak for the nation when it comes to the Mosaic Covenant
 - So it happens here again
- Then, in v.31, the people as a whole summarize the Law they jointly intended to keep
 - Notice Nehemiah describes them as a people who had separated themselves from the Gentiles and to the Law of God
 - This is a rededication to being the people of YHWH
 - They recognized that keeping the Law was a means to keeping them separate
 - And so, if they are to achieve that purpose, their obedience must not waiver
 - Because they've already experienced how the world hates them
 - In their restatement of the Law, it's interesting what they choose to focus on
 - Their concerns centered on three general issues
 - Not intermarrying with the Gentiles
 - Observing the Sabbath requirements, both of the Sabbath day and the Land Sabbath

- And the needs for worship
 - Caring for the needs of the priests
 - And supporting the operation of the temple
- Why did they focus on these issues? Because these were the chief sins that brought judgment to prior generations
 - First, past generations made the mistake time and time again of intermarrying with surrounding peoples
 - They would offer their daughters to these cultures and receive their sons
 - These relationships quickly introduced idolatry into the nation
 - The Northern Kingdom was taken by Assyria for this sin
- Secondly, as their hearts grew greedy over time, the nation set aside the Sabbath observances
 - The nation ceased observing the Sabbath day, preferring to work the extra day for more income
 - And the nation ceased leaving the land fallow every seventh year, as required
 - God provided a double portion in the sixth year, yet the people preferred to take an extra year of harvest in the seventh year as well
 - This is the reason God cited when He sent the Southern Kingdom into slavery in Babylon for 70 years
 - One year for every Land Sabbath they failed to observe over 490 years
- Finally, the nation became so corrupt that it introduced pagan idolatry into the temple, setting up pagan idols and employing priests of Baal to serve in the temple
 - These abominations were just the final stage of a descent into pure idolatry for Israel
 - Occasionally, a good king would come along to rescue the nation for a generation, but the die was cast

- The nation had walked away from a true worship with the Lord
- So now, the people have learned the lesson of why the Lord brought Israel into Babylon
 - And now they're determined not to repeat that mistake in their own generation
 - This is the true repentance that we expect to see in response to the Lord's kindness
 - He has been exceedingly kind to restore the nation back to its land
 - And as we've watched, He's been teaching them all the way through
 - Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah each played a role in bringing the nation to this point
 - Escorting exiles, teaching laws and building walls
 - But at the end of the day, the key was developing a heart of repentance in the people
 - That was the mission
 - Repentance isn't a feeling or attitude or even a statement
 - It's an action
 - To repent is to turn, so there must be an action consistent with repentance before we say it's present
 - And this is that moment when we see that movement away from the sins of Israel's past, at least on these issues
 - And truly, the nation never again falls prey to these particular sins
- The restoration of any child of God must eventually reach this point
 - Once we've been brought back under true worship, good teaching and godly leadership, the question is: how will we walk?
 - Will we repeat the sins that brought us under discipline in the first place?
 - Or will we walk in repentance?

- Consider the three areas that entrapped Israel, and notice how they relate to our own walk as Christians
 - First, Israel decided they would rather be friends with the world, rather than to remain separate and apart as God intended
 - Friendship with the world is always our first step away from obedience
 - James said:

James 4:4 You adulteresses, do you not know that **friendship with** the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

- If we are truly intent on walking with the Lord, then we have to make up our minds not to seek for what the world says is valuable or important
 - That's what it means to make friends with the world
 - Israel wanted to make friends with the neighboring people, so they established that friendship by establishing family connections
 - And in doing so, they became an enemy of God
 - And so will we, if we continue to allow the world to set our priorities
 - True repentance means forsaking the world
- Secondly, the people became greedy
 - Specifically, they began to rely upon themselves,
 - In particular, they sought to provide for themselves at the expense of their relationship with the Lord
 - The Sabbath has always been a picture of resting in Christ
 - So when Israel traded the rest of a Sabbath for the chance to earn more wealth, they were trading Christ's work for their own
 - If we are truly going to walk with the Lord, we must learn how to rest in Him and His promises and His goodness and power to provide
 - But more than simply financial provision, we need to be ready to rest in Him for everything that the world throws our way

- When the world is in a panic about economic collapse, environmental disasters, disease or drought
- No matter the circumstance, we need not worry, for we rest in Christ
 - Not that we assume no calamity will befall us
 - But because no matter the calamity, it can't do worse to us than kill the body, which is destined to die anyway
- As Jesus said:

[John 12:25](#) “ He who loves **his life loses** it, and he who hates **his life** in this world will keep it to **life** eternal.

