

## RESTORING THE BROKEN

### A Study of Ezra and Nehemiah

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#### Read Nehemiah 10.

1. In chapters 8 and 9 the reading of the law and the review of their history led the people of Israel to be convicted of their sins. The people confessed sins, both individual and corporate (9:2). What act of repentance did this confession inspire? (9:38)

2. The people of Israel have recently read through Jewish history multiple times: with Ezra at the Water Gate (8:1-3), during the eight days of the Festival of Tabernacles (8:18), and with sackcloth and ashes (9:1). Read these two records of previous times of national repentance: Joshua 24:14-27 and 2 Chronicles 34:14-32. What similarities do you see between these times and the one recorded in Nehemiah?

#### REPENTANCE FROM THE OLD AND TOWARD THE NEW

“Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ... with grief and hatred of his sin, turn[s] from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience.”

~Westminster Shorter  
Catechism, Answer 87

Have you ever experienced a time of deep conviction of sin and a desire to forsake it and follow the Lord wholeheartedly? How was that experience similar to or different from these experiences of Israel?

3. Chapter 3 listed the builders of the wall and chapter 7 is a genealogical list of the exiles who returned to the land, though neither of these names every single Israelite. Here again we have a list, this time of the representatives of the people who are chosen to seal (equivalent to signing) the covenant. What four categories of men seal the covenant on behalf of the people? (10:1, 8, 9, 14)
4. Who makes up “the rest of the people” who were represented by the sealers of the written covenant? (10:28)

What are they binding themselves to do? (10:29)

5. What specific commitments do the Israelites obligate themselves to?

10:30 (📖 \* Deut. 7:3-4)

10:31a (📖 Exod. 20:8)

10:31b (📖 Lev. 25:1-7; Deut. 15:1-5)

10:32-33

10:34 (📖 Deut. 26:1-11)

10:35-37a (📖 Exod. 13:11-16)

10:37b-39

#### **“A TENTH OF THE TITHES”**

The people of Israel were to give “a tithe of [their] crops” (10:37). “The law decreed that a tenth of the plant crops was holy to the Lord (Lev 27:30; Num 18:23-32)....Tithes were meant for the support of the Levites (13:1-12; Num 18:21-32).... The Levites were to give in their turn ‘a tenth of the tithes’ they received (Num 18:25-32). Chambers in the outer courts of the temple were used as ‘storerooms’ for silver, gold, and other objects.”<sup>1</sup>

6. Do you see any of these specific commitments as applying to Christians today? If so, in what way?

Is there a specific commitment that you would write for the church if there were a covenant renewal today?


**Read Nehemiah 11.**

7. What was the state of Jerusalem immediately after the wall was finished? (7:4)

Nehemiah plans to remedy this situation. What initial step does God want him to take towards this goal? (7:5)

8. Nehemiah has a distinct plan for how Jerusalem is to be resettled.  
a. Who is first to repopulate the city now that the wall is finished? (11:1a)

- b. What percentage of the rest of the people are to move to the holy city? (11:1b)

- c. How do they choose who will live in Jerusalem and who will stay in their own towns? (11:1b;  Prov. 16:33)

**CASTING LOTS**

“Lots were made out of small stones or small pieces of wood....They were shaken and cast on the ground.”<sup>2</sup> “Such a trust in the ‘chance’ method of selection demonstrates a firm confidence in providence.”<sup>3</sup>

- d. What is the attitude towards those who are resettling? (11:2)

9. We get an idea of how large a people group the Israelites were at this time from verses 3-19. This record counts the men involved and does not count the women and children. Now do some math.


_____	Men from the tribe of Judah (11:6)
+ _____	Men from the tribe of Benjamin (11:8)
= _____	This represents one-tenth of the total population of men who are not leaders
X        10	
= _____	The approximate number of Israelite men

10. Look back at your answers for question 5. How many of the specific commitments dealt with the administration of the temple (“the house of our God” [10:32])? Which groups of those settling in Jerusalem will have a vital role in fulfilling those commitments to the temple? (11:10-23)
11. Nehemiah’s plan to repopulate the city was in large part a plan to fully resume lawful temple worship: “If the temple were to function properly – administering daily, weekly, and seasonal celebrations of worship – an extensive infrastructure of support would be needed in the city.”<sup>4</sup> Nehemiah brings the priests, Levites, temple servants, and musicians back to Jerusalem and provides them with the urban infrastructure necessary for them to live in the city full-time.

The desire for a city fully submitted to God, with worship being central, was never fully realized. How does this unrealized desire point forward to a greater plan for the city and God’s people? (Zech. 2:3-5, 10-12; Jn. 14:2-4; Rev. 21:1-3)

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This study has been adapted and expanded with permission from a study of the same name by Bridge Community Church, Phila., PA.

 \* For further study

<sup>1</sup> Edwin Yamauchi, “Ezra, Nehemiah” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary with the New International Version: 1 Kings–Job*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 743-744.

<sup>2</sup> Yamauchi, 744.

<sup>3</sup> Derek W. H. Thomas, *Ezra & Nehemiah*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 2016), 385.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas, 381.