

Nehemiah 11:1-12:26

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[0 : 00] We ask it all in Christ's name. Amen. Nehemiah chapter 11. We'll look at the 11th chapter. We'll go into the 12th chapter. We'll go to verse 26 of the 12th chapter because starting in verse 27 is the dedication of the wall. So we won't get into that, but we will start here. A lot of names. We'll wait our way through and we'll take our time. We'll go as slow as we can and hopefully we'll do them at least some justice as we look at that.

And the word of God says, now the leaders of the people lived in Jerusalem. Let me back up. Let's go to the seventh chapter. I want you to see this because I told you this a few weeks back that really the completion of the seventh chapter is found in the first verses of the 11th chapter.

There's this parenthetical interruption chapters 8, 9, and 10 of a kind of renewal of the word, a spiritual revival, if you will, among the people of God.

And we don't see the completion of what Nehemiah began in the seventh chapter until we turn to the 11th chapter. And so I want you to see this because it tells us in the seventh chapter in verse 5, Then my God put it into my heart to assemble the nobles, the officials, and the people to be enrolled by genealogies.

So God puts it in his heart to assemble the people, to enroll them by genealogies. And then he found the book of the genealogy of those who returned and he records those for us there in the seventh chapter. And then the last verse of the seventh chapter, verse 73, says, Now the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, some of the people, the temple servants, and all Israel lived in their cities.

[1 : 38] And when the seventh month came, the sons of Israel were in their cities. And then we have the interruption in chapter 8, that is the first day of the seventh month, where they have this spiritual revival.

And now we go to the 11th chapter. Now the leaders of the people lived in Jerusalem, but the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to live in Jerusalem, the holy city, while nine-tenths remained in the other cities.

And the people blessed all the men who volunteered to live in Jerusalem. Now these are the heads of the provinces who lived in Jerusalem, but in the cities of Judah, each lived on his own property in their cities.

The Israelites, the priests, the Levites, the temple servants, and the descendants of Solomon's servants. Some of the sons of Judah and some of the sons of Benjamin lived in Jerusalem. From the sons of Judah, Athia, the son of Uziah, the son of Zechariah, the son of Amariah, the son of Shephethiah, the son of Mahalel, of the sons of Perez.

[2 : 39] And Messiah, the son of Barak, the son of Kohhoza, the son of Haziah, the son of Adiah, the son of Jorub, the son of Zechariah, the son of the Shilonite. All the sons of Perez who lived in Jerusalem were 468 able men.

Now these are the sons of Benjamin. And Salu, the son of Meshalem, the son of Joed, the son of Padaiah, the son of Colaiah, the son of Mesa, the son of Ithiel, the son of Jeshiah.

And after him, Gabaiah, Sali, 928. Joel, the son of Zechariah, was their overseer. And Judah, the son of Heshanuah, was second in command of the city.

From the priest, Jediah, the son of Jorub, Jachin, Saraiah, son of Hilkiyah, the son of Meshulam, the son of Zadok, the son of Merioth, the son of Ahitab, the leader of the house of God.

And their kinsmen who performed the work of the temple, 822. And Adiah, the son of Jorim, the son of Pelala, the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah, the son of Peshor, the son of Melchijah, and his kinsmen, heads of fathers' households, 242.

[3 : 51] And Amashisai, the son of Azrael, the son of Ahaziah, the son of Meshulamoah, the son of Emmer, and their brothers, valiant warriors, 128.

And their overseer was Zabdil, the son of Hagadolim. Now, from the Levites, Shemaiah, the son of Heshub, the son of Azricam, the son of Heshbiah, the son of Bunai, the son of Shabbathiah, Jazabad, from the leaders of the Levites who were in charge of the outside work of the house of God.

And Mataniah, the son of Micah, the son of Zabdi, the son of Asaph, who was the leader in beginning the thanksgiving at prayer.

And Bakbukai, the second among his brethren, Abda, the son of Shemua, the son of Galal, the son of Jaduthan, all the Levites in the holy city were 284.

