

Nehemiah 11-12 - Erika Rainge

What does Nehemiah 11-12 tells us about God

God's faithfulness to his promises. Let's do some History...

Genesis 12:1-3 -> **God promised** Abraham to make a great nation from him and that all the families of the earth will be blessed in him.

Genesis 49:8-11 -> Speaking to Judah (Abraham's great-grandson) Jacob prophesied that the sceptre will never be taken away from him, and that to him all the peoples will obey.

Deuteronomy 27-28 -> **God warned the people** of Israel that if they were disobedient they would be sent away from the land and they will become servants, and they will be destroyed.

2 Chronicles 36:17-23 -> after many years of disobedience and rebellion to God, the people of Judah (the southern Kingdom), is destroyed and taken away. Their city crushed to the ground. The walls destroyed, the gates burned and the inhabitants taken as slaves to Babylon. **As God has promised.**

But God, keeps his promises

Jeremiah 30-31 -> **Promised to restore the nation**, but specially the city, Zion (Jerusalem, the Holy city)

Jeremiah 29:10 -> the **promise** that they would be **in captivity for 70 years** and then they will return.

So, why it is important what God has done for Israel, and what does has any relevance concerning Neh 11 & 12?

In this passage, the list of names goes back as far as the Perez (v.6), the son of Judah.

Do you remember any other descendant of Judah that was important?

- King David
- Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel (12:1) he was the one that came to rebuild the temple, and he was also an ancestor of Jesus (Matthew 1:12-13)

Can you see now God's faithfulness in restoring the Nation? There was a higher purpose. Jesus was coming. He was promised to Abraham, to Judah, to David, and now God's picture was taking shape.

What does Nehemiah 11-12 tells us about Israel?

Identity: We just thought about the faithfulness of God to fulfil his plans for salvation. But he loves Israel, deeply, and in spite of their sins God had promised to restore them.

But let's think what happened to Israel. After 70 years of captivity a new generation was born. This generation returned to Judah, to Jerusalem.

But who were they? Well, chapter 7 and 11 of Nehemiah, get the records straight. To rebuild the national identity they needed to know who they were, their roots, families, tribes; especially those involved in the ministry of the Temple, Priests, Levites, singers (descendants of Asaph -11:22 - the Psalmist). Chapter 11 tell us about those who were living in Jerusalem, probably the most important city on earth, the Holy City, where the Temple was.

Purification: In Chapter 12:27-43 we come to the dedication of the wall.

Neh. 12:30 - They got together to dedicate the walls and gates, but before doing so they purify themselves (Neh. 12:30).

Although the passage is not specific on this, the tradition for the clergy had to do with fasting, abstaining from sexual intercourse (Ex. 19:14-15), cleanliness and sin offerings (Num. 8:5-13). For the rest of the people was more about bathing and washing of garments.

Worship: Neh. 12:31-43 – here we have the description of the two processions of choirs, with priests, Levites and the rest of the people. The two groups met at the temple (the house of God – Neh. 12:40) and they offered sacrifices there.

Neh. 12:43 – The result of all this process is the great joy experienced by all the people, and it is such that is said that *"it was heard far away."*

What does Nehemiah 11-12 tell us?

Identity – *We considered God's faithfulness in the salvation plan, not only for Israel but in preparing the way for Jesus our saviour. He is the source of our identity. 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us that we are a new creation. Ephesians 1 tells us that we have been chosen in him (Eph. 1:4-5), that we have redemption and forgiveness (Eph. 1:7-8), we have salvation (Eph. 1:13) and inheritance (Eph. 1:14) and that we are his workmanship (Eph. 2:10).*

Purification - *Although our sins have been forgiven we should confess our sins (1 John 1:9) and live holy lives (1 Peter 1:15-16). How can I be holy? Well, ask God to show you in everything you do if it is acceptable to him or not, read his word and if you have doubts ask other mature Christians or leaders!*

Worship and Joy - *Jesus said: ²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." John 4:23-24*

When you know that you are part of the great picture that God is drawing, and that your identity is in him, you will be able to worship him in Spirit and in truth.