- Finally, Israel fell because they placed no importance on the house of the Lord and the proper means and meaning of worship
 - They profaned the chance to assemble and meet with the Lord
 - In the place of spending time in God's presence, they substituted pursuits of the flesh, idolatry and other indulgences
 - They enjoyed living for themselves only
 - They reveled in the lack of accountability
 - And the more things change, the more they stay the same
 - Today, a Christian's walk with the Lord is directly proportional to their personal diligence to assemble and worship with God's people on a regular basis
 - Attendance at a church service isn't the requirement
 - Participation in the Body through some kind of spiritual service is the key
 - I've seen far too many believers wander away from the faith because, in part, they lacked a true commitment to the gathering
 - When Sundays or Wednesdays rolled around, they always found something more important to do
 - And that something was usually flesh-bound

- Something to indulge the flesh
- Anything to avoid the inevitable sense of conviction and accountability that hearing the Word of God produces
- If we are to show the works of repentance, then we must remain committed to the house of God, which means remaining committed to the gathering
 - More than attendance, we must invest ourselves in that gathering
 - As Paul says in Romans 12:

Rom. 12:1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

- Worship means service within the context of the Body gathered
- Neglect our responsibilities to worship through our service and we're moving away from the Lord, which isn't repentance
 - It's regression
- Now to finish the lesson, we move through Chapter 11
 - The scene in this chapter also runs into Chapter 12, but we'll only look at this one chapter tonight

Neh. 11:1 Now the leaders of the people lived in Jerusalem, but the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to live in Jerusalem, the holy city, while nine-tenths remained in the other cities.

Neh. 11:2 And the people blessed all the men who volunteered to live in Jerusalem.

- At the time that the wall was complete, the city of Jerusalem was occupied by just the leaders of the people
 - The leaders have remained in the city to hold the ground and protect the walls
 - Until the walls were complete, no one would have lived in the city under any circumstances
 - There was simply no reason to be there
 - It was dangerous

- And there was no commercial purpose for being there
- The people would rather live on the plot of land they received after they returned
 - They are raising flocks and raising crops
 - Apart from the temple, the city of Jerusalem holds no interest for them
- Now, the walls are repaired and the city is ready to be reoccupied
 - Nehemiah needs the city to be repopulated so it may flourish and survive
 - He wants the best Jewish families to occupy the city
 - But there isn't much room in the city
 - Jerusalem is a relatively small town
 - At best, it could probably house 8,000 people
 - In v.1, we're told that Nehemiah solves the problem by holding a lottery
 - Most interpreters read vs.1-2 as a lottery to see who gets to go into the city
 - But the language of the text suggests a different possibility to me
 - It reads as though this was a lottery to see who *must* go into the city
 - Notice it says that the lots were to select who must be "brought" out of the land and into Jerusalem
 - And then, those who are selected are blessed by the rest for volunteering to live in the city
 - The word choice in vs.1-2 suggests that this is a hardship duty for those who move into the cramped and undeveloped city
 - They are the pioneers, giving up the comforts of their present home to live in the city as a sacrifice for the nation
 - I'm sure they saw the opportunity as an honor, but perhaps in the same way that a soldier is honored to die for his country

- Then, in vs.3-24, is a list of the new residents of Jerusalem

Neh. 11:3 Now these are the heads of the provinces who lived in Jerusalem, but in the cities of Judah each lived on his own property in their cities – the Israelites, the priests, the Levites, the temple servants and the descendants of Solomon’s servants.

Neh. 11:4 Some of the sons of Judah and some of the sons of Benjamin lived in Jerusalem. From the sons of Judah: Athaiah the son of Uzziah, the son of Zechariah, the son of Amariah, the son of Shephatiah, the son of Mahalalel, of the sons of Perez;

Neh. 11:5 and Maaseiah the son of Baruch, the son of Col-hozeh, the son of Hazaiah, the son of Adaiah, the son of Joiarib, the son of Zechariah, the son of the Shilonite.

Neh. 11:6 All the sons of Perez who lived in Jerusalem were 468 able men.

Neh. 11:7 Now these are the sons of Benjamin: Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Joed, the son of Pedaiah, the son of Kolaiah, the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ithiel, the son of Jeshaiiah;

Neh. 11:8 and after him Gabbai and Sallai, 928.

Neh. 11:9 Joel the son of Zichri was their overseer, and Judah the son of Hassenuah was second in command of the city.

Neh. 11:10 From the priests: Jedaiah the son of Joiarib, Jachin,

Neh. 11:11 Seraiah the son of Hilkiah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, the leader of the house of God,

Neh. 11:12 and their kinsmen who performed the work of the temple, 822; and Adaiah the son of Jeroham, the son of Pelaliah, the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah, the son of Pashhur, the son of Malchijah,

Neh. 11:13 and his kinsmen, heads of fathers’ households, 242; and Amashsai the son of Azarel, the son of Ahzai, the son of Meshillemoth, the son of Immer,

Neh. 11:14 and their brothers, valiant warriors, 128. And their overseer was Zabdiel, the son of Haggadolim.

