

April 6, 2025

Nehemiah 7:5-6; 61-73 NIV

4 Now the city was large and spacious, but there were few people in it, and the houses had not yet been rebuilt. 5 So my God put it into my heart to assemble the nobles, the officials and the common people for registration by families. I found the genealogical record of those who had been the first to return. This is what I found written there: 6 These are the people of the province who came up from the captivity of the exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken captive (they returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own town, 7 in company with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Nahamani, Raamiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum and Baanah): The list of the men of Israel:

39 The priests...

43 The Levites...

44 The singers...

45 The gatekeepers...

46 The temple servants...

60 The temple servants and the descendants of the servants of Solomon 392 61 The following came up from the towns of Tel Melah, Tel Harsha, Kerub, Addon and Immer, but they could not show that their families were descended from Israel: 62 the descendants of Delaiah, Tobiah and Nekoda 642 63 And from among the priests: the descendants of Hobaiah, Hakkoz and Barzillai (a man who had married a daughter of Barzillai the Gileadite and was called by that name). 64 These searched for their family records, but they could not find them and so were excluded from the priesthood as unclean. 65 The governor, therefore, ordered them not to eat any of the most sacred food until there should be a priest ministering with the Urim and Thummim. 67 besides their 7,337 menservants and maidservants; and they also had 245 men and women singers. 68 There were 736 horses, 245 mules, 69 435 camels and 6,720 donkeys. 70 Some of the heads of the families contributed to the work. The governor gave to the treasury 1,000 drachmas of gold, 50 bowls and 530 garments for priests. 71 Some of the heads of the families gave to the treasury for the work 20,000 drachmas of gold and 2,200 minas of silver. 72 The total given by the rest of the people was 20,000 drachmas of gold, 2,000 minas of silver and 67 garments for priests. 73 The priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers and the temple servants, along with certain of the people and the rest of the Israelites, settled in their own towns.



The Hand of God from Past to Present
Nehemiah 7:5-6; 61-73 NIV

BIG IDEA: When God begins a new work among His people, He first reminds us of His hand of faithfulness in and through the lives of those who have gone before.

OUTLINE

1. Looking to the Past
2. Looking to the Present
3. Looking to the Future

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These “Sermon Discussion Questions” are designed for study during the week for believers in a wide variety of ages & stages in their walk with Christ.

1. Do you keep a type of scrapbook; a way to catalogue memories? What occasions warrant bringing out “the scrapbooks”? How does that relate to the moment described in this passage?
2. Read Nehemiah 7:1 and 7:5-6. What are your thoughts about possible reasons why God put it in Nehemiah’s heart to call an assembly to remind the nobles, officials, and the people enrolled by genealogy, the names of the people who left Babylon and returned to Jerusalem?
3. How can remembering God’s faithfulness and provision in the past shape how we think about the present?
4. The events of Nehemiah 7 occur almost 100 years after the first exiles left Babylon. What emotions might the family members of the first returnees have felt as they heard the names of their own family? When facing an uncertain future or the threat of persecution, what difference does it make to hear stories of the triumphs of God’s people in the past?
5. How has the Lord given you what you needed to overcome challenges or trials in the past? Ask the Lord to bring to mind people who need encouragement to keep going today.

Praise to Jesus. Let Nehemiah 7 remind us that God’s grace to his people travels down through history in our space and time. Praise God for the record of His faithfulness to His people that is ours in the Bible. Praise Him for His mighty acts of deliverance, which take place in this moment and time. Praise Him for the supreme act of deliverance with the coming of Jesus Christ.

Repentance through Jesus. Confess and repent through Jesus for giving power to past hurts and hardships by living in fear of present or future hardship.

Consecration for Jesus. God has begun a new work among His people. We will remember His hand of faithfulness in and through the lives of those who have gone before, the power of His presence in us, His protection, and provision for generations and for us today. Prayerfully face with confidence and courage this moment, the rest of the day, week, month, and year.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Ezra and Nehemiah tell from beginning to end the story of the return of the people of Judah from exile. Almost 100 years have passed from Ezra 2 to Nehemiah 7. The wall was finished. Nehemiah 7:5, “Then my God put it into my heart to assemble the nobles and the officials and the people to be enrolled by genealogy. And I found the book of the genealogy of those who came up at the first” (the “first” refers to Ezra 2).

- ESV Study Bible

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

These questions are written to aid parents in leading family devotions with their children.

1. What prompted Nehemiah to gather the people using the genealogies? (In verse 5, we read that it was God who put this on his heart. Once we see how it is God guiding this whole renewal process.)

2. How does this passage remind us about the true focus of God's renewal plan? (The genealogies remind us that the people, the covenant community, are the focus of God's plan. The rebuilt walls were really about the safety of God's covenant people and the return to their lives in the Promised Land, which is focused on the worship of the Lord God. This list of people was important enough to God to make sure that it was included in Ezra 2:1-70 and in our passage from Nehemiah.)

3. How does this passage point us to what God has done for His covenant community in the past? How does that help us in the present and in the future? (God made a covenant with the Israelites. That covenant included blessings for when God's people followed the Law. It also included curses for when they were disobedient. The worst curse was exile, which is what God did to the Israelites in using the Babylonians to conquer them and take them to Babylon. God also promised to save a remnant of His people and that they would return to the Promised Land. These covenant blessings and curses can be found in Deuteronomy 28. God's faithfulness in the past gives us confidence to trust Him in the present and future.)