Also, the gatekeepers, Akab, Talman, and their brethren who kept watch at the gates were 172.

The rest of Israel, of the priests and of the Levites, were in all the cities of Judah, each on his own inheritance.

[4 : 59] But the temple servants were living in Ophel and Zeha, and Gishpah were in charge of the temple servants. Now, the overseer of the Levites in Jerusalem was Uziah, the son of Bani, the son of Heshubiah, the son of Mataniah, the son of Micah, from the sons of Asaph, who were the singers for the service of the house of God.

For there was a commandment from the king concerning them, and a firm regulation for the song leaders day by day. Pethahiah, the son of Masha-Hazabba, of the sons of Zerach, the son of Judah, was the king's representative in all matters concerning the people.

Now, as for the villages with their fields, some of the sons of Judah lived in Kiroth, Araba, and its towns, and in Dibon, and its towns, and in Jak-Bazil, and its villages, and in Jeshua, and in Molada, and Beth-Pelet, and in Hazarshul, and in Beersheba, and its towns, and in Ziklag, and in Meknoah, and its towns, and in Ramon, and in Zorah, and in Jarmuth, and Zain-Noah, Adullam, and their villages, Lachish, and its fields, Azekah, and its towns.

So they encamped from Beersheba, as far as the valley of Hinnom. The sons of Benjamin also lived from Geba onward, and Michmash, and Aesha, at Bethel, and its towns, at Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah, Hazor, Ramah, Getaim, Hadid, Zeboim, Nebalat, Lod, and Ono, the valley of craftsmen.

From the Levites, some divisions in Judah belonged to Benjamin. Now, the 12th chapter. Now, these are the priests and the Levites who came up with Jeroboam, the son of Shutil, and Jeshua, Saraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, Amariah, Malak, Hattush, Shekaniah, Rehum, Miramoth, Ido, Genethoi, Abijah, Mizumen, Madiah, Bilga, Shemaiah, and Jorib, Jadhah, Selu, Emok, Hilkiah, and Jadhah.

[6 : 59] These were the heads of the priests and their kinsmen in the days of Jeshua. The Levites were Jeshua, Benua, Kadmil, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mataniah, who was in charge of the songs of thanksgiving.

He and his brothers, also, Bakbukiah and Unai, their brothers, stood opposite them in their service divisions. Jeshua became the father of Jehoiakim, Jehoiakim became the father of Elisha, and Elisha became the father of Jodiah, and Jodiah became the father of Jonathan, and Jonathan became the father of Jadhah.

Now, in the days of Joiakim, the priests, the heads of the father's households, were of Saraiah, Miriah, of Jeremiah, Hananiah, of Ezra, Meshulam, of Amariah, Jehonah, of Maluchai, Jonathan, of Shabaniah, Joseph, of Harum, Adna, of Meroth, Helkiah, of Ido, Zechariah, of Jenethon, Meshulam, of Abijah, Zichri, of Minamin, of Moadiah, Pilti, of Bilga, Shemua, of Shemaiah, of Jodiah, of Jodiah, of Jodiah, of Jodiah, of Jodiah, of Jodiah, of Jodiah, of Amok, Eber, of Hilkiah, of Hashbiah, and of Jodiah, Nathaniel.

As for the Levites, the heads of the father's households, were registered in the days of Elisha, of Jodiah, Jodiah, and Jodiah, so were the priests in the region of Darius the Persian. The sons of Levi, the heads of the father's households, were registered in the book of the Chronicles, up to the days of Johanan, the son of Elisha.

The heads of the Levites were Hashbiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua, the son of Cadmiel, with their brothers opposite them, to praise and give thanks, as prescribed by David, the man of God. Division corresponding to division.

[8 : 46] Mataniah, Bacbukiah, Obadiah, Meshulam, Talman, and Aqab, were gatekeepers, keeping watch at the storehouses of the gates. These served in the days of Jehoiakim, the son of Jeshua, the son of Jehozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah, the governor, and Ezra, the priest, and the scribe.

