

Building for God: Completions

Goldstone Church – 15-Nov-15 10:30am

Nehemiah 6:15-7:3

Introduction

This is the penultimate visit in our current series in book of Nehemiah. We're looking at how God wants us to be involved in building His kingdom here at Goldstone church.

The end of Nehemiah 6 gives us the wonderful news that, after just **52** days, the rebuilding of the Jerusalem wall had been completed. No more rubble, no more crumbling stonework, and no more wide-open gates.

Just as a quick reminder of the story so far:

Chapter 1 'Nehemiah's Foundations': how he prayerfully responded when he heard that Jerusalem's walls were in ruins. And how Nehemiah's prayer helps us in our prayer life.

Chapter 2 'Nehemiah's Preparations': how he was patient, how he planned, and how he responded to the opportunity of rebuilding. We too need to: (i) Wait on God, (ii) Work with People and (iii) Wrestle with Problems.

Chapter 3 'Nehemiah's Recreations': how he carefully organised and divided out the building project. The names of the 10 gates help us to identify areas of our spiritual lives that may need to be rebuilt.

Chapter 4 'Nehemiah's Oppositions': how he responded. Which helps us to know how to respond to our daily trials and oppositions.

Chapter 5 'Nehemiah's Alleviations': where Nehemiah had to address problems with the people he was working with. There was a call for us change: to (i) Relent from sin, to (ii) Restore our focus on God, and to (iii) Recommit our lives to God.

Chapter 6a 'Nehemiah's Confrontations': how he had to deal with a 'dirty tricks' campaign. We saw the Covert Actions of the Opposition, of Intrigue, Innuendo and Intimidation, and Nehemiah's Overt Answers; how he openly and honestly responded to the Opposition.

Nehemiah has been on a rollercoaster; an incredible adventure. But the walls of Jerusalem that had been in ruins for nearly a century-and-a-half, have been rebuilt in less than 2 months. Despite the waves of Opposition that Nehemiah faced, he was still able to galvanise and motivate the people to fulfil what God had called them to do.

These verses give us an insight into some of God's character; it shows What Matters to God.

1. MISSION MATTERS TO GOD (NEH 6:15)

God really does want the job to get done!

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

The assignment that God gave to Nehemiah and to the people in Jerusalem was to do the job. There was a beginning, there was a middle, but most importantly, there was an end. The God we worship and serve is not aimless and ambiguous; He is purposeful and focused.

We see this in the New Testament (Luke 10), when Jesus sends out the 72 disciples.

¹ “[Jesus] *appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.*”

¹⁷ “*The seventy-two returned with joy and said, ‘Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.’*”
Luke 10:1, 17

Notice what Jesus does:

- (i) He appoints them;
- (ii) He resources them; he pairs them up and instructs them on what to do;
- (iii) They had faced opposition, in the form of demons, but that God’s power and authority had defeated the problems;
- (iv) There had been great results.

In the same way, Nehemiah had been:

- (i) Appointed and called by God;
- (ii) Resourced by God, through the supplies provided by King Artaxerxes and through the energy and enthusiasm of the people;
- (iii) Faced and overcome much opposition;
- (iv) There had been great results.

The Mission matters to God!

We have been given a mission by God; to build His kingdom here at Goldstone Church.

Are we willing to do what it takes to get the job done?

Or are we comfortable with being comfortable?

2. WORSHIP MATTERS TO GOD (NEH 7:1)

“After the wall had been rebuilt and I had set the doors in place, the gatekeepers, the musicians and the Levites were appointed.” (Neh 7:1)

Nehemiah has just completed the physical task of rebuilding the walls and gates. Now he addresses the spiritual aspect of his assignment.

It would have been easy for Nehemiah to stop and go home when that last brick or gate was fitted into place. After all, Nehemiah was a civil servant and he needed to get back to his day job.

Remember that the walls and gates represented the identity of the people; an identity in the physical sense, but also an identity in the spiritual sense. It wasn’t enough just to rebuild and maintain the physical walls and gates, Nehemiah had to rebuild and maintain the spiritual life and relationship with God.

So, on completion of the physical rebuild, the first thing that Nehemiah does is to appoint (v.1) ‘the gatekeepers, the musicians and the Levites’.