4. Take time this week to talk with your children about God's faithfulness and trustworthiness. These are vital attributes of God that lead us to walk by faith in Him (Galatians 2:20 and 2 Corinthians 5:7).

Scriptures for further study:

Isaiah 55:10-11

Galatians 3:13

FOR STUDENTS

Scriptures for further study:

Psalms 107

Hebrews 11

Galatians 3:13-14

1. When you reach a big goal, how do you usually celebrate it? What happens after the excitement fades? How does that relate to the moment Nehemiah and the people are in during this passage?
2. Read Nehemiah 7:5. Why do you think God put it on Nehemiah's heart to gather the people and read the names of those who first returned from exile? What does this tell us about how God uses the past to encourage us in the present?
3. How can remembering stories of God's faithfulness in the past (from your family, church, or the Bible) give you confidence in the present and hope for the future?
4. Think about someone in your life or in history whose faith inspires you. What did you learn from their example that helps you trust God more in your own life?
5. The people listed in Nehemiah 7 were part of God's covenant community and helped shape the future of Israel. How do you think God might be using your life and faith to impact others now and in the future?
6. Read Galatians 2:20 and 2 Corinthians 5:7. What does it mean to live by faith, and how can remembering God's faithfulness help you live with that kind of trust today?

FOR SEEKERS AND NEW BELIEVERS

1. God often calls His people to make important or major life changes (like moving location, taking up a new vocation, etc.).

QUESTION: Have you ever experienced any such calling from God in your life? What was your experience? What did you learn about the hand of God in the process, and what did you learn about your faith?

2. In verse 5, Nehemiah says, “So my God put it into my heart...” We can only assume, based on several previous passages, that Nehemiah must have arrived at this place in his heart because he probably spent time in prayer.

QUESTION: We should always make it our first move to pray to God about anything. But are there any particular decisions facing you right now that you really need to be lifting up in prayer and fervently seeking God about?

3. What do you know of your own family history? Are there any noteworthy people or events in your family of origin that continue to impact you? How has your family seen the hand of God over the years?

4. Do you ever think about leaving a legacy for your family in future generations? What kind of legacy are you endeavoring to leave? How would this passage instruct and encourage us in this regard?

5. What can we learn from this passage about the kind of people God is building up? What are some of the qualities and characteristics we see here that should inform us about the kind of Christians and the kind of church God desires us to be and to become?

The Hand of Our God and His Divine Sovereignty in the Return and Renewal of God's People



The Ancient of Days, William Blake, 1794.

About the artwork and artist.

The Ancient of Days, found in prophecies of Daniel, is the subject of William Blake's engraving in which he shows us the Hand of Our God and His Divine Sovereignty in the Return and Renewal of God's People, the sermon series title for Ezra and Nehemiah.

The Ancient of Days is the cover art for Blake's Poem Europe: a Prophecy (1794). The Ancient of Days is a name for God the Father, whom the prophet Daniel spoke of in Daniel 7, where he saw Jesus, the Son of Man, "given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed."

Blake's poem "Europe", depicts a world filled with suffering based on the political climate of Europe and politics in England in the 1790s. It is appropriate in light of the suffering of God's people described in Ezra and Nehemiah. The artwork by Blake serves to remind and encourage God's people to know that He is still active and on the move with His plan of redemption despite their surroundings and circumstances. William Blake (1757-1827) was committed to connecting the prophecies and visions of the God of the Bible with the events in his country; the poet, printmaker, and painter was unrecognized and died impoverished. Despite their circumstances, William and his devoted wife Catherine, whom he taught to read and write, enjoyed a happy marriage and life together.

Today, William Blake is considered one of the greatest poets in the English language and one of the most original visual artists of his day.

Barker, (2004) (Barker, William Blake 1757-1827, 2004)

Introduction to Nehemiah

From January to May 2024, we heard sermons from the Book of Ezra. The introduction to Ezra, recorded sermons, and discipleship resources can be found on our church website at this address; <https://www.fpcrome.org/pdd-ezra/>

Ezra and Nehemiah were, for centuries, received as one book narrating the return of God's exiled people to their land, as under Persian rule they were allowed to resettle and rebuild Jerusalem. These two books cover three different waves of returning exiles, from 538 to 433 BC. But they tell one story: the restoration of God's covenant people according to his Word—which they are now called afresh to obey.

This restoration required, first of all, the rebuilding of the temple and the reinstitution of ceremonial worship. The first leader, Zerubbabel, led the initial wave of exiles back to Jerusalem to accomplish this goal (Ezra 1–6). The second wave came more than half a century later, led by Ezra, who rebuilt not the temple but the people, teaching them—and calling them to obey—the law of Moses (Ezra 7–10).

Thirteen years after Ezra arrived, Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem. He first led the people to rebuild the wall (Nehemiah 1–6). Then, along with Ezra, he sought to restore the people (Nehemiah 7–13) as God's holy nation, followers of his Word.

The restoration was not complete, however. These books picture God's people regathered but struggling; they are poor subjects of a foreign king; their city is devastated; enemies oppress from without; sin threatens from within. We see the faithful hand of God mercifully preserving his people according to his promises. We also see the dire need for the perfect fulfillment of God's promises in the salvation accomplished by his Son. (For further background, see the ESV Study Bible.)