

# Now What? (Nehemiah 7:1-73)

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Date: 13 October 2024

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[ 0 : 00 ] After the war had been rebuilt and I had set the doors in place, the gatekeepers, the musicians and the Levites were appointed.

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.

I said to them, The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot. While the gatekeepers are still on duty, have them shut the doors and bar them.

Also appoint residents of Jerusalem as guards, some at their posts and some near their own houses. Now the city was large and spacious, but there were few people in it, and the houses had not yet been rebuilt.

Some of the heads of the families contributed to the work. The governor gave to the treasury 1,000 derricks of gold, 50 bowls and 530 garments for priests.

[ 1 : 06 ] Some of the heads of the families gave to the treasury for the work, 20,000 derricks of gold, 2,200 minas of silver. The total given by the rest of the people was 20,000 derricks of gold, 2,000 minas of silver and 67 garments for priests.

The priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the musicians and the temple servants, along with certain of the people and the rest of the Israelites, settled in their own towns.

Thank you, Mariah and Moxie. Ah, here you are, Moxie. Thank you.

All right, we're on Nehemiah 7 already. Okay, now many of us, really younger ones here, how many younger ones have you actually seen the movie called Finding Nemo?

Nemo. How many? You were not even born when the movie was made. It was actually 21 years already, the first movie. How many movies have they made, Finding Nemo?

[ 2 : 17 ] Two? Huh? Two, right? Okay, the first one. Okay, the first one. Remember, all the fishes were in the dentist's fish tank?

Right? They tried to escape. So what happened? They kind of, they mucked up, I mean, they messed up the tank, all right? So the dentist had to put every fish in the plastic bag.

Remember? Remember? And then, I don't know how they could escape. Just have a look at it, all right? Have a look at it. It's coming? Can I turn the volume up a little bit?

Okay. But you can see me more than just a hundred years later when I run till theuta, and the Sasha aggravates, and those people fall in class to try to adapt.

All right. Now what? Okay. Now what? Same question. Like in this, in the chapter 7.

[ 3 : 48 ] Now, I mean, last week when Pastor William preached 6, right? The theme was the reference to God, right? It was due to the reference to God and God's power manifested through these ordinary people.

And the war was completed just 52 days. It's amazing. It was a miracle, right? And all this project was done and all the people, all the surrounding nations were afraid and they really saw there was something out of ordinary, okay?

But the thing is, all right, the war is finished. Now what? What's next? Okay. If the project to build the war was Nehemiah's mission, I mean, I should not be preaching.

There should be no chapter 7. But there are a lot more. There's another big, even bigger project, more difficult for Nehemiah to accomplish.

And I believe that would be a lifelong thing. All right? So, Nehemiah 7. Thank you, Moriah, for reading that. It was supposed to be 73 verses.

[ 5 : 12 ] But she will still be reading now. So, I wanted to focus on those two parts that Moriah has just read.

But we won't miss the middle bits. It was a lot of names, okay? But you'll realize that actually Moriah read it some months ago when we studied Ezra 2.

All right? So, let's have a look at it. This chapter. All right? After the war was rebuilt, okay, Nehemiah did three things.

He set in the gatekeeper system. All right? He recounted the names of the early returnees. And he recorded the gifts that were offered by the leaders at the time.

All right? Now, what does it mean to us today? I believe there are similarities. There are principles we can learn from Nehemiah 7.

[ 6 : 21 ] The city of God. The wall is built. It's like the church building, right? It's the hardware of our church. But I believe the church is more than just the building or structures or managements.

But it's like a computer. You know? You don't just have a hardware. You need softwares. And the softwares are you and me. And we need to learn as people of God, as church.

We need to learn to love one another. And we need to love and we need to learn to serve in loyalty together. So PCBC English, we are part of the bigger congregation.

I love this morning. You know, you wouldn't feel how I felt. Because you guys were singing and playing up there.

And me as a participant sitting down, I was so filled with thankfulness. Wow. It's such a message, right?

[ 7 : 29 ] So it's not just English. It was not just Cantonese. It was not just elderly folks. It was not just kids. It's everybody in the Lord. And I was thankful that, I mean, you guys, you use...

