

## PERIMETER & PEOPLE

Theme: In setting up walls of holy distinction, there must also be preservation of holy service.  
(All Scripture is taken from The New King James Version, unless otherwise indicated.)

In the previous chapter of Nehemiah, we were told that the hard work of the building of the city wall was completed. Nehemiah 6:15-16 tells us;

*So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of Elul, in fifty-two days. And it happened, when all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations around us saw these things, that they were very disheartened in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was done by our God (Nehemiah 6:15-16).*

Against remarkably hostile odds, and against continual strain and discouragements, the work was done in remarkably quick time—in only fifty-two days. Clearly the 'good hand of God' that was upon the work at the beginning (2:8) had brought the work to completion.

And now, we come to Chapter 7. The purpose of this chapter is best seen by looking at its last verse. The latter half of Nehemiah 7:73 says, “When the seventh month came, the children of Israel were in their cities.” The people were settled. That last verse, then, will lead us into the events of spiritual reform that are described for us in Chapters 8-10. Nehemiah was not concerned only with the city wall; but also with the spiritual condition of the people within the land itself. And so, in preparation for the great spiritual reforms that would be brought about, the spiritual aspects of the wall itself must be completed. The gates to the wall had to be established and protected; so that those who didn't belong inside were kept out, and those who did belong inside were kept holy. The times in which those gates were active needed to be defined; so that nothing was happening at any time that could cause harm. And within the city, those who ministered needed to be confirmed as having true spiritual authorization to do so.

And so, in that spirit, we come to Chapter 7. It's a careful record of Nehemiah's attention to these important provisions. The wall of the city is meant to be a symbol to us of a holy distinction of God's church from this world. And as this chapter shows us, in setting up walls of distinction, there must also be the establishment of standards for holy service in God's household—so that God's gracious work is protected and preserved.

Without attention to the holy standards within, there's not much point to having the walls of outward distinction.

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Nehemiah begins by telling us about ...

### 1 PROTECTING THE PERIMETER (vv. 1-3).

Nehemiah wrote;

*Then it was, when the wall was built and I had hung the doors, when the gatekeepers, the singers, and the Levites had been appointed, that I gave the charge of*

*Jerusalem to my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the leader of the citadel, for he was a faithful man and feared God more than many (vv. 1-2).*

Hanani was the brother of Nehemiah who first brought a report to him of the condition of the wall and of the people (see 1:2-3). Hanani was a trustworthy man who, obviously, had a heart for the condition of the city. Now that the wall was completed, Nehemiah was required to return to his role of service to King Artaxerxes; and he could trust the city to his brother. Along with Hanani was Hananiah—an established leader who had apparently served with Nehemiah at the king's palace in Shushan (see 1:1). What a testimony Nehemiah gives of him!—that he was a faithful man “and feared God more than many”. After the walls were completed, Nehemiah didn't leave the city without first establishing reliable leadership that had a heart for God and for His people.

Along with them, Nehemiah established “gatekeepers”. A good wall has good entries and good exits. The gates must be supervised so that no one was kept out who belonged in. And they must be guarded so that no one came in who didn't belong. The gatekeepers were responsible for making sure that the activities of the gates were protected—so that nothing was brought in under the cover of night. He entrusted this responsibility to Hanani and Hananiah;

*And I said to them, “Do not let the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot; and while they stand guard, let them shut and bar the doors; and appoint guards from among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, one at his watch station and another in front of his own house” (v. 3).*

But Nehemiah was concerned with more than just keeping bad things out. He wanted to make sure that there were good things going on within to the glory of God. He established “singers” who were responsible for preserving sacred worship—preserving joy and reverence within the city. And he also appointed the Levites as the established servants of the sacred worship of God—preserving the sacred duties of the temple.

In keeping the church as a distinct people in the world, we ought to have well-protected, well-supervised 'gates'—keeping the sins of this world out, but making it possible for those who seek to know our Savior to come in and discover Him—to find Him being worshiped in truth.

