

Nehemiah 6-7

- Nehemiah has successfully defended the city and the people from attacks, both from those outside the city and those inside
 - The neighboring Gentiles attacked the city with military might
 - They did some damage
 - But the people regrouped under Nehemiah's leadership
 - Then the enemy began to stir up strife and discord among the Jews inside the city
 - Complaints arose over the unfair treatment of wealthier Jews of poorer Jews
 - But once again, Nehemiah stepped in, righted the wrongs, and brought the people back together again
 - So then, the work resumed
 - This operation is a triumph of focus and determination
 - Nehemiah and the people aren't merely challenged to rebuild a wall
 - They are challenged by the enemy and the world in their walk with God
- So it goes when the Lord works to restore us in fellowship
 - It will be a battle from start to finish
 - If it's not our flesh drawing us away into sin, it's the world tempting us to replace the Lord's priorities with their own
 - If it's not the world, it's the enemy's schemes and temptations
 - And if it's not the enemy, it's our brothers and sisters in the faith contending with us, or our leaders disappointing us...or something else
 - The fact that restoring fellowship with the Lord can be so difficult is a lesson in itself of the importance of abiding in Christ at all times

- Last week, we ended in Chapter 5, with the people refocused and the enemies of Israel still seeking a way to defeat the plan
- In Chapter 6, we move into a new set of lessons for how godly leaders must respond in leading God's people to obedience

Neh. 6:1 Now when it was reported to Sanballat, Tobiah, to Geshem the Arab and to the rest of our enemies that I had rebuilt the wall, and that no breach remained in it, although at that time I had not set up the doors in the gates,

Neh. 6:2 then Sanballat and Geshem sent a message to me, saying, "Come, let us meet together at Chephirim in the plain of Ono." But they were planning to harm me.

Neh. 6:3 So I sent messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?"

Neh. 6:4 They sent messages to me four times in this manner, and I answered them in the same way.

- With the wall finished, Israel's enemies are running out of options
 - The walls are up, but the city gates have yet to be put in place
 - This means the enemies of Israel can still enter the city as they please
 - So they use this limited opportunity to pay a visit to Nehemiah inside the city
 - Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem send a message to Nehemiah by way of a messenger asking for a meeting
 - They ask Nehemiah to travel to Ono
 - Ono is a plain about 25 miles west of Jerusalem, near the sea
 - It was a no man's land between Judah and Samaria, a remote place of lawlessness
 - They tell Nehemiah to meet at Chephirim
 - The word "Chephirim" is the plural word for "village", so it may just describe a collection of towns in the area of Ono
 - Interestingly, it might also be translated "with the lions", which would be an apt description of what would happen to Nehemiah should he go

- Naturally, Nehemiah knows this is a trap
 - He says they were planning to harm Nehemiah
 - If he went to this place, he would likely never return
 - Furthermore, even if Nehemiah did manage to escape their grasp, by the time he returned from his four day trip, the enemies of Israel would have likely attacked and destroyed the city
 - Without Nehemiah sustaining and leading the people, they would crumble in the face of an attack
 - So Nehemiah wisely avoids the trap
 - He says, "I'm too busy to meet you"
 - The enemies of Israel recognized that Nehemiah was the key to the people's success
 - Leaders exist in the Body of Christ for a reason
 - While we might like to think that because every Christian is led by the same Spirit, therefore, we are equally capable of leading ourselves
 - But if that were true, the Lord would never have designated 12 of his disciples to be apostles
 - The truth is, God makes distinctions among men and women for good reason
 - He assigns some the responsibility to shepherd His sheep, feeding them so they will grow spiritually
 - They also guard the flock, making them to pass under the rod and leading them to an eternal reward
 - While we may rightly avoid men who attempt to lord over us by assuming too much power in the Body of Christ...
 - Then, let's also acknowledge that we do have need for strong servant leaders who model Christ by calling us to follow and obey the Word
- The enemy certainly understands this truth