Ivan, could you actually remember all those words in Cantonese? But fortunately, you did not have to sing, right? Yeah, but I mean, for some of us, they...

They know how to sing. Yeah? Could you understand everything? Yeah, but it was...

And to serve the Lord, praise God. It was such a wonderful picture. This is church. This is church. Sometimes, I don't just do things that I'm comfortable with.

I can step out of my comfort zone and to glorify God. I believe this is what the people at the time experienced. I believe this is what we have to commit ourselves to.

[ 8 : 37 ] So let's have a look at this passage together. Now, this church was built in 19... As they started to build in 1996, they completed the church building, was ready to use, and they had the service tier in 1998.

Praise God. But after the building was accomplished, that was only the beginning, right? And they had to find ways.

And the first thing they thought about was, those were your mom and dad, and your grandparents maybe, and they said, we need to find our own pastor.

And I was one of the candidates. And it was dated back a long time ago. So it was not just building, and they were satisfied with it. It was not just the management.

We had department leaders. We had deacons. We had to build up the people, not just the structures, or the admin, admin, admin, um, um, um, management, all right?

[ 9 : 49 ] So it was about you and me. So the wall, the walls of Jerusalem has been rebuilt.

But Nehemiah did three things. First, he rostered the gatekeepers. And then, he recounted the people, long list of people, and the things they brought back, the animals, and the donkeys, and all this stuff.

And then, 70 to 74, recorded the gifts that was given by the people at that time, the leaders, and the people. And he himself gave gifts.

So let's have a look at each one, and learn from it, as PCBC, what we can apply to our church life, to our relationships here.

Firstly, Nehemiah rostered the gatekeepers. Very interesting. Mariah has read to us, so we won't read it again.

[ 10 : 59 ] But, he did, he set up the system, he selected people to be gatekeepers.

And who were the gatekeepers? Interesting. Musicians. Who on earth would want to fight to get musicians to watch, to keep the gate?

What do you do? If the robbers come, if the thieves break in the door, you get someone, I'm going to sing you a song. What? Why, why would he set in the musicians?

Alright, Levites, we could understand, because they were, they were, they were rostered to build certain parts of the war as well. Alright, so they built the war, rebuilt the war, they were there to

watch the gates, that's fine.

Okay. And this, this guy, Hananiah, or Hananiah, some commentators thought they were the same guy, because it's the same words, except just, just a little bit more.

[12:03] So, some, whether it's one guy or two guys, that's fine, but, he was the guy that was trustworthy. He was the guy, was the one who really had reference to the Lord, and also the residents in Jerusalem.

So, why, why did he need to set up the gatekeepers? Can we, can we imagine, can we think, why? Very simple, because there were gates. Alright, now imagine, just, at your home, alright, you have your, you have your doors, alright, and you have locks, but if you, you never lock your door, or you never shut your doors, what's the purpose of having your door, and locks?

Same thing there. Okay, they had gates, that's why they need someone to watch over the gates. Now, previously, the walls were broken down, and there were holes, there was, I mean, people, there were some parts, there was no, no walls at all.

People would just, can't go in, and came back, they don't need to go all the way to the gates, to get out, or come in. But now, the wall has been, rebuilt, so the only way they can get in and out, is through the gates.

[13:32] That's why, you will need, gatekeepers. And, and, he has set the rules. Gate was opened, at the heat of the sun. Why?

Common sense. It was too early in the morning, there was not enough people, if there are robbers, or if there are enemies come in, they could just, just invade the city, right?

In the heat of the sun, everybody was up, everybody were, were, were up and running, okay? Lots of people. If there are people come in, try to steal, or try to rob, they would be, a little bit hesitant, right?

But, and also, when they closed the gate, when the, the door, the gates were closed, they make sure, the gatekeepers, were on duty. Why?

To, ensure, the people, living in the city, were protected. Feel safe. That's why, you need to have this, gatekeeping system.

[14:34] system. And that's why, he had to choose, someone, who is loyal, faithful, and, and, have reference to God.

Otherwise, you know, how, how, how arrogant, and how, how, you know, in, how, how people could, could come in, and, imagine, say, if the gates was closed, at say, five o'clock, just before dusk, all right?