Next—in the longest section of this chapter—we find Nehemiah telling us how he went about the task of

## **2. PRESERVING THE PEOPLE (vv. 4-73a).**

Nehemiah wrote;

*Now the city was large and spacious, but the people in it were few, and the houses were not rebuilt. Then my God put it into my heart to gather the nobles, the rulers, and the people, that they might be registered by genealogy (4-5a).*

The records of the families of Israel were important to God's plan for them. He had established boundaries and land allocations for His people. And also, He established that certain tribes had certain roles. And so; with so few people, and so much space, some strategic planning needed to take place. The God who cared about the inheritance of His people also put it in Nehemiah's heart to do this.

And as it turns out, it wasn't left to anyone's imagination how it was to be done. Nehemiah wrote;

*And I found a register of the genealogy of those who had come up in the first return, and found written in it (v. 5b) ...*

Some twelve years before—in 444 B.C.—the scribe Ezra preserved a careful record of the families who came in the first wave of return from captivity in 538 B.C. It may have been that Ezra passed on this careful record from previous sources, or that he carefully wrote it down himself. But in any event, Nehemiah obtained this record and included it in his 'diary' of events. His reproduction of this 'register' is almost identical to the one given to us in Ezra 2.

There are a few differences between the lists of names in order; and there are omissions here or there. But as a passage-by-passage comparison shows, there is remarkable agreement. Below, you'll find the two records set side-by-side.

First, we see the prologue to the record; showing us the leaders who came to Jerusalem with Shishbazzar, prince of Judah (Ezra 1:8-11) by the permission of Cyrus, king of Persia:

### ***Nehemiah 7***

*These are the people of the province who came back from the captivity, of those who had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away, and who returned to Jerusalem and Judah, everyone to his city. Those who came with Zerubbabel were Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, and Baanah (vv. 6-7a).*

### ***Ezra 2***

*Now these are the people of the province who came back from the captivity, of those who had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away to Babylon, and who returned to Jerusalem and Judah, everyone to his own city. Those who came with Zerubbabel were Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah (vv. 1-2a).*

Next comes a careful list of the names of the families of the people of Israel who returned. This list is important; because the city was to be occupied by those who truly belonged there—who truly were of the lineage of the Jewish people. The area was large; but the people were scattered. So, this careful record was consulted:

### ***Nehemiah 7***

*7b The number of the men of the people of Israel:*

*8 the sons of Parosh,  
two thousand one hundred and seventy-two;*

*9 the sons of Shephatiah,  
three hundred and seventy-two;*

### ***Ezra 2***

*(2b) The number of the men of the people of Israel:*

*3 the people of Parosh  
two thousand one hundred and seventy-two;*

*4 the people of Shephatiah,  
three hundred and seventy-two;*

*10 the sons of Arah,  
six hundred and fifty-two;*

*11 the sons of Pahath-Moab,  
of the sons of Jeshua and Joab,  
two thousand eight hundred and eighteen;*

*12 the sons of Elam, one thousand  
two hundred and fifty-four;*

*13 the sons of Zattu,  
eight hundred and forty-five;*

*14 the sons of Zaccai,  
seven hundred and sixty;*

*15 the sons of Binnui,  
six hundred and forty-eight;*

*16 the sons of Bebai,  
six hundred and twenty-eight;*

*17 the sons of Azgad, two thousand  
three hundred and twenty-two;*

*18 the sons of Adonikam,  
six hundred and sixty-seven;*

*19 the sons of Bigvai,  
two thousand and sixty-seven;*

*20 the sons of Adin,  
six hundred and fifty-five;*

*21 the sons of Ater of Hezekiah,  
ninety-eight;*

*22 the sons of Hashum,  
three hundred and twenty-eight;*

*23 the sons of Bezai,  
three hundred and twenty-four;*

*24 the sons of Hariph,  
one hundred and twelve;*

*5 the people of Arah,  
seven hundred and seventy-five;*

*6 the people of Pahath-Moab,  
of the people of Jeshua and Joab,  
two thousand eight hundred and twelve;*