Neh. 11:15 Now from the Levites: Shemaiah the son of Hasshub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni;

Neh. 11:16 and Shabbethai and Jozabad, from the leaders of the Levites, who were in charge of the outside work of the house of God;

Neh. 11:17 and Mattaniah the son of Mica, the son of Zabdi, the son of Asaph, who was the leader in beginning the thanksgiving at prayer, and Bakbukiah, the second among his brethren; and Abda the son of Shammua, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun.

Neh. 11:18 All the Levites in the holy city were 284.

Neh. 11:19 Also the gatekeepers, Akkub, Talmon and their brethren who kept watch at the gates, were 172.

Neh. 11:20 The rest of Israel, of the priests and of the Levites, were in all the cities of Judah, each on his own inheritance.

Neh. 11:21 But the temple servants were living in Ophel, and Ziha and Gishpa were in charge of the temple servants.

[Neh. 11:22](#) Now the overseer of the Levites in Jerusalem was Uzzi the son of Bani, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Mica, from the sons of Asaph, who were the singers for the service of the house of God.

[Neh. 11:23](#) For there was a commandment from the king concerning them and a firm regulation for the song leaders day by day.

[Neh. 11:24](#) Pethahiah the son of Meshezabel, of the sons of Zerah the son of Judah, was the king's representative in all matters concerning the people.

- Just a quick summary of the list is appropriate
 - The residents included members of the tribe of Judah, Levi and Benjamin
 - This makes sense, since these were the tribes occupying the Southern Kingdom when it was taken away to Babylon
 - Any other tribes were prohibited from living in the city
 - They were allowed to live in the surrounding lands
 - The reason other tribes were excluded, was to ensure that only pureblooded Jews occupied the city
 - The other tribes were taken in the earlier invasion of Assyria
 - And many of the Jews of the northern tribes intermarried with the Assyrians and other Gentiles in the years that followed
 - Only the Jews from Judah, Levi and Benjamin were sure to be pureblooded Jews
 - Notice, in v.21, a place was made available inside the city for the temple servants
 - In fact, a significant part of the city is devoted to the Levites and those who served the temple
 - That was a key purpose in the city inhabitants
 - To support the operations of the temple
 - The Lord's temple didn't exist for the city; the city existed for the temple
 - Finally, a representative of the king of Persia, Pethahiah, also entered the city

- Apparently, Artaxerxes wanted a man on the ground to check out the happenings in the city
- All together, about 5,000-8,000 people moved in at this time
- The next section describes those who remained outside the walls

[Neh. 11:25](#) Now as for the villages with their fields, some of the sons of Judah lived in Kiriath-arba and its towns, in Dibon and its towns, and in Jekabzeel and its villages,

[Neh. 11:26](#) and in Jeshua, in Moladah and Beth-pelet,

[Neh. 11:27](#) and in Hazar-shual, in Beersheba and its towns,

[Neh. 11:28](#) and in Ziklag, in Meconah and in its towns,

[Neh. 11:29](#) and in En-rimmon, in Zorah and in Jarmuth,

[Neh. 11:30](#) Zanoah, Adullam, and their villages, Lachish and its fields, Azekah and its towns. So they encamped from Beersheba as far as the valley of Hinnom.

[Neh. 11:31](#) The sons of Benjamin also lived from Geba onward, at Michmash and Aija, at Bethel and its towns,

[Neh. 11:32](#) at Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah,

[Neh. 11:33](#) Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim,

[Neh. 11:34](#) Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat,

[Neh. 11:35](#) Lod and Ono, the valley of craftsmen.

[Neh. 11:36](#) From the Levites, some divisions in Judah belonged to Benjamin.

- This group is described in terms of the cities they occupied
 - The name places mentioned here stretch north to south throughout Judah
 - Looking south, they range from the Hinnom Valley south of Jerusalem to the southern border of Israel, at Beersheba
 - And in the north, they go as far as the border with Samaria
 - There are 17 towns for the tribe of Judah and 15 towns of the tribe of Benjamin mentioned in this list
 - The Levites lived among the general population, since the Levites were not given a portion in the land
 - This explains why the other tribes were required to care for the Levites
 - The priests were a part of Israel, yet a special class, set apart
 - By having them live among the other tribes, they became a source of good influence in the culture

- They were the local pastor, as it were, for the other tribes
- All in all, the society of Israel has been restored to a structure they haven't seen since the time of Joshua
 - This is a remarkable transformation, when you consider the state of Israel immediately prior to the captivity
 - Instead of idolatry, the nation has pledged obedience to God's Law
 - Instead of mixing with the culture, the people are living to serve the Lord
 - Instead of profaning the house of God, they are protecting it
 - Instead of living for themselves, they are making sacrifices for each other and for the Lord
 - Restoration is a beautiful thing when accompanied by a willing, humble heart