

Nehemiah 11:1-4 – Volunteering for the Kingdom

TSK, HebrewLexicon, Gill, Barnes, Clarke, Armstrong, Gaebelein, Expositor, Geneva, Gray, JFB, Delitzsch, Henry, Poole, Trapp, Handfuls, Brothers and Sisters in the Lord: **Suppose you have to pack up your things**, sell your beautiful house, give up your land, your garden with fresh produce, lose seeing your friends, leave your church behind, and then move to somewhere there is not even good internet connection, no fresh produce, and no security. **Would you volunteer to go if asked?** **Suppose you have to do it to help distant relatives** you don't know and don't speak the same language as they, and suppose the new neighbors hate you and everything you stand for! **Would you volunteer to go?** **Suppose you have to do this for someone you saved your life...would you go?** Maybe not!

Some Jews in the countryside who survived the Babylonian attacks, were asked to volunteer to go (with their families) to dangerous Jerusalem and settle there. Let's see how they responded.

Our headings are:

God chose the volunteers

Men honored the volunteers

God honored the volunteers

Our goals are: **That you will be willing to make sacrifices for the one who sacrificed his life on Calvary for you.**

God chose the volunteers

1 Now the leaders of the people dwelt at Jerusalem; **the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to dwell in Jerusalem, the holy city**, and nine-tenths were to dwell in other cities.

1. Jerusalem had a problem which needed to be addressed: There was a shortage of men there.

a. The shortage was so severe they could not defend it and there were many threats. Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem, Arabians, Ashdodites...among others. The enemies truly hated Jerusalem, mostly because it was a prosperous place.

Nehemiah 7:4 Now the city was large and spacious, but the people in it were few, and the houses were not rebuilt.

Some of the people who worked on the wall were from neighboring towns, not residents of Jerusalem, so they went back to their towns after the wall was repaired. There were less than 20,00 people in Jerusalem at this time, by the best estimates.

b. With the city decimated, there weren't many job opportunities there.

c. Proper order had not yet been established. They needed law makers, judges, and a redeveloped social structure.

Psalms 122:5 For thrones are set there for judgment, The thrones of the house of David.

d. A strong Jerusalem was good for business and they needed to recapture all that lost revenue for the nation. Jerusalem was a thriving metropolis before the Assyrian captivity in 722BC and the Babylonian captivity in 586BC.

e. The temple had been rebuilt, but there were not many to worship Yahweh...or even help with the worship.

f. Jerusalem was the place from which Messiah would come and die for the sins of the world and they needed it in the hands of Israel. They needed the land properly occupied. They had to find a solution and find it fast.

2. But why is Jerusalem described as a holy city?

Jerusalem was the place where the Ark of the Covenant was, which represented the **very presence of God**. But more!

There was the **place for sacrifice of animals that pictured Christ**. There were the other things of the temple also – **Holy Place with the Trinity picture by the Table of the Showbread, the Table with the Lampstand, and the Altar of Incense.**

Joel 3: 17 "So you shall know that I am the LORD your God, **Dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem shall be holy**. And no aliens shall ever pass through her again."

The church, the New Jerusalem, is also described as the Holy City.

Daniel 9: 24 **"Seventy weeks are determined For your people and for your holy city, To finish the transgression**, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy.

Revelation 3:12 "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And **I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem**, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.

3. So the leaders decided to cast lots so see who would go to live in Jerusalem for the kingdom's sake.

Why lots? God required this. This way not one could say, "They made me come to Jerusalem because they did not like me."

Proverbs 18:18 **Casting lots causes contentions to cease**, And keeps the mighty apart.

Proverbs 16: 33 The lot is cast into the lap, **But its every decision is from the LORD.**

4. They decided that they would try to get 1/10th of the population from outside the city to come into the city to live.

(Syracuse (Sicily), Rome, and Tiberias were enlarged similarly, though they were enlarged by force not voluntarily.)

5. Lessons:

a. Congregations are smaller today. It should give us cause to be concerned about her future. The church needs numbers

to fight for the kingdom. **We should never celebrate being small**, saying the church is small because it is pure. The church can be large and pure as well! **So evangelize!** See Revelation 3 and 21.

b. There is another way the church is built up: Having children. Some reject the idea of having children because of selfishness or ignorance. Not having children killed communism. (Prophesied so by Reformed scholars!) The church must not do the same.

c. Don't reject church membership! The godly man knows he needs to show commitment so the work of the kingdom would not only survive, but also expand. **Membership is a commitment to Christ.**

d. Be personally involved in the life of the church. The world will be drawn to the Savior!
Isaiah 52:1 Awake, awake! Put on your strength, O Zion; Put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city...

e. Remember where all this decision started: With a return to the Scriptures and the reminder of what God did for his people and what he would do in the future, and so the people committed to serving him even more.