- So he makes a point to attack the head of every congregation as often as he can
 - Those attacks will be all the more severe and persistent if that leader is particularly effective in carrying out God's commands
 - It's a brilliant strategy, and one the enemy has long used: attack at the strongest point first
 - If the strongest defender falls, then you won't even have to fight the weak points
- This strategy worked perfectly in the first battle, in the Garden
 - The enemy set his eyes on defeating Woman, rather than Adam
 - Woman put up a fight, defending the Lord with His Word, though without sufficient understanding to recognize the enemy's deception
 - Once the enemy had defeated woman, he didn't even bother with Adam
 - Adam was clearly the weak link in the chain, as we see when he accepts the fruit from woman without argument
- Unfortunately, over the centuries, many men (and women) leaders in the Church have fallen to the enemy's schemes, like Woman
 - They've fallen for the same reason Woman fell
 - Because they didn't recognize the enemy's techniques and learn how to defend against them
 - In this chapter, we'll see three ways the enemy works to defeat a leader and thereby bring down God's people
- In vs.1-4, we see the first of these attempts: the enemy seeks to distract or deceive Nehemiah into letting his guard down and making a misstep
 - In Nehemiah's situation, the deception was to lead him to think that a compromise with the enemy was possible
 - Perhaps Nehemiah was tiring of the fight
 - Perhaps he had a weak spot for being liked and honored and flattered

- If he accepted their overture, he would be deceived and distracted from the task
 - If we had a dollar for every church leader who succumbed to the enemy's deceptions and distractions, we could buy the temple
 - Pastors have traded the pulpit to run for public office, to run corporations, to promote best-selling books or campaign for social causes
 - Others have remained in the pulpit, but been distracted in their message
 - Preaching prosperity, social equality, health and healing, or just entertaining the crowds became more attractive than preaching Christ and Him crucified
 - Elders and deacons and teachers and Sunday school leaders have likewise set aside their calling and diligence because the enemy dangled some shiny object in their path
 - A promotion at work, a new girlfriend, a midlife crisis
 - The defense to distraction and deception is focus and understanding
 - Our leaders must be men and women who wake up every day reaffirming their commitment to the hard work of ministry
 - And when something intriguing comes along, they need to be wise enough to expect the enemy to throw such things in our path
 - And the Lord allows the enemy a degree of freedom to test our hearts
 - We need to be in prayer for our leaders that they not take the exit ramps that the enemy places in their path
 - We want leaders who will make the kind of sacrifices that serving the Lord requires, because they make those sacrifices on our behalf
 - So it's in our best interest to pray for them to stand strong
- Now, we move to the enemy's second common technique: dishonoring and discrediting leaders

[Neh. 6:5](#) Then Sanballat sent his servant to me in the same manner a fifth time with an open letter in his hand.

[Neh. 6:6](#) In it was written, "It is reported among the nations, and Gashmu says, that you and the Jews are planning to rebel; therefore you are rebuilding the wall. And you are to be their king, according to these reports.

[Neh. 6:7](#) "You have also appointed prophets to proclaim in Jerusalem concerning you, 'A king is in Judah!' And now it will be reported to the king according to these reports. So come now, let us take counsel together."

- Once again, Sanballat uses a letter to thwart Nehemiah's leadership, but this time, it's an open letter
 - In this day, an open letter was literally what it sounds like
 - It was a written instrument that hadn't been sealed closed
 - Usually, a letter was sealed with wax or some other way to ensure the contents of the letter remained private until read by the intended recipient
 - The courier was tasked with ensuring the integrity of the seals
 - But in this case, Sanballat doesn't seal his letter to Nehemiah
 - He sends an open letter precisely so that the courier and all whom the courier encounters will eavesdrop on the conversation
 - Sanballat's purpose is to discredit Nehemiah as a leader before the people
 - In the letter, Sanballat impugns Nehemiah's motives and purposes in assuming leadership over the city rebuilding
 - He says it's been reported among the nations that Israel is planning to rebel against Persian authority
 - Furthermore, Nehemiah has designs on becoming king of Israel
 - And the prophets are walking around declaring that a king is in Judah
 - Finally, Sanballat says that these things will be reported to the king in Persia
 - The implicit threat is clear: the people of Israel are in jeopardy because of the reckless schemes of Nehemiah

