

NEHEMIAH 7

NEHEMIAH'S CARE FOR JERUSALEM

The Lord says concerning His Church, in Isaiah 62:6, "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem!" Here in this chapter, we see that this was Nehemiah's great care and concern; because dead walls, without living watchmen, are only a poor defense to any city. And even then, living watchmen – no matter how careful and diligent they may be – are worthless if the Lord Himself does not keep His watchful eye upon our homes and cities (Ps. 127:1).

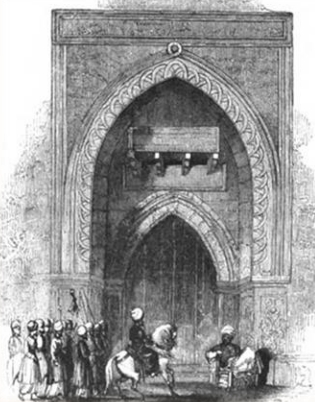
Nehemiah appointed the porters, singers, and Levites to their respective offices. He also appointed two governors, to whom he committed the care of the city; and he gave them charge to ensure the public peace and safety. One of these men was Hanani, Nehemiah's own brother – the same man who had come to him at Shushan, in chapter 1, with the news of the desolations of Jerusalem. He was a man of great integrity and love for his country. The other governor was Hananiah, who had been the ruler of the palace; and of this man, it is said that he was faithful, and one who "feared God above many" (verse 2). It is probable that Nehemiah was about to return to the Persian court, to have his commission renewed; and so he left these two worthy men in charge with the affairs of Jerusalem during his absence. He ordered the rulers of the city themselves to stand by and see the city gates shut up and barred every night; and they were also to take care that the gates were not opened in the morning until they could see that all was clear and quiet, and that no enemies were lurking around for a chance to sneak into the city. Sentinels were to be set upon the walls, who were to give timely notice of any danger from approaches of the enemy.

Nehemiah knew very well that the safety of a city, under God, depends more upon the number and valor of its inhabitants than upon the height or strength of its walls. Therefore, observing that the people were few who lived in Jerusalem, he thought it would be good to take an account of the people. Hereby, he could find what families had formerly settled in Jerusalem, but had moved into the countryside; and he could take measures to bring them back. He could also discern what families could be influenced to come and rebuild the houses in Jerusalem and dwell in them. It is noteworthy to observe where this good intention of Nehemiah's came from. He said, in verse 5, "My God put it into my heart." Whatever good motion comes into our minds, we must acknowledge that it has come from the Lord. It was He Who put it into our hearts, for every good gift and good work are from above. All knowledge and grace are from Him.

Nehemiah called the rulers and the people together, so that he might have an account of the present state of their families – their number, their strength,

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ Nehemiah takes care that the city of Jerusalem is well-fortified – verses 1-4
- ❖ He takes care to see that the city is well-peopled; and for that purpose, he reviews the register of the families of captives who returned from exile – verses 5-73



and where they were settled. It is probable that when he summoned them to come together, he ordered them to bring such an account along with them out of their various districts. He also reviewed the old register of those who came back from Babylonian exile under the leadership of Zerubbabel, and he compared the present accounts with that. That is why this chapter provides us with a repetition of that register from the second chapter of the Book of Ezra. Two things from that chapter are here repeated and recorded for a second time –

namely, the names and numbers of their various families, and their offerings to the service of the Temple. The repetition of these accounts shows us the delight which our great God is pleased to take in the persons, families, and services of His people, and the particular notice which He takes of them. He knows all those who are His – by name!

So an account was here given of the heads of the various families who came back from captivity in Babylon. We may suppose they were greatly increased by this time; but it was well for them to remember their small beginnings, so that they might acknowledge God in the multiplying of their families and building them up. Moreover, by this means, their genealogies would be preserved, and the distinction of their families would be kept up until the Messiah came – for Whose sake, these genealogies were preserved.

There are some differences in the numbers between the register recorded here and that which is recorded in Ezra. Most of them are exactly the same, and the rest are just a few under or a few over. This may be accounted for by the fact that some may have said they would return, and that was the number recorded in Ezra 2; but in the end, they stayed in Babylon, and the number was adjusted accordingly to reflect the lower numbers in this register here in Nehemiah 7. Then, too, some may have ended up coming back to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel at the last minute – which would account for the reason why some of the numbers in this chapter are slightly larger than the register in Ezra 2.

An account was also repeated of the offerings which were given by those first returning exiles toward the work of God. In all, the amount of the gold recorded here totaled over 147 pounds, worth nearly \$4.5 million; and the silver tallied up to 4,200 pounds, worth over \$1.6 million.* Whatever is given to the work of God, He is not unrighteous to forget it; not even a cup of cold water, wherewith He is honored, shall go without its reward!

Lord Jesus, we praise You, our Almighty Governor, for setting up spiritual watchmen on the walls of Your Church, in order to look out for the safety and best interests of Your people. Help them to be men of faithfulness and integrity, like the men whom Nehemiah appointed to be governors of Jerusalem. Amen.