



## **It's Not About The Walls**

Jon Guinn // Nehemiah 8

In Chapter 7 the walls had just been finished. The doors have been set in place. The work is complete and the people are returning to Jerusalem. The chapter ends with the people “settled in their own towns” Neh. 7:73b

Life is good. The people are at peace. The vision that God had placed on Nehemiah was complete. But this is not where the story ends. The walls were a sign of security and safety for the people of Israel. The security that the physical walls offered wasn't enough. God people wanted more and in chapter 8 we will see God stirring in the hearts of the people. They wanted more, they were not going to settle for the security that the walls offered.

Big Idea

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*The walls have been rebuilt and Gods people could have put their trust in the false sense of security that the wall provided. Or they could trust in the God of the Bible.*

*What are we placing your trust in?*

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### ***Nehemiah 8:1***

God was moving in the people to not put their trust in the security of the wall but to press into God's Word in order to know Him more. So they could place their trust in Him.

It's worth noting that Ezra did not call the people together. The people told him to teach the law. God was working in the hearts of the people, and giving them a desire to know the God of the Bible.

So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.

Nehemiah 8:2-3

### **Their response to Gods Word**

- **The word can seem overwhelming**

- Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and teacher of the Law, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, “This day is holy to the Lord your God. Do not mourn or weep.” For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. Vs.9
  - We don’t know why the people are weeping. It could be that reading the law was overwhelming as we realize their own inadequacies because we all know we cannot fulfill the law on our own.
- For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh. - Romans 8:3

- **With heart understanding comes Joy**

- Illustration on when you were a teenager reading the Bible. We need to pray for the Spirit to bring His work to life.
- The Levites calmed all the people, saying, “Be still, for this is a holy day. Do not grieve.” Vs.11
- I believe they showed the people examples of God’s grace. (Elaborate)
- God said to Abraham “And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” - Gen 12:3b
- Joseph said to his brother “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good” - Gen 50:20
- In spite of David’s sin God testified concerning him: ‘I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.’ Acts 13:22

- The Bible is packed with examples of humans who sin and a God who forgives. Humans who run and a God who pursues. Humans who don't deserve grace and a God who gives it anyway.
- **From Joy to celebration**
  - Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." Vs.10
- **From Celebration to remembrance**

They found written in the Law, which the Lord had commanded through Moses, that the Israelites were to live in temporary shelters during the festival of the seventh month and that they should proclaim this word and spread it throughout their towns and in Jerusalem: "Go out into the hill country and bring back branches from olive and wild olive trees, and from myrtles, palms and shade trees, to make temporary shelters"—as it is written.

**Neh. 8:14-15**

- The Festival of tabernacles: (booths) or Sukkot
  - A time to remember God's faithfulness when His people wandered in the wilderness after the exodus, and to remind the people that Israel dwelt in booths after the Lord brought them out of Egypt.
  - They would set up outdoor dwellings on the roof of their homes, or in their yards. They lived in them during the celebration to remember how God was with his people in the wilderness. (an excuse to go camping)
  - It also would remind people that the Lord dwelt among his people in the tabernacle that stood in the center of the camp of Israel. And as a reminder to God's presence today...
  - The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14 NIV

- Just as the Lord was with the people of Israel as they wandered in the wilderness so too is our savior is with us as we seek shelter from our cares and troubles.
- What we can see from this chapter is what Gods people need is a holistic transformation of their hearts if they are ever going to love and obey their God.

### It's not about the walls

Let's go back to the beginning of the chapter. As I mention earlier at the end of chapter 7 the walls had just been finished. The doors have been set in place. The work is complete and the people are returning to Jerusalem. The chapter ends with the people "settled in their own towns" Neh. 7

Life is good. The people are at peace. The vision that God had placed on Nehemiah was complete. But this is not where the story ends as we have seen. The security that the physical walls offered them. That they could have relied on instead of God. Those walls were not enough. God people wanted more and in chapter 8 we have seen stirring in the hearts of the people. They wanted more, they were not going to settle for the security that the walls offered.

Big Idea

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*The walls have been rebuilt and Gods people can put their trust in the false sense of security that the wall provided. Or they could trust in the God of the Bible.*

*What are we placing your trust in?*

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### **What are we trusting in?**

- **Our Political views**

- Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?" But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? Show me the coin used

for paying the tax.” They brought him a denarius, and he asked them, “Whose image is this? And whose inscription?” “Caesar’s,” they replied. Then he said to them, “So give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.” Matt 22:17-21

- When Jesus said, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s,” He was drawing a sharp distinction between two kingdoms. There is a political kingdom of this world, and Caesar held power over it. But there is another kingdom, not of this world, and Jesus is King of that. My question is what kingdom are we going to be a part of? What Kingdom are we going to place our trust in?

- **The economy and our finances**

- He who trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like the green leaf. - Prov. 11:28
- Illustration of your stress at work.
- How much of our security and our sense of peace is interconnected with our economic status? Or are we placing our trust in how the economy is doing when we should be trusting Him.

- **Modern technology**

- When we look around and see the advancements that man has made with technology, it is easy to place our trust in this as well. But as we have seen over this past year, life is extremely fragile and we cannot rely on technology to save us. We need to place our trust in Him.

- **Relationships**

- This is a tricky one because relationships can be such an important part of our lives. God gives us relationships as a blessing and a way of growing in Him, but we can also depend too much on our relationships and not put our trust in Him.

- Stop trusting in mere humans, who have but a breath in their nostrils. Why hold them in esteem? - Isaiah 2:22

## **Conclusion**

Just as the people in the time of Nehemiah pressed into God's Word as the walls were complete and the gates were in place, they had every reason to feel secure in their natural surroundings. As their sense of security increased and things began to look better they didn't allow themselves to trust in external circumstance.

As we potentially come out of this pandemic and things begin to go back to normal are we going to put our trust in God or in the apparent security of our circumstance?

I have a challenge for us personally and as a church. If we don't intentionally press into God our natural tendencies will be to take a step back when times get better we can even justify it in our minds as a time of rest but we can't allow ourselves to not press into our relationship with God.

Now is a time more than ever that God is calling us his people to be a light in the darkness. So many people right now have been isolated for so long. So many people have lost those they've loved.

It has been an unprecedented time of suffering for man people. They are hurting they're lonely they're sense of security has been shaken. They have begun to realize that life is fragile that our society that our political systems, that are economy, that our technology isn't going to save them.

Jesus is the only one true answer. He is the hope of the world! We have an opportunity as the people of God as his representatives on this earth to reach out to those around us to share the good news that there is hope in Him!

We are his hands and his feet. There's an opportunity before us. If you look historically at revivals from the past they happen in times of stress and times of conflict in times of need and unrest.

I want to encourage us to take the time to get to know God's Word as they did in Nehemiah, not just for head knowledge but for heart knowledge. To know the

God of the Bible. To know Jesus more and in doing so allow him to work in us and then through us to those around us.