- Breaking down the elements of the deception, we can see the enemy's thinking clearly
 - First, Sanballat lends credibility to his accusations by creating the impression of multiple witnesses without actually having multiple witness
 - He says, "others are saying..."
 - No one else is saying anything, but it sounds like there are multiple sources, which makes the accusation seem more credible
 - That's the danger with gossip
 - No matter how many people repeat a lie, it's still a lie
 - But because many people repeat it, more people are likely to believe it, making it all the more dangerous
 - That's why we must not contribute to gossip, and in doing so, giving truth to the lie
 - This is also why Paul commands that we not accept an accusation against our leaders without independent confirmation of the accusation

1 Tim. 5:19 Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.

- Secondly, the enemy attacks the motives of the leader
 - He doesn't attack the actions, since the actions are self-evident
 - But he takes the godly, righteous actions of a leader and calls them something else
 - He fills in details, assumes motives, and creates a narrative to fit his view of the facts
 - There is no substance to his comments, and there is another story that fits the same facts
 - Instead of rebellion, Nehemiah is rebuilding the wall to strengthen the king's power in Judah

- Instead of wishing to be king, Nehemiah is content to serve as governor for only a time
- This illustrates the danger of interpreting a leader's motives, or heart, based on someone else's interpretation of their actions
 - If the people of Israel agreed with Sanballat's assessment, they would have been rejecting their leader without cause
 - And that was the enemy's hope and the reason he made sure his letter was open
 - Don't participate in such speculation
 - And pray that the truth will reign in your church
- Thirdly, Sanballat misuses the Word of God to support his attempts at discrediting Nehemiah
 - He says he's heard the prophets saying a king is in Judah
 - The prophets of Nehemiah's day were Haggai and Malachi
 - Both these men walked around, declaring the Word of the Lord concerning the future, including the future of the Messiah
 - That one day, Israel's king would reign in Judah as promised
 - Sanballat took that truth and twisted it to fit his lie about Nehemiah
 - This is literally the enemy's oldest tactic
 - To twist the Word of God to indict those who lead God's people
 - In the first case, it was Satan indicting the Word God spoke to Adam, asking if indeed He forbade eating of any fruit in the Garden
 - That was a distortion of God's Word, leaving the impression that God's Word brought negative, destructive outcomes to God's people
 - Likewise, here Sanballat twists God's Word to cause the people of Israel to fear that Nehemiah's leadership will bring them destruction at the hands of the Persian army
 - Nothing could be farther from the truth

- God's people must know God's Word so that when the enemy distorts it in an attempt to tear down our leaders – or or to tear down the Word itself – we are prepared to defend it
 - As a teacher, I've endured occasions when my teaching of God's Word has been twisted with an intent to discredit me or the ministry
 - Usually, the point is to accuse me of mishandling the Word of God in a malicious way
 - But if we know the Word well, then we won't fall for that discrediting tactic
- Nehemiah responds to these reports with a timeless response

Neh. 6:8 Then I sent a message to him saying, "Such things as you are saying have not been done, but you are inventing them in your own mind."

Neh. 6:9 For all of them were trying to frighten us, thinking, "They will become discouraged with the work and it will not be done." But now, O God, strengthen my hands.

- Nehemiah calls it like it is
 - He says nothing you are saying is true
 - The NIV captures the sense of this even better

Neh. 6:8 I sent him this reply: "Nothing like what you are saying is happening; you are just making it up out of your head." [NIV]

- Besides being an awesome retort, Nehemiah's statement serves as a great example of not playing the game on the enemy's turf
- Nehemiah didn't engage in a debate over his motives
 - He didn't try to argue Sanballat's lie with a different story
 - To do so lends even more credibility to the accusations
 - And it would look defensive and weak
- The enemy doesn't deserve a response to his schemes
 - The Bible tells us to resist the enemy, but it doesn't tell us to engage with him on his terms

- When the enemy brings voices to impugn the motives of our leaders, we need to follow the instructions of Scripture and wait for multiple, independent witnesses before passing judgment
- In the meantime, don't expect your leaders to answer the accusations with a defense
- Instead, expect Nehemiah's response
- After calling it a fraud, Nehemiah appeals to the Lord for a defense
 - He knows the people might not be so strong in the face of this scheme
 - So he asks the Lord not only to stop the attack
 - But also to strengthen the people to resist the temptation to believe the slander and turn on Nehemiah's leadership
 - Nehemiah's return to prayer each and every time he is challenged is such a great example for all of us
 - But once more, after the attack, they get back to the rebuilding of the city

Neh. 6:10 When I entered the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah, son of Mehetabel, who was confined at home, he said, "Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you, and they are coming to kill you at night."

