

Nehemiah and Rebuilding

Study 7 – Dedication and Mission

Welcome

Which is your favourite joyful song? It may be worship or another.

Worship

Pick one joyful worship song to listen to or sing together. If you are a musical group, you may like to get out a variety of instruments! In a time of prayer, say thank you for answered requests, and for one another.

Word – Study 7 – Celebration and Mission

Before launching into a new phase of our community life and vision for local ministry, we are wise both to learn from the Old Testament believers' response to exile, and also from our Lord Jesus as he embarks on his mission. Therefore we will study in three parts this week. Looking back at the ending of Nehemiah's mission project, then briefly at Jesus' mission project before finally beginning to reflect on the Lord' call on us as we regroup for the years ahead.

1 – Nehemiah 12.27-47

Background: having listened to God's word, and reinstated ceremonial worship, the people renew their Covenant with God. This is recorded in **Nehemiah 10.28-39**. Would one of the group like to read and summarise the different items that were important to promise again?

Then the returned exiles make a noisy celebration. Have fun reading the account of the dedication of the walls of Jerusalem and worship in the rebuilt Temple. Can you use the map of Jerusalem (Study 4) to trace the pathway of the two choirs? You might like to find some soundtracks of the different instruments mentioned. Also, do invite a volunteer to read the names out!

Different roles in the new Jerusalem have a continuity with those in the Tabernacle and first Temple eras, many of them instituted by King David. There were priests (Exodus 28 and 29) and Levites (Numbers 8.16,22). The Levites' roles were various and included work to supervise the Temple, officials, judges, gatekeepers and musicians (1 Chronicles 23). How do they match any roles within our Christian worship today?

Joyful musical celebration is an important part of Temple worship alongside the different sacrifices. King David had introduced music into Tabernacle and Temple services in c.1000BCE (1 Chron. 15.16, 16.4-7; 2 Chron. 35.15). It was also important in the life of the new testament churches (Ephesians 5.19-20; Colossians 3.16-17). How important is musical worship to you?

2 – Luke 4.16-21 – the Mission of Jesus

Ezra and Nehemiah together brought the people back to the city of David, to Jerusalem, for their identity, gathering again, the covenant renewed and worship restored. As they prayed, re-read God's word, and worked within their difficult circumstances they understood their Mission, and completed the task given to them.

As we have seen, Nehemiah fulfilled his Mission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. In the so-called 'Nazareth Manifesto' (Luke 4.16-21), Jesus set out His Mission in his first recorded sermon.

Can you see any parallels between

- Nehemiah's and Jesus' Mission?
- How each of them set about it and overcame difficulties?

3 – Our Mission

You now have a blank piece of paper as a group!

Would you like to brainstorm any ideas that have come to you as a result of this series of studies? Ideas that might help us as Hampshire churches seeking the Lord's will in the 21st Century following a pandemic, and in the ever-changing culture of our day?

This is just the beginning. We could try to pick up exactly as we were pre-pandemic. Or we could listen carefully to each other, to the new circumstances of our community, our readings of Scripture, guided by the Holy Spirit, and set a new path with God's help.

Note: The 'Nazareth Manifesto' and supporting Isaiah prophecy, chapter 61, is picked up by Cris Rogers in his book about Nehemiah as a leading forward into new vision (used at Spring Harvest: 'Restore, Renew, Rebuild' © 2022). Let us give time to reflecting deeply, possibly reading the chapters, to listen to ideas for the future.

Our churches need all of us to take part in the new decisions of priorities, vision and strategy. What will yours be? Will you share with Ministry Team and PCCs?

What is our Mission? What would Jesus say?

Witness

Return to joyful thanksgiving! Finish by reading Psalm 147, a worship song probably written during this season of the post-exilic community life.

Can you make it real for your own celebration of God's love and kindness?
Make a decision to celebrate the good things you have learned this season,
and be accountable to each other for sharing them with others.

Who will you tell? What are your next steps? When will you review progress?