Nehemiah 11, 1 through 12, 26. Now there's an old practice, and it's an old practice in church, in which before the pastor would preach, there would be someone who would read the scripture, they would stand up, read the scripture for him, and then he would preach.

We're going to start that back on passages such as this. So if you ever want to be the one who volunteers, say, hey, I'll be the one who reads the scripture for you, I can tell you when it would be a good time to do it.

And so they're difficult names for sure. But I want you to see the people of God as we gather together tonight, because it is of utmost importance.

For it is the people that actually was the focus in Nehemiah's work. We know, we've said it over and over again, but we don't need to lose sight of it. Nehemiah chapter 1 tells us that when Nehemiah was the king's cupbearer, he did not ask concerning the city, he asked concerning the people, the remnant who had returned to the city.

[10:00] And his concern was about the people of the Lord, the people who had experienced God's redemption, if you will, of the issue of the king to be able to return back to the promised land.

Because these were the covenant people, the covenant people that were living in the land that God had promised in fulfilling the word of God. And his concern for them was rooted in a concern of familiarity.

They were of the same nationality of him, but also in God's faithfulness. And ensuring that they were living as the covenant people of God. God used Nehemiah not only to secure the walls, but also to resurrect the people and to restore them into proper worship.

Along with Ezra and so many others that were laboring there. But here when we get to this chapter, we begin to see the people of God and we cannot escape that reality. For the majority of the book of Nehemiah, and this is why I think at times we discount it and we don't look at it as being one that is pleasant to read, there are a number of listing of names.

Nehemiah chapter 3 tells you everyone that worked on the wall. So you have this listing and this recording of names. Nehemiah chapter 7 gives you the listing of those that is also found in the book of Ezra.

[11:06] And Ezra's chapter 1 and 2, Ezra chapter 2 actually, of the record of the people who returned at that first returning from the Babylonian captivity. And now we have this listing of names again found in Nehemiah chapter 11 and in the first half of chapter 12.

We cannot escape the reality that this book has a lot of mentioning of individuals and a lot of mentioning of people's names. But when we see that God has restored these people through their physical means, the wall has been reconstructed, he has restored them in their relationship with him, the covenant has been renewed for they have celebrated the festivals, they have read and heard the word, they understand the word, they've repented, this great repentant prayer that we find in Nehemiah 9.

And now we see them as the people of God, that God would move forward with these people to bring about his purposes and plans. Just three things I want you to notice tonight.

The first thing that we notice is the importance of the individual. These people are absolutely important. Each and every one of them are important. Even the ones that are unnamed.

But it tells us that now the leaders of the people lived in Jerusalem. Now that is in direct contrast to what we read at the end of chapter 7 where it tells us the leaders of the people were living in their own cities.

[12:30] And that's why we went and read that. There's this difference of location, right? So when we close chapter 7, the leaders of the people were living in their own cities. When we open and we come back to this reality in the 11th chapter, we find that the leaders of the people are living in Jerusalem.

And the reasoning behind that is because what happens in chapters 8, 9, and 10. The opening up of the word of God, the reading of the word of God, the celebrations of the festival of God, everything that takes place in that 7th month.

And it just renews and restores the people. And now the leaders are gathered together here in the city of Jerusalem and that's where they're living. This chapter brings to completion what God put into the heart of Nehemiah starting immediately after the walls were completed.

For the 7th chapter tells us the walls were completed. They were done in 52 days. And after 52 days, God put it into his heart to enroll the people and list them by genealogy, right?

So this is a God-ordained process. And so when we read this, we read these listing of names and these individuals, we understand that this is something that God placed into the heart of Nehemiah. [13:43] And it serves historical purposes, sure. It serves beneficial purposes, even as we get into the New Testament for that order and the established things that take place now are absolutely important for the fulfillment of the Word of God so that the temple could continue on.