Neh. 6:11 But I said, "Should a man like me flee? And could one such as I go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in."

Neh. 6:12 Then I perceived that surely God had not sent him, but he uttered his prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.

Neh. 6:13 He was hired for this reason, that I might become frightened and act accordingly and sin, so that they might have an evil report in order that they could reproach me.

Neh. 6:14 Remember, O my God, Tobiah and Sanballat according to these works of theirs, and also Noadiah the prophetess and the rest of the prophets who were trying to frighten me.

- Finally, the third tactic of the enemy plays out, a plot to disqualify Nehemiah
 - On this occasion, Nehemiah visits the home of a Jew by the name of Shemaiah
 - Nehemiah says he was "confined" in his home

- He may have been confined for health reasons, like a shut-in
 - But the word “confined” usually means “being detained”, as in a prisoner, suggesting he was under house arrest
 - The point is, he’s not an upstanding member of Jewish society
- We don’t know Nehemiah’s reason for visiting, but it appears Shemaiah summoned Nehemiah to hear a “prophecy” he wanted to deliver
 - He suggests that both of them flee into the temple for protection from the enemies of Israel, who wish to kill Nehemiah
 - Shemaiah wants Nehemiah to believe this is a word from the Lord, and therefore Nehemiah must heed the warning
 - He tells Nehemiah to enter the temple, past its doors and shut himself in
 - Given the state of the city at that time, the temple was easily the most secure and defensible structure in the area
 - Much like the Texans retreating to the chapel in the Alamo against the Mexican army
- In v.11, Nehemiah responds by asking, “Should a man like me flee, and could I go into the temple?”
 - Nehemiah recognized the two aspects of this plot to disqualify him from leadership
 - First, by fleeing from a threat, he loses his standing before the people as an example of faith and reliance on God
 - While there is a time to flee, Nehemiah has based his position of authority on calling the people to stand firm, fulfill their duty to God and trust in God to defend the city
 - How many times have we heard Nehemiah praying to God for defense?
 - And how many times has Nehemiah appealed to the people to wait on God, expecting Him to come to their aid in a time of distress?
 - So what would the effect be if Nehemiah turned tail and ran at the suggestion that God’s enemies might attack?

- It calls into question everything he has said
 - This is why leaders are called to the highest standards of conduct in their service to God's people
 - A leader has no power to compel godliness in others while he is modeling sin in his own life
 - A teacher can't persuade others to obey God's Word while failing to obey it himself
 - No one can accomplish anything for the Lord through hypocrisy
 - It would have been the height of hypocrisy for Nehemiah to lock himself up in the temple, having just exhorted Israel to stand firm in the face of threats
 - And of course, had Nehemiah taken this advice, he would have eliminated himself from the action
 - He would have been neutralized by his absence
 - And this is exactly what dishonor and disqualification brings
 - It removes a soldier of God from the battle
 - It creates a casualty on the battle field
 - The war continues on, but the casualty is left behind
- The second way this plot would disqualify Nehemiah is by leading him into a very public sin, resulting from pride and arrogance
 - Nehemiah asks, "Who am I to enter the temple?"
 - He is referring to the limits imposed by the Law on who may enter the Holy Place of the temple
 - When Shemaiah suggests Nehemiah enter past the doors, he is speaking of the Holy Place of the temple
 - Only the Holy Place was secured by a set of doors
 - Yet, the Law stipulated that only the priests could enter into the Holy Place
 - Nehemiah is not of the tribe of Levi, so he has no right to enter the Holy Place