And, you close the gate, and, and, and somebody, what, after a couple minutes, you close the gate, somebody, no, no, hey, open the gate, please, please, I mean, suck tear, traffic jam, I mean, the, the donk is ran, was running slow, and there was a lot of camels on the, on the roads, we were late, please open the door for me.

Now, if you were, you know, if you, you're not, you're not loyal to the, to the rules, let him in. Yeah, I mean, it would be horrible, if he stays out there, and get robbed, you know, okay, let him in.

Once you let him in, the problem begins. Next time, it will be about ten minutes, after your gates is closed, and somebody will knock, hey, Lord, hey, please help me, I'm running late, you know, and then, the rules will be broken.

[15:57] So, Hananiah, or Hananiah, they have to be faithful, and loyal, and rules are rules. I'm not, I'm not saying, rules cannot be changed, but if rules are to be broken, what's the point of having rules?

Right? When 4.30, when we start worship, and people start coming late, oh, we just wait, wait, wait, wait, and then 4.45, you start your worship. Are we, are we, are we having reference to God, or are we actually wanted to, don't want to, like, you know, we don't want to, we want to pay, people will feel better, I won't tell them off.

I believe, we need to, in order that, we'll be, be safe, to worship, and, and to, be protected, as people of God.

That's why, Nehemiah, need to set in, the gate, keeping system, alright? It's for security.

And, there are, today, as church, pastors, leaders, we are, to be gatekeepers. And, I believe, not just us. Everybody, we need to, watch, watch out, for one another.

[17:26] For, cults, we need to, protect one another, so that we, as a church, we can grow, in the knowledge, of the Lord. I mean, we, we can't, control, everything on the, internet, what you watch,

you know, but, I just, really want to, yeah, I just really want to, wholeheartedly, please, beware, what you watch, on the internet.

Don't just type in, the Jesus, or Bible studies, and then, everything, you really have to screen. There's a lot of, dangerous stuff, on the internet, today.

A lot of, a lot of, you don't know, what they believe, and then, once you, you're hooked on, hooked into it, you get dragged away. We have, we have our responsibility, to protect you guys.

But you, also, have responsibility, to protect, one another. Do we, know, our brothers, and sisters, situation at the moment?

How is their, spiritual life? Do we care for them? Do we, what, are we watchful, for one another?

When God asked Cain, where's your brother?

[ 18 : 53 ] And Cain said, am I my brother's keeper? We are, our brothers, and sisters keepers.

Let's, keep watch, for one another. Gatekeeping, for security. And next, he recounted the people. Long, long list, right?

Long, long list. Interesting. There are, set different kinds, I believe, Pastor William, have preached about it, in Ezra 2. There was different kinds of people, right?

When the first, now, this list, was about 100 years old. All right? This, Nehemiah 7, the list that he recounted, on, on a time when, Ezra, when the first, first returnees, they came back to Judah, it was 100 years old.

But, there was different, different people's group. They were not just the, influential, or the, the, the wealthy ones, the leaders, all right?

[ 20 : 00 ] And the clans, and the heads of the clans. But, they are living in other regions, out of the countries. And, there are priests, there were priests, there were Levites, including those gatekeepers, and singers.

But, there were also temple servants. All right? Those, those, those, those doing nitty gritty stuff. And also, there were, those who, names, were not found, in the genealogy record.

It really, it really, signified that, God's people, are so diverse. So, it's not just one type, not just pastors, not just deacons, but everyone, not just the older ones, but the younger ones.

Not just male, or, there are other females as well. There was, other ethnicities, all right? But, at that time, the people of God, all belong, because they were willing, and God called them, they responded, and they were, they were just, went back to Jerusalem, in one heart.

Okay, the two, the two lists, the first, in Ezra, and the second one, in Nehemiah, very interesting, there are differences, in the numbers.

[ 21 : 30 ] All right? Now, there was five types here, one, two, three, four, five, but here, there was seven, because, they included, the leaders, clans, and other regions, and, Israelites.

So, they gathered, that three types, into one. There's priests, and the Levites, temple servants, and names not found, in the genealogy of record. So, if they were the two, if they were the same people, how come, there was different, in the numbers?