*7 the people of Elam,  
one thousand two hundred and fifty-four;*

*8 the people of Zattu,  
nine hundred and forty-five;*

*9 the people of Zaccai,  
seven hundred and sixty;*

*10 the people of Bani,  
six hundred and forty-two;*

*11 the people of Bebai,  
six hundred and twenty-three;*

*12 the people of Azgad,  
one thousand two hundred and twenty-two;*

*13 the people of Adonikam,  
six hundred and sixty-six;*

*14 the people of Bigvai,  
two thousand and fifty-six;*

*15 the people of Adin,  
four hundred and fifty-four;*

*16 the people of Ater of Hezekiah,  
ninety-eight;*

*17 the people of Bezai,  
three hundred and twenty-three;*

*18 the people of Jorah,  
one hundred and twelve;*

*19 the people of Hashum,  
two hundred and twenty-three;*

*25 the sons of Gibeon,  
ninety-five;*

*26 the men of Bethlehem and Netophah,  
one hundred and eighty-eight;*

*27 the men of Anathoth,  
one hundred and twenty-eight;*

*28 the men of Beth Azmaveth,  
forty-two;*

*29 the men of Kirjath Jearim, Chephirah,  
and Beeroth,  
seven hundred and forty-three;*

*30 the men of Ramah and Geba,  
six hundred and twenty-one;*

*31 the men of Michmas,  
one hundred and twenty-two;*

*32 the men of Bethel and Ai,  
one hundred and twenty-three;*

*33 the men of the other Nebo, fifty-two;*

*34 the sons of the other Elam,  
one thousand two hundred and fifty-four;*

*35 the sons of Harim,  
three hundred and twenty;*

*36 the sons of Jericho,  
three hundred and forty-five;*

*37 the sons of Lod, Hadid, and Ono,  
seven hundred and twenty-one;*

*20 the people of Gibbar,  
ninety-five;*

*21 the people of Bethlehem,  
one hundred and twenty-three;*

*22 the men of Netophah,  
fifty-six;*

*23 the men of Anathoth,  
one hundred and twenty-eight;*

*24 the people of Azmaveth,  
forty-two;*

*25 the people of Kirjath Arim, Chephirah,  
and Beeroth,  
seven hundred and forty-three;*

*26 the people of Ramah and Geba,  
six hundred and twenty-one;*

*27 the men of Michmas,  
one hundred and twenty-two;*

*28 the men of Bethel and Ai,  
two hundred and twenty-three;*

*29 the people of Nebo, fifty-two;*

*30 the people of Magbish,  
one hundred and fifty-six;*

*31 the people of the other Elam,  
one thousand two hundred and fifty-four;*

*32 the people of Harim,  
three hundred and twenty;*

*33 the people of Lod, Hadid, and Ono,  
seven hundred and twenty-five;*

*34 the people of Jericho,  
three hundred and forty-five;*

*38 the sons of Senaah,  
three thousand nine hundred and thirty.*

*35 the people of Senaah,  
three thousand six hundred and thirty.*

Then, the list of the priests was consulted. Someone couldn't simply declare themselves to be a priest of God. They had to come from the priestly lineage of Aaron; otherwise they were disqualified for service. Ezra preserved the record of those priests who returned; and now, that record was examined by Nehemiah to make sure that those who would serve truly were qualified to do so.

***Nehemiah 7***

*39 The priests: the sons of Jedaiah,  
of the house of Jeshua,  
nine hundred and seventy-three;*

*40 the sons of Immer,  
one thousand and fifty-two;*

*41 the sons of Pashhur,  
one thousand two hundred and forty-seven;*

*42 the sons of Harim,  
one thousand and seventeen.*

***Ezra 2***

*36 The priests: the sons of Jedaiah,  
of the house of Jeshua,  
nine hundred and seventy-three;*

*37 the sons of Immer  
one thousand and fifty-two;*

*38 the sons of Pashhur,  
one thousand two hundred and forty-seven;*

*39 the sons of Harim,  
one thousand and seventeen.*

Then came the Levites; who were members of the tribe that God had set aside for the duties of the temple. There were much fewer of them that had returned than of the priests. But their service also needed to be confirmed as to lineage.