- If he had taken Shemaiah's advice, he would have been knowingly violating the Law of God without cause
 - We know there are times when men cross boundaries established in the Law with the approval of God
 - As when David ate the show bread reserved for the priests
 - But in this case, Nehemiah would be acting in sin, since he has not received permission from the Lord to enter the temple
 - Notice, in v.12, Nehemiah realizes that the prophecy of this man was no prophecy at all, but rather a lie intended to entrap Nehemiah
 - Were Nehemiah gullible enough to accept this advice, he would have been sinning in a very serious and public way
 - And the people would have rightly interpreted his sin as a reflection of his arrogance and pride
 - "What kind of man thinks he can walk into the Holy Place on his own initiative?" they would have asked
 - At that point, Nehemiah would have lost all support among the people
 - He would have been disqualified as a leader
- It's important to note the order of events in vs.11-12
 - Only after Nehemiah rejects this suggestion does he then come to understand that the prophecy is no prophecy at all
 - The order of these events demonstrates an important principle of how God works in us in the face of the enemy's schemes
 - God waited for Nehemiah to make the right choice, based on the knowledge already available to him, before the Lord revealed the backstory
 - Even before Nehemiah was made aware that the prophecy was a trick, he knew enough to understand Shemaiah was giving bad advice
 - Nehemiah's knowledge of God's Word, combined with his own common sense, was enough to reject this suggestion

- Once Nehemiah had come to the right conclusion, the Lord confirmed his choice by giving him the insight to know this man was hired to trick him
 - The Lord wanted Nehemiah to be confident in his decision, knowing the Lord was behind him
 - But God typically allows us to work through these tests without special revelation, or burning bushes or voices from Heaven
 - He has already given us all that's required for godliness in His Word and through His Spirit

2 Pet. 1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;

2 Pet. 1:3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

- Before the Lord will move to give us more, He waits to see if we are willing to use what He has already provided
- Meanwhile, notice how the enemy works to undermine our trust in God's Word
 - Shemaiah called to Nehemiah claiming to have "a word from the Lord"
 - How often has the enemy pulled that trick out of his bag?
 - The enemy makes an appeal to our flesh by enticing us with something special, miraculous, mysterious
 - He knows that if our choice is between heeding the Word God delivered over the centuries through His prophets...
 - Or receiving an exciting, divine revelation delivered by special delivery from God to you
 - Then our flesh will always prefer the special new thing
- But our flesh is self-destructive and easily manipulated by such nonsense
 - We must be trained by Scripture itself to turn aside from special revelation or "a word from God", especially when it goes against what we know in Scripture

- When we do this, we become trained in how to distinguish truth from nonsense, as Hebrews tell us

[Heb. 5:12](#) For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

[Heb. 5:13](#) For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant.

[Heb. 5:14](#) But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

- Nehemiah was trained, and so he rejected this bad advice, and as he did, the Lord revealed to him that this man could not be trusted at all
 - Notice, in v.13, Nehemiah correctly concluded that this tactic was intended to cause Nehemiah to act out of fear, rather than faith
 - Acting out of fear is a sin in Scripture
 - Because acting out of fear is the antithesis of walking in faith
 - The Bible doesn't say that being afraid is sin, but it condemns allowing fear to rule our hearts and decide our actions
 - Secondly, Nehemiah understands that the scheme hoped to drive Nehemiah into sin, and thereby discredit him before the people
 - Now you can see why it's so important that our leaders remain vigilant against schemes that might discredit them
 - Notice also in v.14, Nehemiah mentions other prophets and prophetesses who must have tried to trip him with other so-called words from the Lord
 - This wasn't an isolated attack, so imagine all the ways the enemy must have tried to create fear or give a false word from God
 - The fact that a woman was involved as well, might indicate that a sexual trap was among the schemes the enemy tried
 - We need to pray for our leaders to be wise and brave in the face of this nonsense
 - And we need to be prepared for the attacks ourselves for the day when we're called into a leadership role ourselves

- Nehemiah places all this in God's hand, asking Him to remember the evil deeds of these people
 - In other words, Nehemiah didn't take revenge himself
 - He let it go, trusting God to take revenge in the proper time
 - Don't become distracted by the scheme, nor by a pursuit of the guilty
 - Leave it all to God, and get back to work doing what He has called you to do

[Neh. 6:15](#) So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of the month Elul, in fifty-two days.