There's some commentators, trying to explain, I don't know, I think they only knew, at that time. Some said that, because, the one list, was set in, from Persia, before they actually, started the journey.

And, Nehemiah's list, was the one that, they arrived, Jerusalem. And also, because they're 100 years old, it could have been, a little bit of, numbers and differences, alright?

But, interesting that, the total sum, women and children included, was exactly the same. 42,360. I don't think, there's a major issue, with the, with the differences, in numbers.

[ 22 : 58 ] It's not, it's not a major issue. I think the important thing is, that when, Nehemiah, recorded, recounted, these, names, the numbers, I think he had some purpose.

For a time, he really wanted, reminded the people, now. I mean, because he's already 100 years old. That means, those who were present, with Nehemiah, alright?

He was, the, those were, the people that, um, they, they were the, grandfathers, grandmothers, who were, who were the returnees.

And, they sure, have passed away. And, I believe, when, Nehemiah, recounted, these names, those, who were there, they were reminded that, yeah, we're all, even though we're different, but we're all, one people of God.

Right? we are, as, church, even though they are, we are, our, our, age, or our, giftings, our, personalities, our ways of doing things are different.

[ 24 : 14 ] But, we are, in one body. Just as, um, 1 Corinthians, chapter 12 says, there's, there's one body, but there's many different parts. And, that, chapter, it was referring, different spiritual gifts.

And, I believe, we're not defined, just by spiritual gifts. I mean, God has given us, um, apart from spiritual gifts, talents, right?

There's, um, heart, my passion, um, there's, my experiences, my abilities. I mean, we're all very diverse. But yet, God calls us, if we're willing to, offer, these, back to God.

And, God can use us, in, in his, in his, will. And, and, and, without differences, we can all accomplish his will together.

And, secondly, I believe there is another reason when, why Nehemiah wanted to recount those lists. Because, yeah, he really wanted to, get the people, out again.

[ 25 : 20 ] Because, during that time, people were not, interested. And, that's why the war has, need to be rebuilt. Because, the, the city of God was, kind of, abandoned.

Nobody was interested, in, in, in, in serving the Lord. And, there were priests, there were Levites.

And, because, maybe people didn't want to offer, um, give gifts, to the temple.

And, this priest had, was out of the jobs. Levites had nothing to do. And, there was not enough money for them to keep their living. So, what? They had to, go, market gardening, farming, growing stuff.

or, doing other stuff. Right? And, but their, identity, their, their role, and responsibilities, were for serving God. And, and Nehemiah, recounted them, priests, they were, the Levites, they were, they were temple servants.

Call them back out, to serve. And, for those who were not, priests, or Levites, I mean, you guys, have your responsibilities, to support them, so that the, the temple of God, the, the, the ministry of God, will be up and running again.

[ 26 : 35 ] This is, I believe, what, um, Nehemiah, when he, when he, when he, counted the list, he had that purpose. There were, those people at the time, I believe, they were the second or third generations, who came back, come back from, from Persia.

Perhaps they lost that vision. Right? And I think today, maybe second or third generations, from our, for those, who've established, this church, 30 years ago, 32 years ago, what we call, Sun Yidai, we're the second or third generations, of our, of our, of our parents, or grandparents.

All right? Have we lost the first love? Have things, well, we're not facing, hardship, we actually, our lives are quite easy, really, compared to those, at that time, they were really, fell into a really hard, and difficult situation, economically, life was hard, there was enemies, right?

There was, it was, everything was go against, going against them. But I think for a lot of us, most of us, our parents, have actually prepared, quite well for us. And somehow, in this New Zealand, lay back, easy lifestyle, everything is fine, we've got a good job, and I don't know, we've got, yeah, and somehow, we lost that love.

In Revelation 2, the first church, the spirit was, was rebuking, that church, Ephesus, the church of Ephesus, you have lost, that first love.

[ 28 : 19 ] You need to repent, we need to repent, to pick up, the love, the first love we have, from God.

