

Studies In Nehemiah 6

Onward In the Work of Restoration

Neh. 7:1-8:8

Introduction:

1. It seemed when I was growing up that most of my summers were spent on the end of a gooseneck hoe.
 - a. We hoed the weeds in the vegetable garden.
 - b. We hoed the weeds in the row crops.
 - c. We hoed weeds around the barn, in the fencerows and in the fields.
2. It was always nice to get to the end of the row, perhaps we would get a break, drink some cool water and rest for a while, but then it was back to work on the next row.
3. Nehemiah's work on the city wall was completed.
 - a. He had confronted his enemies. He had responded to their attempts to frighten him. He had stayed the course and accomplished the work of God. The walls of the city had been rebuilt.
 - b. It was a time for celebration, but it was not a time to quit, eat, drink and be merry.
4. There was more work to do and Nehemiah applied himself to the task.

Discussion:

- I. Nehemiah made arrangements for securing the city (7:1-3).
 - A. He appointed leaders and put them in charge of the city.
 1. He appointed Hanani his brother.
 2. And Hananiah, the commander of the fortress.
 - B. It is interesting the notation that is made about Hananiah.
 1. Were we to look for someone to put in charge of security we might look for a man of size, strength and athleticism. We might look for someone trained militarily. Hananiah may have had such qualifications, but that is not what is mentioned here.
 2. "He was a faithful man and feared God more than many."
 3. Similar qualifications were fitting for those put in charge of the care of the widows in Jerusalem (Acts 6:3, 5).
 4. Leadership among God's people is founded on one's relationship to God and his spiritual principles first and foremost.
 - C. We need to give great consideration to this principle as we appoint leaders among ourselves to build the house of God.
 1. It is a rather sloppy approach in the Lord's church to appoint to leadership whoever volunteers.
 2. Do you appoint to leadership in your family whoever volunteers?
 3. Do you appoint to leadership whoever volunteers in your government?
 4. Do you appoint to leadership whoever volunteers to teach your children?
 5. Do you look for those who are faithful and who distinguish themselves by fearing the Lord more than many?

II. Nehemiah made arrangements to increase the inhabitants of the city (7:4ff; 11:1-2).

- A. Three groups had returned to the region of Jerusalem from the exile.
 - 1. The first under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Jeshua.
 - 2. The second under the leadership of Ezra.
 - 3. Now this third group under Nehemiah.
- B. Nehemiah found the list of those who had come up from exile under Zerubbabel and Jeshua.
 - 1. Note that the list in Neh. 7:7ff is identical with the one found in Ezra 2.
 - 2. The list is divided into five categories: “the people of Israel,” “the priests,” “the Levites,” “the temple servants,” and “the sons of Solomon’s servants.”
 - 3. Some were excluded from the priesthood because their ancestral registration could not be located.
- C. Verse 73 observes, “The priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, some of the people, the temple servants and all Israel, lived in their cities.” They are living in various places, not necessarily in Jerusalem.
- D. 11:1-2 summarizes the plan to increase the city.
- E. There is a sense in which we have been tasked with increasing the inhabitants of the city of God (Heb. 12:22; Rev. 21:9-10).
 - 1. As we reach out to others with the message of the gospel we labor to build up the city of God.
 - 2. In the city there is security, protection and many dwelling places (cf. Jn. 14:2).
 - 3. As we strengthen and encourage one another we are building the city of God.
 - 4. There is work that all can do: singers, gatekeepers, servants, teachers, exhorters, givers, leaders (cf. Rom. 12:7-8).

III. Nehemiah made arrangements for the people to live by the law (8:1-8).

- A. Ezra read from the book of the law before all who could understand.
- B. Leaders stood with him on his right and on his left. This symbolized their solidarity with the things he was reading.
- C. When Ezra opened the book of the Law all the people stood up. This was their show of respect for what God had revealed.
- D. Ezra blessed the Lord. The people answered, “Amen, Amen!” They lifted their hands and bowed low and worshiped with their faces to the ground. How similar their response to the prophets when they encountered God.
 - 1. Moses hid his face when God spoke to him at the burning bush (Ex. 3).
 - 2. Ezekiel fell on his face (1:28).
 - 3. Isaiah said, “Woe is me, for I am ruined!” (6:5).
- E. Such respect and such awe should characterize us before the revelation of the law of God.
- F. After Ezra read from the law the Levites explained the law, translating to give the sense so that the people understood the reading (8:7-8).
 - 1. I am confident that what they did was much similar to what we do today.
 - 2. Reading, explaining, working to see the significance, gaining understanding of what

it is that God is revealing to us.

Conclusion:

1. Are you leading like Nehemiah?
 - a. Securing the city of God? Appointing leaders who are faithful and who fear the Lord?
 - b. Are you working to increase the inhabitants of the city?
 - c. Are you making arrangements for the people to live by the revelation of God?
2. Are you advancing God's work in your family? In the congregation? Among the brethren? Among those who are not yet numbered among God's people?
3. There is to be celebration over how far we have come, but it is not time to quit! Onward with the work of restoration!