[Neh. 6:16](#) When all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations surrounding us saw it, they lost their confidence; for they recognized that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.

[Neh. 6:17](#) Also in those days many letters went from the nobles of Judah to Tobiah, and Tobiah's letters came to them.

[Neh. 6:18](#) For many in Judah were bound by oath to him because he was the son-in-law of Shecaniah the son of Arah, and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah.

[Neh. 6:19](#) Moreover, they were speaking about his good deeds in my presence and reported my words to him. Then Tobiah sent letters to frighten me.

- Remarkably, the people completed this project in only 52 days
 - Even under ideal circumstances, that was a remarkable feat
 - Considering how long it sat in disrepair, the speed of this work is both a testimony to God's power and an indictment of Israel's disobedience
 - They have been living in the city for about 100 years since the first return from exile
 - All this time, they have suffered attacks and harassment and fear
 - And they were always just 52 days away from having their wall
 - The speed of the effort testified to God's power, as the people of the land acknowledged
 - In v.16, the people around the city declared the greatness of Israel's God

- Here's the point of the whole exercise in one verse
 - God's people are called to accomplish a great work and are given a leader, so that the result would be a witness to God's power
 - And as a result, the world testifies to God's glory
 - This must always be our aim in serving God
- Nehemiah ends this chapter with a footnote on another adversary, Tobiah
 - The name "Tobiah" is a Jewish name
 - And this man appears to have been working all the while to drive a wedge between the nobles of Israel and Nehemiah
 - They were writing letters back and forth
 - Though we don't know the contents of the letters, Nehemiah does tell us that these nobles were beholden to Tobiah through family connections
 - Tobiah used those connections to compel the nobles to commend him to Nehemiah, so that Tobiah might have greater influence over him
 - Ultimately, that effort failed as well, but it goes to show the immense pressure Nehemiah experienced throughout the project
 - Not only from outside the camp
 - But also from compromised members of Israel who did the enemy's bidding
- Reading this account causes me to wonder what accomplishments for God lie just "52 days away" for me?
 - What impossible task and seemingly insurmountable challenge is more achievable than I imagine?
 - Where has the Lord brought leadership into my life to spur me onward so that I might finally achieve the thing that's been waiting for me for too long?

- What an encouragement it can be to know that when we take a step of faith in a new direction, the outcome doesn't depend upon us
- Are we hesitating to serve God in some way because the enemy has succeeded in distracting, deceiving or discrediting us along the way?
 - Are we sidelined because of fear, doubt or weariness?
 - If so, consider you may be closer than you think to the success God has in store
 - You may be 52 days away from living in peace and security
 - You need only take a step of faith
- As with priests who crossed the Jordan carrying the heavy Ark

[Josh. 3:14](#) So when the people set out from their tents to cross the Jordan with the priests carrying the ark of the covenant before the people,
[Josh. 3:15](#) and when those who carried the ark came into the Jordan, and the feet of the priests carrying the ark were dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks all the days of harvest),
[Josh. 3:16](#) the waters which were flowing down from above stood and rose up in one heap, a great distance away at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan; and those which were flowing down toward the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. So the people crossed opposite Jericho.
[Josh. 3:17](#) And the priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan while all Israel crossed on dry ground, until all the nation had finished crossing the Jordan.

- With the wall finished, it comes time for the people to celebrate and enjoy the fruit of their labor by moving into the city

[Neh. 7:1](#) Now when the wall was rebuilt and I had set up the doors, and the gatekeepers and the singers and the Levites were appointed,
[Neh. 7:2](#) then I put Hanani my brother, and Hananiah the commander of the fortress, in charge of Jerusalem, for he was a faithful man and feared God more than many.
[Neh. 7:3](#) Then I said to them, "Do not let the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot, and while they are standing guard, let them shut and bolt the doors. Also appoint guards from the inhabitants of Jerusalem, each at his post, and each in front of his own house."