How do we see, church, brothers and sisters, is this, kind of a supermarket, we go, I mean, oh yeah, I like this one, okay, we stay for a while, just like you go to this, pack and save, and you don't like, pack and save, you go to countdown, right?

it's not a consumer, kind of an attitude, church is a body, you can't swap bodies, all the time, right? You can't swap organs, all the time.

This is your body, and this is your organ, these are your organs, and that's, that's you, and we are all, committed, to, together, in this, body of Christ.

And this, I think I lost, I lost, oh okay, I lost, I lost a passage, but there was a passage here, very interesting, in chapter, in 61 to 65, I'll read it to you, do I have that, or I have missed that, or I have missed that, okay, I'll read this to you, 61 to 65, there was a group of people, the following came up, from the towns of, Tel Melah, Tel Hasha, Kerib, Adon, Emma, but they could not show, that their families, were descended, from Israel.

[ 30 : 04 ] There were some people, amongst the people of God, they could not find their identity, the record did not, did not find them, did not show them, they were actually Israelites.

Hey, what happened? And also, there's not, not a small number neither, there was 642 people. It's quite a big group. And then it's verse 63, and from among the priests, the descendants of, Hobar, Hobar, Iyer, Hekos, and, and, whatever his name, I don't care, and, and these, that, and they searched, in the family records, they could not find him, so they were excluded, from the priesthood, as unclean.

Now, Nehemiah, found that, there's a group of people, that may not be legitimate, to be amongst them.

Some, not even sure, they were Israelites. And some, they claim to be priests, they may be even serving, as priests, but they could not find, their names, in the book.

And, and the verdict was, the governor said, the governor said, order them not to eat, any of the most sacred food. And they're not supposed, to be serving as priests.

[ 31 : 31 ] Now, imagine, this verdict, this order, from the governor, from Nehemiah, would have, I mean, would have, caused a lot of, a lot of discomfort, to some people.

I mean, I've been, I mean, what, I've been serving in, in this, community, for that many years, to say now, you're banning me, from doing that? I've been amongst you guys, for a long time.

But, if this is, recorded in the, in the, law of God, no, if they were not, from the priestly line, if you allow them, to serve as priests, you are, against, the will of God.

that's not holy, not, no reference to God. And even for those, they were claimed, they're not sure, if they were Israelites, not. Right?

So, today, I think, when we think about, um, people, amongst us, I mean, the church is not, it's not like a, ordinary, clubs, outside.

[ 32 : 44 ] it's not like a, secular kind of, a community group. We, we don't, we don't need people, come to help, in a sense. Serving, ministry, is to God.

You know what I mean? The difference? It's not like, oh, you want to come to help, oh yeah, thank you for helping. No, serving, is, is kind of a, it's a, we are, we are separated, we are called, to serve. Right? We're not, helping out. God does not need us, to help out. So, comes, with a standard, and also with a, holy, and absolute standard.

And I, I believe that, we do need, rules, and regulations, for people, to serve. Otherwise, our ministry, our service, will not be acceptable, to God.

And sometimes, it's hard. You know? And you're banning, people from serving, because, oh, I've been, I've been, I've been meeting, with you guys, for a long time, but you're not allowed, me to participate?

[ 33 : 55 ] We welcome people, to participate, but with, with godly standard. Right? With godly orders. So, I think, this is something, it's really reminding us, um, what is, ministry, what is church?

What is, serving? And this is, this, uh, church management system, is something, to help us. I believe it's, it's just like, counting, uh, recounting, the numbers, to help us, to know, who are, ready to serve.

And maybe, to find out, who are not, exactly, ready. Right? Right? Right? Right? Right? So, and, and, and, in Nehemiah's mind, mind, at that time, um, in verse 4, it says, the city was large and spacious, but there were few people in it.

What did, why did he mention that? Because, I believe, Nehemiah, really want more people, to move into the city. Move, move into Jerusalem. Jerusalem. Because, it's the city of God.

And, in verse 73, the last verse of that chapter, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the musicians, and the temple servants, and a lot of people, they, they were actually settled, in their own towns, not, in Jerusalem.

[ 35 : 25 ] But, the purpose, of rebuilding the wall, was, to get the people, to move into it, to make Jerusalem, a vibrant city. And, that's why, in chapter 11, they had to cast a lot, one out of ten, to move in, to move in, to live in Jerusalem.