Bible commentators suggest that these worship leaders were also given the task of guarding the city gates; protecting the city from invaders, and to ensure that God could be worshipped in the Temple at all times.

Worship matters to God. The Bible is full of references about worship, e.g. Jesus tells the woman at the well (John 4) that God “must be worshipped in spirit and truth”.

But what do we mean by “worship”? One comment only: Worship is more than just singing songs and hymns.

In English and church vocabulary generally, easy to interchange the words ‘worship’ and ‘music’, e.g. ‘Start our service with a time of worship’. But worshipping God is far more than just singing songs – however wonderful and spirit-led it is.

Worship involves every part of our being. Our whole identity and personality is participating when we worship. What we say, what we think, what we do, how we do it – every aspect of what makes us who we are, everything is involved when we worship God “in spirit and in truth”.

We worship God at work in the way we conduct ourselves and do business.

We worship God on holiday in the way that we relax and have fun.

Parents worship God by the way they raise their children.

Children worship God by the way they honour and look after their frail and needy parents.

We worship God by the way we manage our finances, drive our cars, speak to our neighbours, and meet socially with each other during the week.

We worship God through our personal prayer and Bible readings – and how we come together on Sundays, through music-worship, prayer-worship, offering-worship, preaching-worship, silent-worship.

When we worship God in “spirit and in truth”, every part of our being is included. Our *mind* is awed by the greatness of God; our *heart* is filled with love for God; and our *will* is submitted to the purpose God has for our lives.

Worship matters to God! We have been called to worship.

Our mission to build God’s kingdom here at Goldstone Church will be accomplished through our worship.

Are our lives focused on worshipping God, or something else?

3. INTEGRITY MATTERS TO GOD (NEH 7:2-3)

“I put in charge of Jerusalem my brother Hanani, along with Hananiah the commander of the citadel, because he was a man of integrity and feared God more than most people do.”

(Neh 7:2)

Nehemiah delegates some of his responsibilities to others. But although certain administrative skills were important, Nehemiah is more concerned with their Godly character. He selects 2 men:

- “Hanani” – possibly a relative of Nehemiah; same person who came to Nehemiah to alert him of the problems in Jerusalem (Neh 1). Appointed as the civil leader of Jerusalem.
- “Hananiah” – appointed as the military leader of Jerusalem.

They are given clear guidelines about the security of the city (v.3).

Note the character qualities these men showed:

a) Faithfulness.

These men were “reliable, truthful and firm”. What they said they would do, they did. Because they were faithful, they could be trusted.

Faithfulness is an essential ingredient in any relationship.

We worship a faithful God, who always speaks the truth, and who always keeps his word. Because of His faithfulness, our relationship with God is able to grow and deepen.

b) Fear of God.

‘Fearing God’ = to have a profound reverence for God; a reverence that spills out in the way that we live our lives. The ‘fear of God’ is respecting God, obeying God, submitting to His discipline, and worshipping God in awe and high esteem.

As we honour and revere God, our relationship with Him grows and deepens.

c) Watchfulness.

Nehemiah instructs Hanani and Hananiah to appoint other guards (v.3), proving that they have a watchful character. Because of their faithfulness and they fear of God, Nehemiah knows that they will keep on being watchful.

In New Testament, Jesus warns his followers (Mark 13:35) to be watchful.

We are also told to be alert because the devil is on the prowl (1 Peter 5:8).

Our relationship with God is active, not passive. He calls us to authentic worship from within the context of being alert to what is going on around us.

Integrity matters to God.

We have been called to be Faithful, to Fear God and to be Watchful.

Our mission to build God’s kingdom here at Goldstone Church will be accomplished through our worship, and through living lives full of Godly character.

CONCLUSION

Nehemiah rebuilt the walls and gates of Jerusalem despite the many attacks he encountered. Although it had only been 52 days, it probably felt longer.

As disciples and followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to Build His Kingdom in the context of the realities of life; this can include a season of opposition. But what matters to God is: Mission, Worship and Integrity.

May we:

- Take up the **Mission** that God has given us, and to do what it takes to get the job done.
- To **Worship** God in everything, and through everything do, with everything that we have, and with everything that we are.
- To live lives of **Integrity** for God. Lives of faithfulness, lives in reverence & fear of God, and lives of watchfulness.

AMEN