Temple service and temple worship could go on for 400 years. Though there is no prophetic voice, there is no word from God, there is this complete changing of rule and dominion. All these things are going on. There's a short window of time when they have independence. And then there's this window of time, you know, when Alexander the Great comes through there. There's this time when the Roman Empire comes through. There's all these things that transpire historically in the Intertestament times.

Alexander's kingdom is broken up. As soon as Alexander goes through, he gives peace to the Jewish people, for he finds in the writing of the Jewish people, the book of Daniel. And the book of Daniel speaks of this man who comes and will have world dominion.

And the people of the Jewish descent say, see, it talks about you. Daniel's vision saw that. And he is, he's in Daniel's vision of the beast, the man with all the different colors. So Alexander said, hey, I'm going to give you guys peace.

[14:51] I'm going to allow you to exist. You can continue temple worship. Alexander didn't read the rest of the story where it says that his reign would come to a sudden end and his kingdom will be divided into four different things. But that's exactly what happened.

Right after he gave peace to the people of Jewish nationality, Alexander dies suddenly. And he's very unexpected. So then his four generals take over his rule and his empire.

And now we have all this turmoil. And this turmoil takes place where really kind of centered in on the nation of Israel. And there's all this back and forth. And these things are happening. All that happens between Malachi and Matthew, by the way.

And then the Romans come in and say, well, we'll take it over. And so they conquer it and all this. You have the Maccabean revolt there. What keeps them doing when we turn in Matthew and then we turn a little bit later in the gospel of Luke and we find Zechariah coming into the temple and he's burning incense.

What keeps them going is the fact that there was something put into the heart of individuals way back here where they said this is the order. These are the people doing it. This is what's been established.

[15:50] And God gives them this blessed state of consistency, even in the midst of turmoil that takes place in the world around them so that when it's time for the Savior and the fullness of time comes, the scene is set.

And there's this longing and this anticipation and it's the hope of the world that now is going to arrive on the scene. And it's just this thing that just keeps going.

And so God put this into the heart of Nehemiah and Nehemiah brings it about here. And we see this reality, but notice how important every individual is.

And it says that he brought these people here, but the rest of the people cast lies to bring one out of ten. So they're going to tithe the people, essentially. A tenth of the people are going to move to the city of Jerusalem.

Why? Because the city of Jerusalem, the walls have been rebuilt, which are a visible testimony that anybody passes by these people God is showing favor to. Look, the walls are completed.

[16:50] The city looks beautiful. It's well constructed. So from outward appearances, it looks good. But what good is a splendidly built city if it's not inhabited by the people of God?

For the covenants and promises of God are connected to people. It's people in a place, but the focus of the covenants are people.

I will be your God and you will be my people. I will call you as my people. People are the focus of every covenant that God has made, of every promise that he's given.

Now, it is in connection with places and times and seasons, sure, but it is people that are the focus here. So now we have this city that needs to be inhabited.

If we look at it, there are some rough numbers that they can give you. Kind of, as people go back and look at it, we think that during the time of Nehemiah, roughly between 6,000 to 8,000 people inhabit the city of Jerusalem.

[17 : 52] Okay, so you have about 6,000 to 8,000 people living there. If you contrast that to right before the Babylonian captivity, right before Nebuchadnezzar coming in and ransacking Jerusalem, about 20,000 people lived in Jerusalem before Nebuchadnezzar came in and besieged the city and it fell.

So you really, you have very, very, very few people that are living there. But it is important that there be some people there because not only is it the seat of government, though they're living under the Persian rule, it is also, that is the main place.

That's where the temple is. That's where the testimony is. The people will be a visible testimony that God has placed them there. And so now we have these leaders who hear the word and we have the 10th of the people and they rejoice and they bless the people who volunteer.

I like what Warren Wearsby says, these silent volunteers, unnamed volunteers, we don't know them, but the people revered them because they said we will do what no one else does.

And the one thing they said they would do is that they would be present. We don't, we're not going to live on our land. We're not going to live on our farms. We're going to come live in the city and it is the ministry of presence that they say we will be present here because we know it matters.