- First, Nehemiah gives instructions on how to secure the city and control the gates
 - After living in an un-walled city for so long, the people needed training on how to operate the gates
 - Nehemiah says the gates remain closed at night and don't open them until the sun is high enough to be hot
 - Only in daylight hours is the city open for business
 - And Nehemiah appoints trustworthy men to guard the city walls and control the gates
 - What a shame it would be to lead a great project and achieve great progress only to place the work into the hands of untrustworthy men
 - Many a great work of God's people has come to ruin when a great builder was followed by an incompetent steward
- With the city walls built and the security of the city established, Nehemiah now needs a way to determine who will occupy the city
 - Just as with the original exile under Zerubbabel, the Jews wanted to ensure that only those who were truly Jewish could receive a portion of this land
 - So Nehemiah searches and finds the list of names from the original exile
 - The list is almost identical to the list given in Ezra 2
 - And this list is the list of those who are eligible to enter the city
 - We will read it as a single unit, mangling names as I go

Neh. 7:4 Now the city was large and spacious, but the people in it were few and the houses were not built.

Neh. 7:5 Then my God put it into my heart to assemble the nobles, the officials and the people to be enrolled by genealogies. Then I found the book of the genealogy of those who came up first in which I found the following record:

Neh. 7:6 These are the people of the province who came up from the captivity of the exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away, and who returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his city,

[Neh. 7:7](#) who came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, Baanah. The number of men of the people of Israel:

[Neh. 7:8](#) the sons of Parosh, 2,172;

[Neh. 7:9](#) the sons of Shephatiah, 372;

[Neh. 7:10](#) the sons of Arah, 652;

[Neh. 7:11](#) the sons of Pahath-moab of the sons of Jeshua and Joab, 2,818;

[Neh. 7:12](#) the sons of Elam, 1,254;

[Neh. 7:13](#) the sons of Zattu, 845;

[Neh. 7:14](#) the sons of Zaccai, 760;

[Neh. 7:15](#) the sons of Binnui, 648;

[Neh. 7:16](#) the sons of Bebai, 628;

[Neh. 7:17](#) the sons of Azgad, 2,322;

[Neh. 7:18](#) the sons of Adonikam, 667;

[Neh. 7:19](#) the sons of Bigvai, 2,067;

[Neh. 7:20](#) the sons of Adin, 655;

[Neh. 7:21](#) the sons of Ater, of Hezekiah, 98;

[Neh. 7:22](#) the sons of Hashum, 328;

[Neh. 7:23](#) the sons of Bezai, 324;

[Neh. 7:24](#) the sons of Hariph, 112;

[Neh. 7:25](#) the sons of Gibeon, 95;

[Neh. 7:26](#) the men of Bethlehem and Netophah, 188;

[Neh. 7:27](#) the men of Anathoth, 128;

[Neh. 7:28](#) the men of Beth-azmaveth, 42;

[Neh. 7:29](#) the men of Kiriath-jearim, Chephirah and Beeroth, 743;

[Neh. 7:30](#) the men of Ramah and Geba, 621;

[Neh. 7:31](#) the men of Michmas, 122;

[Neh. 7:32](#) the men of Bethel and Ai, 123;

[Neh. 7:33](#) the men of the other Nebo, 52;

[Neh. 7:34](#) the sons of the other Elam, 1,254;

[Neh. 7:35](#) the sons of Harim, 320;

[Neh. 7:36](#) the men of Jericho, 345;

[Neh. 7:37](#) the sons of Lod, Hadid and Ono, 721;

[Neh. 7:38](#) the sons of Senaah, 3,930.

[Neh. 7:39](#) The priests: the sons of Jedaiah of the house of Jeshua, 973;

[Neh. 7:40](#) the sons of Immer, 1,052;

[Neh. 7:41](#) the sons of Pashhur, 1,247;

[Neh. 7:42](#) the sons of Harim, 1,017.

[Neh. 7:43](#) The Levites: the sons of Jeshua, of Kadmiel, of the sons of Hodevah, 74.

[Neh. 7:44](#) The singers: the sons of Asaph, 148.

[Neh. 7:45](#) The gatekeepers: the sons of Shallum, the sons of Ater, the sons of Talmon, the sons of Akkub, the sons of Hatita, the sons of Shobai, 138.

