

# Successors and Ancestors

Nehemiah 7



Week Ten

## inTro



Read This Week's Passage:  
Nehemiah 7

### PIVOT TO PEOPLE

Up to this point in the book, Nehemiah had overcome many obstacles: external opposition from international coalition forces, internal social conflicts within the community, and the logistics of rebuilding the walls within two months! His answers to these issues were primarily prayer and dependence on God while maintaining his focus on the immediate work before him.

But aside from the immediate objective, Nehemiah's main purpose was still something higher—a purpose somewhat obscured from view until now. He was to rebuild not only Jerusalem but the people of Jerusalem. For what is a walled city without people to inhabit it?

Biblical leadership must always be concerned for people. While business, science, and politics focus on the objective leadership tasks at hand with values such as profit, progress, and power, biblical leadership always takes into account the people. We will discover that Nehemiah's leadership sought restoration of the community and its connection with God.

While the first six chapters of the book focused on the material restoration of the walls, chapters 8 through 13 now pivot to the spiritual restoration of the people.



## **inScribe**

Write out Nehemiah 7:1–5 from the translation of your choice. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, outline it, or mind map the chapter.



Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

**Circle** repeated words/phrases/ideas

**Underline** words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you



Draw **Arrows** to connect words/phrases to other associated or related words/phrases



Memorize your favorite verse. Write it out multiple times to help memorization.

Where is accountability needed in your life? Public accountability? Spiritual accountability to God?



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**COMPETENCE AND SPIRITUALITY**

The initial verses of chapter 7 state that Nehemiah had completed his mission. Whereas in the previous chapter, the wall had been built, but the doors had not been hung (Nehemiah 6:1), now both were complete. The logistics of the wall and doors were over. Now that a mere administrative leadership was necessary for the upkeep of the structures, Nehemiah delegated the task to others: Hanani and Hananiah (verse 2).

Whether Hanani was a literal brother of Nehemiah is not surely known because relatives and kinsfolk were also referred to as brothers. The Bible continues to mention two prerequisite qualities to look for in a successor: competence (“for he was a faithful man”) and spirituality (“feared God more than many”). One could also include the prerequisite of having a burden for the work, which was likely shared with Hanani, whom Nehemiah initially met in Nehemiah 1:2.

In secular organizations, competence is measured by resumes, educational degrees, licenses, and certifications. Other metrics may be used, but the point is that competence and skill sets are the main criteria used in employment selection. Biblical leadership, however, goes one step further and includes the role of spirituality. Of course, this attribute is more difficult to measure, but the Bible interestingly says Nehemiah’s choice of a successor “feared God more than many.” Rather than an objective quality, it is subjective and even comparative to those around. The point is not how much or even how much more, but rather, whether the individual has a close relationship with God.

This latter quality may be laughed at by the secular world, but why would spirituality not be a key factor when it comes to spiritual work? For spiritual things are spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:13, 14). Just as the description does not discount competence, neither does it disregard spirituality. Some in church and religious work assume that all you need is a relationship with God. But know-how, ability, skillfulness, and proficiency in the area at hand are just as necessary.

## THE HANDOFF

Once his successors were chosen, Nehemiah's astute leadership caused him to look at other areas that needed to be developed. A couple of lessons arise from these actions: (1) Nehemiah knew when to step down and delegate responsibilities and duties to others, and (2) true leadership transcends a position and looks for any area that needs to be cultivated.

One area of concern was security. Nehemiah 7:1 records that he set up porters and Levites over the walls and doors. Possibly still wary of Sanballat and his friends, the threat of invasion, spies, and other breaches of security were a present reality. His vigilance and watchfulness are something to be emulated.

In verse 3, Nehemiah continued to create a system of subordinates and subsystem of security, in that the Levites were to open the gates at daytime (for surprise attacks could have occurred at dawn or dusk), while the inhabitants of Jerusalem were responsible for the walls at other times.

In verse 5, Nehemiah was impressed by God to take "inventory" of the people. Nehemiah's scrupulous attention to detail shows the ideal meticulousness Christian leaders must exercise in their finances, social relationships, and responsibilities. Verses 6–73 list names, families, hometowns, positions, goods, supplies, livestock, and finances. Good leadership includes organization skills, paying attention to fine detail, and accurate record keeping. The best leadership knows that the important factor is the people behind these facts.