[19 : 05] And they bless those who choose to go back and they choose to be there and they choose to be present in that time. But they're not the only people that are listening to this because when we read this, listen, we also see the people that are living, quote, in their own lands and on their own territories.

That is a refrain and a wording that we find in the book of Joshua in which the people, when they are led by Joshua and God brings his people into the promised land, the testimony that resounds at the end of that when the conquest is complete is they are living each in their own town and in their own territory.

And so now we have this testimony again that the people of God are living in their own town and in their own territory, in their own territory. And it is just furthering the repetition that when God brought the people into the land the first time, he established them.

And now he is restoring them to the former glory of being in their land. So he has brought it full circle. As Joshua had led them in, the 13 men around Joshua, Ezra had stood with the 13 men around him.

As the covenants were proclaimed and affirmed when Joshua brought them in, Nehemiah and Ezra stand and they proclaim and confirm the covenant when they come into the land again. As in Joshua, people are living each in their own land and in their own territory.

[20 : 21] Now they are again living each in their own land and their own territory. It is just a biblical testimony and a biblical witness to us that God has indeed restored his people.

And that proclaims his faithfulness. For God had said, I will appoint 70 years and after 70 years, I will call you from the nations in which I have dispersed you and I will bring you back to this land. I will again reestablish you in this land. He has kept his word. They failed him. They were unfaithful to him. But God has been faithful even in the midst of his disciplining, even in the midst of his striking.

And now he is healing them. He is restoring them. And we see here the importance of people. People are important in every aspect of the economy of God.

Everything we do, all the work that happens, all the ministry and missions that the church takes place in today really mean nothing without people. People are more important in process.

[21 : 21] We say that all the time. But people are the focus of God's economy. We need to understand that. Okay, we need to garner that and see the reality here of what God is doing.

It was not the festivals. It was not the joyous times. It was just the consistent concern of God for his people. Secondly, we notice here the diversity of the group, the grand diversity that is within this group.

This is why we read the names. This is why we see the things that are there. As with every other listing of people, we find in here a very diverse group of people. Sure, they're the same nationality, but they're diverse in backgrounds.

They're diverse in occupations. They're diverse in calling. They're even diverse in their residence. A tenth of the people will live in Jerusalem. The leaders will live in Jerusalem. The Levites that choose to live in Jerusalem, they do not have to for they have Levitical cities.

But we do see some Levites are living out in other regions. Some of the ones that are ahead of this part of temple worship are living outside of the city proper. People are living in their own town.

[22 : 27] They have different backgrounds. And that's important because we see here so many that are similar in a connection. We'll get to that in just a moment. But they are diverse in who they are as individuals.

And God does not try to conform people to uniformity. He does not want everybody being identical. He does not want everybody looking the same and acting the same and walking the same.

God is concerned about the diversity of his people. And we see this reality because some of these are leaders of homes. Some are second in command of the city. Some work in political.

They are the representative before the king, right? Concerning the inhabitants of Jerusalem. So there's the political realm. Nehemiah is the governor. He's in the political realm. Ezra is the priest. Some of them are gatekeepers. Some of them lead the thanksgiving when the prayer begins. Some of them lead the songs of thanksgiving. Some of them are standing on either side of one another in worship.

[23 : 24] But there is a grand diversity of the people of God for God loves to use varying people in varying ways for one great cause. And we see this reality here because over and over and over again, God lists for us these naming of people.

Now, sure, there's one grand number of them that have the similar occupation. We'll get to that in just a minute. But God uses this diversity for his glory. God is most glorified when his people are most diversified.

And that is when they're not always the same, that each of them come from varying backgrounds, each of them come from varying ways. And it is the testimony of scripture. We kind of got into it just a little bit this morning, but why was the church so kind of, we don't want to call it hostile.

It wasn't hostile, but why were there so many divisions and diversifications in the early church?

Well, the kind of, we didn't have time to get into it this morning, but the church was pretty stable as long as it stayed in Jerusalem.