***Nehemiah 7***

*43 The Levites:  
the sons of Jeshua, of Kadmiel,  
and of the sons of  
Hodevah, seventy-four.*

*44 The singers:  
the sons of Asaph,  
one hundred and forty-eight.*

***Ezra 2***

*40 The Levites:  
the sons of Jeshua and Kadmiel,  
of the sons of Hodaviah,  
seventy-four.*

*41 The singers:  
the sons of Asaph,  
one hundred and twenty-eight.*

Then, the record of the gatekeepers was consulted:

### ***Nehemiah 7***

*The gatekeepers: the sons of Shallum, the sons of Ater, the sons of Talmon, the sons of Akkub, the sons of Hatita, the sons of Shobai, one hundred and thirty-eight (v. 45).*

Then came the list of the Nethinim. The Hebrew word that is used means “given”; and these were those non-Jewish families that were given by God to the Levites to help them in the service of the temple work (possibly having their roots in the people of Gibeon who are described to us in Joshua 9).

### ***Nehemiah 7***

*The Nethinim: the sons of Ziha, the sons of Hasupha, the sons of Tabbaoth, the sons of Keros, the sons of Sia, the sons of Padon, the sons of Lebanah, the sons of Hagaba, the sons of Salmal, the sons of Hanan, the sons of Giddel, the sons of Gahar, the sons of Reaiah, the sons of Rezin, the sons of Nekoda, the sons of Gazzam, the sons of Uzza, the sons of Paseah, the sons of Besai, the sons of Meunim, the sons of Nephishesim, the sons of Bakbuk, the sons of Hakupha, the sons of Harhur, the sons of Bazlith, the sons of Mehida, the sons of Harsha, the sons of Barkos, the sons of Sisera, the sons of Tamah, the sons of Neziah, and the sons of Hatipha. (vv. 46-56).*

### ***Nehemiah 7***

*The sons of Solomon’s servants: the sons of Sotai, the sons of Sophereth,*

### ***Ezra 2***

*The sons of the gatekeepers: the sons of Shallum, the sons of Ater, the sons of Talmon, the sons of Akkub, the sons of Hatita, and the sons of Shobai, one hundred and thirty-nine in all (v. 42).*

### ***Ezra 2***

*The Nethinim: the sons of Ziha, the sons of Hasupha, the sons of Tabbaoth, the sons of Keros, the sons of Siaha, the sons of Padon, the sons of Lebanah, the sons of Hagabah, the sons of Akkub, the sons of Hagab, the sons of Shalmal, the sons of Hanan, the sons of Giddel, the sons of Gahar, the sons of Reaiah, the sons of Rezin, the sons of Nekoda, the sons of Gazzam, the sons of Uzza, the sons of Paseah, the sons of Besai, the sons of Asnah, the sons of Meunim, the sons of Nephusim, the sons of Bakbuk, the sons of Hakupha, the sons of Harhur, the sons of Bazluth, the sons of Mehida, the sons of Harsha, the sons of Barkos, the sons of Sisera, the sons of Tamah, the sons of Neziah, and the sons of Hatipha. (vv. 43-54).*

Then we find the list of the sons of King Solomon's servants. These were surviving captives of nations that the Jewish people had conquered in the time of King David, and who Solomon had put into service (1 Kings 9:20-22). Their presence and service had become an ongoing part of life in the kingdom of the Jewish people; and so they too were included in the record.

### ***Ezra 2***

*The sons of Solomon’s servants: the sons of Sotai, the sons of Sophereth,*

*the sons of Perida, the sons of Jaala,  
the sons of Darkon, the sons of Giddel,  
the sons of Shephatiah, the sons of Hattil,  
the sons of Pochereth of Zebaim,  
and the sons of Amon.*

*All the Nethinim, and the sons  
of Solomon's servants, were  
three hundred and ninety-two  
(vv. 57-60).*

Some who had come up with those who returned were not able to confirm their history. They were included in the list as part of the population; but they were kept back from service in any sacred work until their lineage could be confirmed. Nothing was left to guess-work.

