

NEHEMIAH 11

THE REPOPULATION OF JERUSALEM

Jerusalem was here called the holy city because the Temple was there, and that was the place where God had chosen to put His name. Upon this account, one would think that the Lord's people would have all wished to have a habitation in that place; but on the contrary, it seems that they declined dwelling there. This may have been because a greater strictness of lifestyle was expected from the inhabitants of Jerusalem than from those living in other cities, which they were not willing to come up to. Perhaps people also declined moving to Jerusalem because, of all places, it was the place that was most hated by their heathen neighbors. A fear of persecution and trouble keeps many people out of the Church; for they do not consider that although she is indeed maliciously threatened by her enemies, she is also carefully protected and preserved by the Lord, and made a quiet habitation (Isa. 33:20; Ps. 46:4-5). But another factor that probably influenced many of the Jews against moving to Jerusalem was that it was better, for their worldly advantage, for them to dwell in the countryside. Jerusalem was no trade-city; and therefore, there was no money to be gotten there by merchandise, as there was in the country by grain and cattle. Sadly, many people prefer their own wealth, credit, pleasure, ease, and safety above the glory of God, the cause of Christ, and the public good.

There were a few people who willingly volunteered to dwell at Jerusalem. It was left upon record – to their honor – that when others were shy of venturing upon difficulty, loss, and danger; they were willing to move to Jerusalem, and be near the house of their God. The rest of the people blessed these volunteers. However, it was found that there was still room in the city. Therefore, upon a review of all the people, it was concluded that one-tenth of the population should be brought to dwell in the holy city. The persons who were to comprise this 10% were to be picked by the drawing of lots, which everyone knew to be directed by the Lord. This would prevent strife; and it would be a great satisfaction to those upon whom the lot fell to dwell at Jerusalem, that they plainly saw God appointing the place of their habitation.

A general account was given of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, because the governors of Judah looked upon them as their strength in the Lord of hosts, and valued them accordingly (Zech. 12:5). Many of the people of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin dwelt there; for part of the city originally lay in the lot of one of those tribes, and part in the other. A number of the priests and Levites settled at Jerusalem also; for where else should men who were holy to the Lord dwell, except in the Lord's holy city?

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ Nehemiah takes cares that the city of Jerusalem is repopulated – verses 1-2
- ❖ The chief persons, priests, and Levites who lived there – verses 3-19
- ❖ The cities and villages where the rest of the people lived – verses 20-36

Having given an account of the principal persons who lived in Jerusalem, a record was also made of other people. The Nethinims – the descendants of the Gibeonite Temple-servants (Josh. 9) – lived in Ophel, which was upon the wall of the city. Since they were appointed to labor at the Temple, it was necessary for them to be close by, so that they might be ready to serve. As for the Levites, although they were dispersed throughout the cities of Judah, yet they had an overseer who resided in Jerusalem. This man took care of their affairs and took cognizance of their conduct, to make sure they did their duty. A man who was the commissioner of the king of Persia also lived in the holy city. He made deci-



sions in controversies that arose between the king's officers and his subjects; and he was to see that what was due to the king from the people was properly paid in, and that what was allowed by the king for the Temple-service was properly paid out.

An account was given here of the villages, or country-towns, which were inhabited by the rest of the Jews. The towns in which the people of the tribe of Judah dwelt were listed in verses 25-30, and those which were inhabited by the descendants of Benjamin were enumerated in verses 31-35; and accommodations for the Levites were made among both (verse 36). We may suppose that the people were now safe and easy, although they were few and poor; but by the blessing of God, they were likely to increase in wealth and power. And this would have been the case – except that a general spiritual lukewarmness came over them. They were charged with this sin, in God's name, by the prophet Malachi. He prophesied around this time; and in him, prophecy ceased for several hundred years, until it revived in John the Baptizer!

Why are the names of all these dead people listed here for us to read? Why does it matter to us if the priests moved to Jerusalem or not? The point is that this Book and the priestly names which it contains are not intended to satisfy us! We have a better High Priest, after the order of Melchizedek! The purpose of the Book of Nehemiah is to lead us to Christ, so that we can say, "We have the best High Priest!" He is our Mediator. He paid the price for our salvation, so that we could be brought into the presence of our holy God. The sacrifice couldn't be more perfect! We will never win salvation by our own good deeds. Will we lay our guilt upon Jesus, Who died as our Sacrifice and stands as our Substitute, so that we may stand before the Father – being accepted in the Beloved? This is what ultimately satisfies the life of a believer. This is the Christian's joy and happiness, until our Savior returns to take us to heaven, where there will be no more pain or sorrow forever!

Lord, cause us to be among that happy number of people who are dwelling in Your Church here on earth, so that we may one day be admitted into the new Jerusalem above, when our Savior and Redeemer returns in all His glory! Amen.