And as long as, you know, we were bringing it, well, before Paul, let's just say before Paul, the church was pretty stable because everybody had the same concept of what the King of David should be, what the Messiah, the expectation of the Messiah.

[24 : 35] They had this, all this Old Testament knowledge. They had been taught that from their youth up. They had went to the temple worship. They knew what priests and Levites were all about. They, and while they may have had a distorted view of it, they grew up, quote unquote, in that church world.

And they were expected and prepared for this. And, and God was now the fulfillment of everything they had been hearing all of their life. And then Paul goes around, starts preaching to a bunch of non-Jewish people.

And all these people in the Roman empire who grew up believing in varying God and various gods and, and mystical creatures and all these different things now are welcomed into the church.

Someone asked me this morning, why do we, now is a good time doing this. And the reality is, when you look across our congregation proper now, when you look across, I believe Ethan said, we had about 80 in here during the Sunday school hour up front.

And when you look across that 80, and if I was to ask, how many of you grew up in church? There'd be a great majority of them who did not. And then if I asked the question, how many of you grew up Southern Baptist?

[25 : 42] There are probably an overwhelming majority, more of us that did not, because I did not grow up Southern Baptist, that did not grow up Southern Baptist. And so our backgrounds are different.

There's diversification, right? So one of the things that we're, as a church, working through is trying to make sure we, like Paul preached, are intent on one purpose. We're all believing the same thing. We are Catholic, not Roman Catholic, but Catholic according to the one way, reality, and understanding we're all going in the same direction so we know what we believe. And so we're working through it.

And if we're having to work through it now, how much more so in the early stages where it was all new? Nobody grew up in church, right? Nobody had any background. Nobody had any of this.

And so now they're working, but God wants it that way because God is most glorified when his people are most diversified. By this will all people know that you love me for your love with one another.

[26 : 37] And one of the glorious testimonies of the church and the glorious testimonies of the people of God is how God can unite so varying of people together for one purpose.

And that God could use them as one seamless body. that the gatekeepers and he who leads in the prayer of thanksgiving and the musicians and those in outside work of the temple and the civil laborers who were reporting back and forth to the king and those who were attending the fields that were providing the animals for the temple sacrifice and those who were cutting the trees and providing the wood and leaving.

Because if everybody lived in Jerusalem, who's going to cut the trees down for the fire? Right? You need people living out in the country because there's no trees in Jerusalem and somebody has to provide wood.

They drew lots. Who would provide wood each month to keep the fire going on the altar, right? So someone has to live out there and cut trees down. And you may think that it's insignificant but if they're not cutting the wood, we get to that by the time we get to the end of Nehemiah, if they quit cutting wood and they don't bring it here, guess what?

The whole thing shuts down. But you need each and every one of them. Sounds a whole lot like Ephesians 4, right? Where God put the body together forming every part, knitting it together what every joint and marrow and ligament should supply.

[27 : 58] See, Scripture is one consistent theme that God takes diversification of people to do one grand, magnificent work. And when we read these lists, I know they're difficult and I know they're hard but notice just how differing the people, there are Benjamites, there are Levites, there are priests, there are all these different people doing different things and yet they are the people of God.

And it's essentially what we see as the church today. We're not all the same, we don't all do the same thing, but we're the people of God. Which brings us to the last and final thing.

Because you notice here the importance of the individual, you notice the diversity of the group, but you see the singular calling of the nation. The singular calling of the nation.

The overwhelming majority of the names we find, their occupation is in connection with the temple. Now that shouldn't surprise us. It is not that the unnamed ones are unimportant because we need them to live inside the city of Jerusalem here historically.

We need them biblically to be there. We need the others to do things. But we needed the record and the genealogy of the names that were connected with the labor of the temple. For that is the genealogy that will continue forward.

[29 : 20] That will be what the Jewish people use to maintain consistency so that we will know that it is Zachariah's time according to his division to burn incense on the altar.

And we need to know who is supposed to be laboring and when they are supposed to be laboring. Because the focus, the grand calling of the nation was not just to go about life and do what you wanted to do as you wanted to do it.