Right? So, I think, in a spiritual aspect, for us to think about, we, really want to, commit ourselves, in the house of God.

I'm not saying, you have to move into, this 219, to Rakow drive. Alright? But, our hearts, let's not live outside the wall, let's, let our hearts, be here, with God, with God's people.

That is, that is what God wants. So, security, for, rostering, the gatekeepers, recounting the people, as participation.

And lastly, recording the gifts. What was the purpose? Alright? Now, there was a lot of numbers, huge numbers there. I don't, I don't intend to, find out how much is it, for today now.

[ 36 : 39 ] But there was, but if you can, if you just, impression of reading that, it's very detailed. Right? Very detailed. And even more detail, much more detail, than Ezra 2.

And you see, the governor, actually set an example, he offered the gift first. Alright? In 70.

Alright? And then, some of the heads of the family, gave, treasury. And then, others. It was, amounted, a great sum, of treasures, and gifts.

Alright? And, why, did he have to, recall that, in so, so much detail? Because I believe, he as a governor, he has to be, accountable.

Because, it's a lot of money, and he was a man, of integrity, as, it was not just a guy, who just talked, and talked, but he also, walked, his talk.

[ 37 : 44 ] And for, 20 years, he did not receive, any allowances, as a governor. Right? So, just like, as his, person, of integrity, he disclosed, everything, in transparency.

Everything, was accountable. I believe, this is, church as well. Not just, with money, our, our treasurer, needs to be, transparent, and accountable.

Not just to the, IRD, or the, charity commission. But I think, we as a church, we need to be, accountable, to one another too. Just ask, ourselves, am I, do I have somebody, or, a group of people, that I, I am accountable to?

Do I, let other people, know my pains, my hurts, my temptations, my failures? I mean, church is not just, a one man band, you know, I can do things, on my own.

Because, God has allowed us, to have brothers, and sisters. And we, surely, we have some, closer ones, we can share, our hearts, and share, our, our failures.

[ 39 : 02 ] And we are, to be, to be, watch, watch, keep, gatekeepers, for one another. Otherwise, we will run ourselves, risks, of falling apart.

It was this guy, Albert Moeller, president of the, Southern Baptist Seminary. It's not him, that fell, alright? But he, he was sharing somebody, one of his colleagues, a very famous, very, god, godly, a very well, reputed, Christian leader, in the US.

If you Google it, you will find him. Alright? He said, in one of this, talk, he said, I didn't see it coming. He's been working, alongside this guy, for a long, long time.

Very, very, smart, very, very, influential. Alright? He was 73. This guy, not him, this guy, 73, imagine.

And then he found out, that he had, an appropriate relationship, with a, 20 years old, for five years. Can you imagine?

[ 40 : 19 ] 73. For 65, I had no desires, I had no drives. 73, good God, how, what, what, what, I mean, what is this, appropriate relationship?

So, just, don't think, don't, don't think we are smart. Don't think we can cope, by ourselves. We need, one another. Our lives, need to be accountable.

Do you have someone, that you are accountable to? Do you have some, brothers and sisters, or maybe spiritual mentors? that, that, can actually, you know, you can go to him, or her, to share, your hearts, to ask, for help, before, it is too late.

So, roster, the gatekeepers, is security. Recounter, the people, is participation, and recorded, the gift, is accountability.

These, this is what church, we need. These are the softwares, of the church. Not just the building, not just the structures, not just the management, but, these.

[ 41 : 43 ] I mean, these softwares, need to be upgraded, all the time. And sometimes, we crash, right? Sometimes, hangay, alright? But that's fine, God will fix it.

But this is something, we need to work on, all the time. Do, our eyes, fix on just the, the, the building, the structure, or, do we actually, give much attention, onto these things, that really build up, the people, of God?

To conclude, I really encourage you, to find a place, in PCBC. Okay? I mean, the, the COVID years, was, horrible.

You couldn't, we couldn't reach out, to one another, we could only see, each other on screen. I couldn't even touch you, couldn't even hug you, alright? And sometimes, this syndrome, can, can, can, kind of, bar us from, having true fellowship, with one another.

