

The Sunday School Lesson

John Brayboy, Salem
Missionary Baptist Church

- Make a Difference**
Nehemiah 2:4-8, 15-18
- I. God Given Vision (Neh. 2:4-5)
 - II. God Timed Opportunity (Neh. 2:6-8)
 - III. God Inspired Survey (Neh. 2:15-16)
 - IV. God Directed Leadership (Neh. 2:17-18)

I. God Given Vision
Nehemiah 2:4-5

Nehemiah was in captivity in Persia and was a cup bearer for King Artaxerxes I, the Persian Emperor. God gave to him a vision of the ruins of Jerusalem. Being often in the presence of the King, the King would see Nehemiah's countenance. This particular time the king noticed that Nehemiah was sad and he questioned him as to why he was so sad. Nehemiah prayed to God before he answered the king. Nehemiah did not do like many folks do, he did not speak hastily, but waited for the Lord's help before answering the king.

Nehemiah asked two questions of the king (1) if I've pleased the king and (2) if I have found favor in thy sight. He knew that if the answer from the king was favorable, then his request to go to Jerusalem would be favorable. His request was to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the wall and rebuild the city.

II. God-Timed Opportunity
(Nehemiah 2:6-8)

Nehemiah evidently had a private audience with the king, and the queen. The king wanted only to know how long it would take for the journey. The king was glad for him to go and Nehemiah set a time when he would

return. Nehemiah had authority from God to go, but he also requested letters of authority from the king to travel across the other provinces to get to Jerusalem. God had called him for a mission and he made all the necessary preparations before making the journey.

Nehemiah also knew that when he got to Jerusalem he would need timber for the rebuilding of the wall and Jerusalem. Letters from the high command would ensure him safe passage to Jerusalem and the necessary materials he needed to accomplish the mission before him. When we go about doing the work of God we need to be doing it on his authority and not the authority of man. We may need man's help but if we do, then God will prepare his heart to help.

III. God Inspired Survey
Nehemiah 2:15-16

Upon Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem he did not make an announcement of his purpose for being there. He waited three days then he took a survey of the city at night to access the ruins. Part of the reason for him not telling the Jews his plan initially was because he did not know who to trust. Remember that there was a mixed group living in Jerusalem who could have caused trouble. Therefore, he needed to have a plan before he proceeded.

IV. God Directed Leadership
(Nehemiah 2:17-18)

Nehemiah called the leaders together to bring his purpose for being in Jerusalem. He reminded them of the waste of Jerusalem and the ruins of the wall and gates. He appealed to their self respect to do something about the situation. Sometimes our attitudes about situations we are in are like the Jews/ We just accept things as they are and do not try to correct or improve them. Nehemiah's plea to the Jews was to get to work on the wall and gates so that Jerusalem would no longer be a reproach. In those days a city without walls was considered to be a reproach on its people.

Nehemiah conveyed to the crowd how the hand of God was upon him to

see about the rebuilding of the wall and Jerusalem. Not only that, but he also told them that he had authority from the King of Persia. When they heard the words of Nehemiah they arose to the occasion to do their part in seeing the wall was built and the gates repaired. When God sets a mission before us we need to follow his leader-

ship and make the necessary preparations to carry out the mission. God bless you all. Pray for us.

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Along the Robeson Trail

by Dr. Stanley Knick
Director, UNCP Native American Resource Center

How many people lived in eastern North Carolina before European contact? In the search for Lumbee context, it is important for us to try to answer this question for two main reasons. First, it would be good to know the size of the pre-contact population in this region to help us envision important things about the diversity of life among the Lumbee ancestors. How many people lived together in a village? How many villages were there, and how were they distributed? How much and what kind of contact existed among the villages? Was there a balance between: a) the size and nature of the Indian population and b) the capacity of the natural environment to sustain their kind of lifestyle?

Second, it would be good to know the size of the pre-contact population to help us understand the magnitude of what happened after European contact. What changes occurred in the size and distribution of the population? What changes happened in a typical village? What were the biological effects of European contact? What effects did European contact have on the culture of Indian people — on the context of the Lumbee? With these and other questions in mind, and accepting the importance of knowing how many pre-contact people there were, how can we estimate the size of the population?

One way to figure how many Native Americans there were is to look at early historical documents, such as the writings of explorers and missionaries, tax and census records, and military records. For example, the descriptions of Ralph Lane suggest a sizable population in the eastern Carolinas. Lane wrote to Richard Hakluyt (in September, 1585) that the region was "very well peopled and towned." The next year he reported to Walter Raleigh that one Indian village of Chawanook "is able to put seven hundred fighting men into the field, besides the force of the province itself." However, it is difficult to assess how reliable these written population estimates are, and in many cases written estimates which are early enough in the colonial period are simply unavailable.

Another way to estimate pre-contact population is by using a formula called "carrying capacity." Carrying capacity is an estimate of how many people could be sustained (with food, fuel, water, etc.) by a certain amount of land. For example, if we use an estimate as low as five people per square mile, then we could calculate that just the eastern half of North Carolina (26,356 square miles) could have supported more than 130,000 people. But this estimate is probably too low. An environment as full of plant, animal and water resources as eastern Carolina was originally could support more than five people per square mile.

A third way to estimate pre-contact population is by counting archaeological sites. This method consists of estimating the number of people in a household, the number of houses in a prehistoric village, the number of villages, and so forth. For example, archaeological research here along the Lumbee River suggests that there were as many as twenty Woodland villages in Robeson County alone. If these villages were home for 200 people each, which would not be an unusual number for a Woodland village, then there could have been as many as 4,000 pre-contact Native Americans just in what is Robeson County. If the rest of the region had a similar density of Woodland villages (which seems a safe assumption given the large number of archaeological sites which have been documented), there could have been as many as 200,000 people in eastern North Carolina.

Regardless of which of these three methods we use, the number of pre-contact Native Americans in eastern Carolina — the population which includes the ancestors of the Lumbee — must have been substantial. In the next segment, we will continue to reconstruct the past in our search for Lumbee context.

For more information, visit the Native American Resource Center in historic Old Main Building, on the campus of The University of North Carolina at Pembroke.

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