[Neh. 7:46](#) The temple servants: the sons of Ziha, the sons of Hasupha, the sons of Tabbaoth,
[Neh. 7:47](#) the sons of Keros, the sons of Sia, the sons of Padon,
[Neh. 7:48](#) the sons of Lebana, the sons of Hagaba, the sons of Shalmal,
[Neh. 7:49](#) the sons of Hanan, the sons of Giddel, the sons of Gahar,
[Neh. 7:50](#) the sons of Reaiah, the sons of Rezin, the sons of Nekoda,
[Neh. 7:51](#) the sons of Gazzam, the sons of Uzza, the sons of Paseah,
[Neh. 7:52](#) the sons of Besai, the sons of Meunim, the sons of Nephushesim,
[Neh. 7:53](#) the sons of Bakbuk, the sons of Hakupha, the sons of Harhur,
[Neh. 7:54](#) the sons of Bazlith, the sons of Mehida, the sons of Harsha,
[Neh. 7:55](#) the sons of Barkos, the sons of Sisera, the sons of Temah,
[Neh. 7:56](#) the sons of Neziah, the sons of Hatipha.
[Neh. 7:57](#) The sons of Solomon's servants: the sons of Sotai, the sons of Sophereth, the sons of Perida,
[Neh. 7:58](#) the sons of Jaala, the sons of Darkon, the sons of Giddel,
[Neh. 7:59](#) the sons of Shephatiah, the sons of Hattil, the sons of Pochereth-hazzebaim, the sons of Amon.
[Neh. 7:60](#) All the temple servants and the sons of Solomon's servants were 392.
[Neh. 7:61](#) These were they who came up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addon and Immer; but they could not show their fathers' houses or their descendants, whether they were of Israel:
[Neh. 7:62](#) the sons of Delaiah, the sons of Tobiah, the sons of Nekoda, 642.
[Neh. 7:63](#) Of the priests: the sons of Hobaiah, the sons of Hakkoz, the sons of Barzillai, who took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai, the Gileadite, and was named after them.
[Neh. 7:64](#) These searched among their ancestral registration, but it could not be located; therefore they were considered unclean and excluded from the priesthood.
[Neh. 7:65](#) The governor said to them that they should not eat from the most holy things until a priest arose with Urim and Thummim.
[Neh. 7:66](#) The whole assembly together was 42,360,
[Neh. 7:67](#) besides their male and their female servants, of whom there were 7,337; and they had 245 male and female singers.
[Neh. 7:68](#) Their horses were 736; their mules, 245;
[Neh. 7:69](#) their camels, 435; their donkeys, 6,720.
[Neh. 7:70](#) Some from among the heads of fathers' households gave to the work. The governor gave to the treasury 1,000 gold drachmas, 50 basins, 530 priests' garments.
[Neh. 7:71](#) Some of the heads of fathers' households gave into the treasury of the work 20,000 gold drachmas and 2,200 silver minas.
[Neh. 7:72](#) That which the rest of the people gave was 20,000 gold drachmas and 2,000 silver minas and 67 priests' garments.

- Since we commented on the list in Ezra 2, I will not take time to do that here again

- Instead, we need only briefly note the purpose in the retelling of the list
 - First, this list established which families in Nehemiah's day had right to enter the city and live there
 - So by re-reading the list, Nehemiah demonstrates that God's Word will reign in the city
- Secondly, he is reflecting the faithfulness of God
 - These people are the children and grandchildren and perhaps great-grandchildren of the first exiles
 - And yet here, they are experiencing the faithfulness of God to fulfill His promise that the people would re-inhabit this city with walls and a temple
 - What was once rubble has returned
- The time required for that fulfillment was a result of the people's delay, not the Lord's
 - His faithfulness never waned
 - He remained true to His Word, sending prophets and teachers and leaders to ensure the work was done
 - And He even foretold the delay in the Book of Daniel, when we counted out the years that would be required to rebuild the city with a wall in Daniel 9
- But for now, the people can see the power of God to keep His promises over time and distance, from generation to generation
 - Not even the disobedience of people will thwart the will of God and His faithfulness

Neh. 7:73 Now the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, some of the people, the temple servants and all Israel, lived in their cities. And when the seventh month came, the sons of Israel were in their cities.