### ***Nehemiah 7***

*And these were the ones who came up from  
Tel Melah, Tel Harsha, Cherub, Addon, and  
Immer, but they could not identify their father's  
house nor their lineage, whether they were  
of Israel:*

*the sons of Delaiah, the sons of Tobiah,  
the sons of Nekoda,  
six hundred and forty-two;  
and of the priests:*

*the sons of Habaiah, the sons of Koz,  
the sons of Barzillai, who took a wife  
of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite,  
and was called by their name.*

*These sought their listing among those who  
were registered by genealogy, but it was not  
found; therefore they were excluded from the  
priesthood as defiled. And the governor said to  
them that they should not eat of the most holy  
things till a priest could consult with the Urim  
and Thummim (vv. 61-65).*

The totals were added up and carefully recorded.

### ***Nehemiah 7***

*Altogether the whole assembly was  
forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty,  
besides their male and female servants, of*

*the sons of Peruda, the sons of Jaala,  
the sons of Darkon, the sons of Giddel,  
the sons of Shephatiah, the sons of Hattil,  
the sons of Pochereth of Zebaim,  
and the sons of Ami.*

*All the Nethinim and the children  
of Solomon's servants were  
three hundred and ninety-two  
(vv. 55-58).*

### ***Ezra 2***

*And these were the ones who came up from  
Tel Melah, Tel Harsha, Cherub, Addan, and  
Immer; but they could not identify their  
father's house or their genealogy, whether  
they were of Israel:*

*the sons of Delaiah, the sons of Tobiah,  
and the sons of Nekoda,  
six hundred and fifty-two;  
and of the sons of the priests:*

*the sons of Habaiah, the sons of Koz,  
and the sons of Barzillai, who took a wife  
of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite,  
and was called by their name.*

*These sought their listing among those who  
were registered by genealogy, but they were  
not found; therefore they were excluded  
from the priesthood as defiled. And the  
governor said to them that they should not  
eat of the most holy things till a priest could  
consult with the Urim and Thummim  
(vv. 59-63).*

### ***Ezra 2***

*The whole assembly together was  
forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty,  
besides their male and female servants, of*



*whom there were seven thousand three hundred and thirty-seven; and they had two hundred and forty-five men and women singers. Their horses were seven hundred and thirty-six, their mules two hundred and forty-five, their camels four hundred and thirty-five, and donkeys six thousand seven hundred and twenty (vv. 66-69).*

*whom there were seven thousand three hundred and thirty-seven; and they had two hundred men and women singers. Their horses were seven hundred and thirty-six, their mules two hundred and forty-five, their camels four hundred and thirty-five, and their donkeys six thousand seven hundred and twenty (vv. 64-67).*

And even the donations to the supply of the priestly work was recorded.

***Nehemiah 7***

*And some of the heads of the fathers' houses gave to the work. The governor gave to the treasury one thousand gold drachmas, fifty basins, and five hundred and thirty priestly garments. Some of the heads of the fathers' houses gave to the treasury of the work twenty thousand gold drachmas, and two thousand two hundred silver minas. And that which the rest of the people gave was twenty thousand gold drachmas, two thousand silver minas, and sixty-seven priestly garments (vv. 70-72).*

***Ezra 2***

*Some of the heads of the fathers' houses, when they came to the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem, offered freely for the house of God, to erect it in its place: According to their ability, they gave to the treasury for the work sixty-one thousand gold drachmas, five thousand minas of silver, and one hundred priestly garment (vv. 68-69).*

The conclusion of the old record is stated.

***Nehemiah 7***

*So the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, some of the people, the Nethinim, and all Israel dwelt in their cities (v. 73a).*

***Ezra 2***

*So the priests and the Levites, some of the people, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the Nethinim, dwelt in their cities, and all Israel in their cities (v. 70).*

And so, having carefully examined the record, Nehemiah wrote this comment at the end of verse 73: "When the seventh month came, the children of Israel were in their cities." The wall was built, and everyone was where they should be. Perimeter and people were settled.

\* \* \* \* \*

This gives us a spiritual illustration of the great need of the church. In terms of guarding the perimeter, the apostle John wrote this in his second letter:

*For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward. Whoever*

*transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds (2 John 7-11).*

And in terms of opening the gates to God's servants, John wrote this in his third letter:

*Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, who have borne witness of your love before the church. If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well, because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth (3 John 5-8).*

May we, by God's grace, be faithful to protect and preserve the integrity of God's house—both in terms of its perimeter and its people!