**inTerpret**

After looking at your scribed and annotated text, what special insights do your marks overall seem to point to?



What questions emerge after studying this passage? What parts are difficult?

What other principles and conclusions do you find?



Read more at  
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Successors and Ancestors



What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

2 Tim. 2:2

Acts 6:1-7

1 Tim. 1:4



What other verses/promises come to mind in connection with Nehemiah 7?

Review your memorized verse from Nehemiah 7.

## THE VISA OF VICTORY

A policy was enacted to ensure that those living in Jerusalem were pure Jews, and they had to be registered by genealogy. This ensured that the citizens had a genetic connection to the city, thereby preventing the enemies of God from coming back in.

However, some groups could find no genealogical record of their ancestry, as stated in verses 61–65. Instead of being incorporated into the group, they were “excluded from the priesthood as defiled.” Later in the New Testament, 1 Timothy 1:4 and Titus 3:9 discourage the practice of checking genealogies. By this time, genealogies had become an “endless” and futile exercise, no longer being concerned with security but exclusivity. Rather, the theology of Ephesians brings out that Gentiles and Jews can now be one if they are in Christ (Ephesians 2:11–22). This is a revolutionary thought! Paul speaks out against the divide that kept Gentiles and Jews separate for centuries, not on the basis of justice but on the basis of Jesus Christ!

Jesus is the only One who has the right to be living in the New Jerusalem. As long as our “genealogy” is found to be connected to Christ, our citizenship, regardless of being a Jew or Gentile, is now ensured in the heavenly city! So we do away with our earthly cultural records and replace them with our connection with Christ. The implications are that a new culture is being created in Christ, called the church! Two people of different nationalities, cultures, or races have more common with each other in Christ than someone from their own gene pool. This is the power of Christ’s blood!



**inVite**

Meditate on Nehemiah 7 again  
and look for Jesus in the passage.



Is Jesus exclusive? Is salvation  
exclusive?

How do you see Jesus differently  
or see Him again?

Prayer: How do you respond to  
seeing Jesus in this way?



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Review your memory verse.  
How does it apply to your  
life this week?

—————→  
As you have studied this  
week, what personal  
applications have you been  
convicted of in your life?

What are practical applications  
you must make in your school,  
family, workplace, and church?



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Spirit of Prophecy at  
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**PREJUDICE AND RACISM DESTROYED**

For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:27, 28

“No distinction on account of nationality, race, or caste, is recognized by God. He is the Maker of all mankind. All men are of one family by creation, and all are one through redemption. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment of the temple, that every soul may have free access to God.

“The religion of the Bible recognizes no caste or color. It ignores rank, wealth, worldly honor. God estimates men as men. With Him, character decides their worth. And we are to recognize the Spirit of Christ in whomsoever He is revealed.

“Thus Christ sought to teach the disciples the truth that in God’s kingdom there are no territorial lines, no caste, no aristocracy; that they must go to all nations, bearing to them the message of a Saviour’s love.

“The walls of sectarianism and caste and race will fall down when the true missionary spirit enters the hearts of men. Prejudice is melted away by the love of God.

“Walls of separation have been built up between the whites and the blacks. These walls of prejudice will tumble down of themselves as did the walls of Jericho, when Christians obey the Word of God, which enjoins on them supreme love to their Maker and impartial love to their neighbors.

“When the Holy Spirit is poured out, there will be a triumph of humanity over prejudice in seeking the salvation of the souls of human beings. God will control minds. Human hearts will love as Christ loved. And the color line will be regarded by many very differently from the way in which it is now regarded. To love as Christ loves lifts the mind into a pure, heavenly, unselfish atmosphere.”<sup>1</sup>

1. Ellen G. White, *Ye Shall Receive Power* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald®, 1995), 337.



Share insights from this week's memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.



**Who will take up the work in your position after you?**

**Which is more difficult: competence or spirituality?**

**How do you respond to someone who simply won't stand down from their position to the detriment of the organization?**

**In what ways have we placed culture, race, or ethnicity above our Lord?**

**Are you meticulous and watchful with your spiritual life?**

**Are you watchful of the spiritual lives around you?**

**How can we better keep our finances and details as ordered as Nehemiah did?**

**What kinds of threats are around you constantly?**