The grand calling of the nation was to be the people of God who worship corporately together. So the overall calling, no matter what occupation any individual has, was that they would contribute to the worship of the nation.

Rather, that would be the gatekeepers, the tenders of the property, or the musicians, or the priests, or the Levites, whatever it is. it is an overwhelming calling of the nation that they would be people who worship.

And so God has so focused his listing and his recording of names here that we know who it is who leads in every aspect. We know who it is that is over the Levites.

[30 : 27] We also know, we are told, in verse 11, in chapter 11, starting in verse 22, the oversight of the Levites is this, and he gives us all those, and in verse 23 it says, for there was a commandment from the king concerning them and affirming a regulation for the song leaders day by day.

If you were to go and open back up the book of Ezra, you will find in the book of Ezra that when Ezra was given permission to go by the king back to the land, the king wrote in that letter that they would use the taxes of that land to contribute financially to the work of the temple.

Now, not that we think that the king who gave him permission was a believer. We know that it was beneficial for the king for he said, I want them to pray for me because they were trying to check every box to make sure that every god was receiving prayers for him and his family that his dynasty may live forever.

And so he said, to appease the god of the Jewish people, I want to make sure that they have people there. So there's this commandment from the king. It is provided financially for that they would have this regulation of worship and songs and singing.

But in so doing, what the king was enabling the people to do was what God had called them to do. There was this worship attitude that was supposed to happen among the people of God.

[31 : 39] And worship is so central to who they are and to their grand calling that if we notice, by the time we get to the 13th chapter and worship has ceased, the nation begins to disintegrate.

Because it is as the people are fulfilling their calling, that is, worshipping together and meeting together and rejoicing in who the Lord God is, then God blesses them.

But when they begin to deviate from that and worship begins to deteriorate, the nation begins to crumble. In those days, there was no king in Israel and every man did what was right in his own eyes. And the grand calling of God's people is to be a worshipping people.

And what happens is sure, individuals are important. And sure, each and every one of us are diverse. But what happens is when the people of God begin to think more of themselves, than they do of who it is they are called to worship, then the people of God begin to fall apart.

When we begin to be so people-focused and self-focused rather than worship-focused and exalting who it is who's called us as a diverse group of individuals to be used for his glory and our good, when he quits being the central focus of his people, then the church or the people of God begin to crumble.

[33 : 04] We've seen it historically, we've seen it even in modern history, and we've seen it in a lot of those different things. There's, I can quote any number of things, but any time the church begins to be more focused on individuals than it is on worship, then the church is weakened.

There's a great number of movements, and even today some of them are very prevalent, and I hear it even pastors in our own denomination that begin to speak of it, and I'm not going to call them out here, I may call them out in Sunday school next week when we look at historical Baptist doctrine and some of the things we deviate from now, but when we begin to be focused more on people than we do worship, we're weakening who we are because that's not our calling.

The people of God's primary calling is to be a worshipping people, and he is to be the focus. He is to be the central of his people, and he is to be the only one exalted.

So be careful as we look at this. If we're, we don't want to be, we don't want to discard and ignore people. People are important, but there's one grand one that is deserving of all of our attention, all of our affection, and all of our adoration, and that is the one that calls us to be his people for his glory.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the day. We thank you that we've had the opportunity to gather together. We thank you for your word, and Father, we pray that we would be your people, Lord, in our diversity, in our uniqueness, in our individuality, but for your glory.

[34 : 44] May we be people who worship together, who lift our hearts and minds to the throne of God. May we exalt you, and may our worship and adoration of who you are be the central aspect of our lives, for we know that as we are the worshipping people, then we are your people to be used in our daily occupations, to be used in our everyday life, because we know that you are our grand calling.

Thank you that we have the opportunity to labor in this world, to labor in various ways and various means. We thank you even for the trials and tribulations of this life, for we know that they produce within us a desire and a longing to worship.

So God, draw us closer to you each and every day, in every way, and we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you, guys. Really appreciate it.