Men honored the volunteers

2 And **the people blessed all the men who willingly offered** themselves to dwell at Jerusalem.

1. While the lot's decision was from God, the men apparently were not forced to move to Jerusalem, but voluntarily left for the greater good, and as a result, were blessed by the other people.

The volunteers' neighbors wanted to encourage them. **These volunteers had faith in the Lord Jesus, they had courage because of that faith, and that led to their self-denial!** No wonder they were honored by those who remained behind. Judah was described as being the bold lion by Jacob, and he was! Love for their Savior made them overcome fear of the enemies.

2. What does it mean that the people "blessed" the volunteers? Can a man bless another?

This meant **they prayed** for the volunteers, **spoke well of them**, **encouraged them**, and **supported them**.

Psalms 122:6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May they prosper who love you. 9

Because of the house of the LORD our God **I will seek your good.**

Spurgeon's power room was at the **back of the church where women gathered to pray while he was in front preaching.**

3. Lessons:

a. Be willing to sometimes give up your freedom, your finances, and your friends for the common good of God's people.

b. Unfortunately, because of the drumbeat of the importance of the individual, self-love and all, some will only do things if they are paid or if they are promoted for it. Not for you though! You know what the Lord did for you on the cross and you are willing to give up your own temporary benefits for the kingdom benefits – which bring eternal rewards.

God honored the volunteers

3 **These are the heads of the province who dwelt in Jerusalem.** (But in the cities of Judah everyone dwelt in his own possession in their cities — Israelites, priests, Levites, **Nethinim**, and descendants of **Solomon's servants.**) 4 **Also in Jerusalem dwelt some of the children of Judah and of the children of Benjamin. The children 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 children of Perez;**

1. God honored those who volunteered to move to Jerusalem and give up the comforts, security, and prosperity of country life.

The people who returned from captivity had settled in their original places in the country.

Notice here Judea had become a province at this time, being under the Medo Persians.

Nehemiah himself had volunteered and invested his money in the building up of Jerusalem for worship.

2. It is not that these men wanted their names written-up in the annals of history, but God was pleased to record their names, not only for them, but for eternity!

There were good names too! Athaiah—*Yahweh has shown himself pre eminent*. Hazaiah—*Yahweh has seen*.

3. Some other people to note were the Nethinims and Solomon's servants.

The Nethinim's were likely the Gibeonites who were sworn to be wood cutters and water carriers, and were assistants to the Levites who were assistants to the priests. So they were from the lowest strata of society. **Solomon's "servants' descendants" is self-explanatory.**

4. Jerusalem was given to Judah and their neighbors, Benjamin.

Joshua 15:63 As for the Jebusites, **the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive** them out; **but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem** to this day.

Joshua 18:28 Zelah, Eleph, **Jebus (which is Jerusalem)**, Gibeath, and Kirjath: fourteen cities with their villages. **This was the inheritance of the children of Benjamin** according to their families.

So these 2 tribes had a duty to make the sacrifices. ((Judah and ½ the tribe of Benjamin made up Judah.)

5. Lessons:

a. Even the smallest things you do for Christ is made note of and will be rewarded on the day of judgment. God knows when **you share a hymnbook with a stranger!** God knows when you **point someone to the cake before the kids get there.** He sees you **pat someone's shoulder** to encourage him.

b. The lowest, the oldest, the least educated, the uneducated, the poorest – all have a part to play in Christ's kingdom. Are you playing your part? Are you training for it?

c. Be warned! "*Most people prefer their own wealth, credit, pleasure, ease, and safety, before the glory of God and the public good.*" Henry. **Don't marry them. Don't be close to them.** Hear this warning: **Philippians 2:21 For all seek their own,** not the things which are of Christ Jesus.

Conclusions:

The Jews (mostly men from Judah, and Benjamin, but some others from the defunct Israel were included) were picked by God and consequently **volunteered to go to Jerusalem** to ensure the **safety, stability, and success** of the city. Above all, this was essential for the coming of Messiah and the establishment of his kingdom. **The commitment flowed from the renewal of their covenant with God after hearing the Word of God preached.**

Beloved in the Lord Jesus:

1. What are you volunteering to do for the kingdom of God? I did not ask what are you doing so people might like you! I did not ask what you might like to do to get a sense of satisfaction! What are you volunteering to do for the kingdom of God? Praying? Evangelizing? Encouraging? Charity? Leading? Giving? Teaching?

2. Remember what Jesus did for you on the cross! This is what gives meaning to life! This is why you would live for him! This is why you worship him!

3. One of the best ways to volunteer for the kingdom is to invite people to church so they might hear the Gospel and be saved.

Finally, do you want to be part of the kingdom of God? God calls you to come in! He provides the way it – Jesus Christ – the only way! And he warns you of judgment, if you don't come in.