



The People

Nehemiah 7

- ❑ Under the leadership of Nehemiah, rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem was completed (6:15). However, Nehemiah's job was not done. Read Nehemiah 7:1-3.

People Appointed

- ❑ After the wall was completed, “the gatekeepers, the musicians (singers) and the Levites were appointed” (7:1).¹ These positions were typically associated with the temple and the worship of God, yet Nehemiah mentions them in conjunction with guarding the city (7:2-3).²

1. What does this indicate about the purpose of the rebuilt Jerusalem?

- ❑ Nehemiah appointed his brother Hanani³ to be in charge of Jerusalem, along with Hananiah the commander of the citadel (fortress) who would supervise the security of the city (7:2).

2. What qualifications were needed for Hananiah's position? (7:2)⁴ Why was this so important?

- ❑ Nehemiah told Hanani and Hananiah to appoint “residents of Jerusalem as guards, some at their posts and some near their own houses” (7:3b). Jerusalem's security was important.

People Needed

- ❑ Read Nehemiah 7:4-5. Jerusalem was surrounded by a newly rebuilt wall (6:15). The temple had been rebuilt earlier (Ezra 6:15). But the city needed more people (Nehemiah 7:4). So Nehemiah sought to get more people into the city.⁵ God led him to get a list of the people who had returned to Judah from exile in Babylon (7:5). Nehemiah found the genealogical record of those who had returned. This record is presented in verses 6-73.⁶

¹ ‘Gatekeepers’ – usually Levites stationed at the doors and gates of the temple; here assigned to the city gates to guard and operate the gates. ‘Musicians’ – typically Levites skilled in playing musical instruments and singing, usually for the purpose of worship. ‘Levites’ – descendants of Levi assigned to various duties at the temple.

² Also, in the list of exiles who returned to Jerusalem, about 10% of the total number were ‘priests’ (7:39-42); and ‘temple servants’ and ‘descendants of the servants of Solomon’ outnumbered the gatekeepers, musicians and Levites combined (7:46-60, 43-45).

³ Hanani was the brother who brought the report of Jerusalem's condition to Nehemiah (1:2).

⁴ As commander of the citadel, Hananiah was ‘evidently well qualified in military terms to supervise the guarding of the city’ (H.G.M. Williamson, *Ezra-Nehemiah* [Waco, TX: Word, 1985], 270). But good character was also needed. Hananiah was a ‘man of integrity’ (NIV) or ‘faithful man’ (HCSB). He was trustworthy and reliable. He also ‘feared God,’ which means he revered (honored) God in his attitudes and actions.

⁵ Apparently many of the Jews preferred to live outside Jerusalem, but the city needed more people to increase its safety and strength. ‘Now that self-respectability and the potential for defense had been reestablished, the possibility of encouraging some of the Jews to live there was realistic. The question was – who?’ (Williamson, 271)

⁶ The record in Nehemiah 7:6-73 is basically the same as the record in Ezra 2:1-70, though the primary concern is different. In Ezra 2, the concern is ‘the continuity of this community with the preexilic Jewish nation... [and] the purity of the Jewish community’ (Mervin Breneman, *Ezra-Nehemiah-Esther* [Nashville: B&H Publishing], 73-74).

People Listed



- ❑ Verses 8-63 list various people, according to different categories.
 - ❖ Family – “the descendants of _____” (7:8-25)
 - ❖ Place of residence⁷ – “the men of _____” (7:26-38)
 - ❖ Temple ministers⁸ and family – e.g., “the priests: the descendants of _____” (7:39-60)
 - ❖ Those “who could not show that their families were descended from Israel” (7:61-63)⁹
- ❑ The total number of people was 42,360.¹⁰
 3. Why do you think it was so important that Nehemiah populate Jerusalem with descendants of Israel?
- ❑ God chose Israel as his special people to be the channel of blessing to all peoples (*Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 49:5-6*).¹¹ God chose Jerusalem as the place to “put his name” (*1 Kings 11:36*). God promised that he would rebuild Jerusalem and restore his people to the place he had chosen (*Isaiah 44:24-28, Nehemiah 1:8-9*). While the restoration of Israel was significant in the fulfillment of God’s promises, it pointed to a greater fulfillment.¹²

God's People Today

- ❑ Jesus Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of the Old Testament promises.¹³ It is “in Christ” that all peoples (all nations) may be blessed (*Genesis 12:1-3; Galatians 3:16; 3:6-9, 14, 26-29*). Those who are united with Christ through faith become the new people of God (*1 Peter 2:9*).
 - 📖 “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (*Galatians 3:28, NIV*).
- 4. For Israel, genealogies reminded them of their identity as God’s people, and encouraged them to fulfill their responsibilities in light of that identity. As Christians, how can we know and be encouraged by our *spiritual* genealogy, heritage and identity?¹⁴
- 5. Nehemiah 7 concerns the importance of people (people appointed, people needed). How can we apply what we’ve discussed to Christian believers and the church?

Reflection/Application

- Are you one of “God’s people?” Do you need to receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior?
- As a believer, do you need to “move into the city?” Is there something God wants you to do, but you’ve been unwilling to move? Pray. Talk to a mature brother or sister. Move in faith.

⁷ Probably prior to being exiled; not necessarily the place to which they returned (Williamson, 34).

⁸ Priests, Levites, musicians, gatekeepers, temple servants, descendants of the servants of Solomon.

⁹ Apparently, these families were ‘eventually accepted in the community. Temporarily at least, they were probably given the status of circumcised foreigners’ (Breneman, 83).

¹⁰ The list of numbers adds up to only 31,089. There are various explanations for the difference, and also for the differences between this list and the list in Ezra 2. If you want more information, ask Jay.

¹¹ As a ‘holy nation’ Israel was set apart to God & his service; distinct and separate among the peoples of this world.

¹² ‘Through [God’s covenant community] and their descendants we have the Scriptures, and through this community Jesus Christ came into the world. Even though the community was practically unnoticed in the world at that time, they constituted the center of God’s redemptive plan’ (Breneman, 79).

¹³ See ‘The Promised One’ under ‘God’s Promise for the Nations’ on the ICF website.

¹⁴ Our ‘spiritual genealogy and heritage’ starts in the Bible, extends through church history into our present lives.