

## **A Different Kind of City**

### **Nehemiah 6:15 – 8:18**

As the walls are completed Nehemiah knows where the glory belongs: they have done this with God's help. When things go well, it is easy to forget God. Nehemiah doesn't. Knowing God is with him gives him the courage to do the next thing – to rebuild the people as a distinctive people.

#### **God-Centred Leaders**

The leadership in Jerusalem was compromised by its relationship with Tobiah. They used their position for their own gain. Their loyalties were divided. We will face the same temptations.

Nehemiah knew that if the people were to be a beacon and a blessing, they needed leaders who would lead them towards that.

So Nehemiah appoints gatekeepers, singers and Levites, to protect, worship God, and teach the people God's word. Over them he puts two men whose allegiance is to God not their gain, and who fear God, not men: two great character traits for any who aspire to leadership. And there is always this need for God-centred leaders: who will be faithful to serve for the good of others and out of a fear of God more than man.

#### **A God-Centred People**

Nehemiah's instructions about the gates was about who or what was going to be this city's god. It was not going to be work or profit, but God, and that would need a different kind of working. Also, chapter 7 gives a list of returned exiles, true Jews from whom the city could be repopulated. For us, those ethnic barriers have gone. But if the church is to be a distinctive community, her people must be distinctive. That means we need a power at work amongst us that will change us.

In chapter 8 we see the power of God's word changing the people. The gospel has the same power.

It has the power to humble us: and we need this power in our lives if we are to change. The people became aware of their sin. Likewise, the gospel tells us we are so wrong Christ had to die for us.

But it doesn't leave you in the dust. It also lifts you up. The people are told not to grieve but to rejoice, because God's joy is their strength. The gospel also brings us joy, as we realize that we are so loved Christ was willing to die for us. It gives us a joy that can make you strong when you feel weak.

But the third reason we need the gospel is that it makes us outward looking. The people are to share what they have with those who have nothing. The law tells us God is the defender of the poor, the widow and the asylum seeker. The gospel also breaks our self-centredness: when we realize Christ has served us, we will love and serve others.