

EVANGELICAL BIBLE COLLEGE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA



NEHEMIAH

**(The Leader, the Mentor, and
the Wall Builder)**

BY

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[BOOK 46]

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WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

Professor Simon Greenleaf was one of the most eminent lawyers of all time. His "Laws of Evidence" for many years were accepted by all States in the United States as the standard methodology for evaluating cases. He was teaching law at a university in the United States when one of his students asked Professor Greenleaf if he would apply his "Laws of Evidence" to evaluate an historical figure. When Greenleaf agreed to the project he asked the student who was to be the subject of the review. The student replied that the person to be examined would be Jesus Christ. Professor Greenleaf agreed to undertake the examination of Jesus Christ and as a result, when he had finished the review, Simon Greenleaf personally accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour.

Professor Greenleaf then sent an open letter to all jurists in the United States saying in part "I personally have investigated one called Jesus Christ. I have found the evidence concerning him to be historically accurate. I have also discovered that Jesus Christ is more than a human being, he is either God or nothing and having examined the evidence it is impossible to conclude other than he is God. Having concluded that he is God I have accepted him as my personal Saviour. I urge all members of the legal profession to use the "Laws of Evidence" to investigate the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and if you find that he is wrong expose him as a faker but if not consider him as your Saviour and Lord"

HOW CAN I BE SAVED?

Salvation is available for all members of the human race.

Salvation is the most important undertaking in all of God's universe. The salvation of sinners is never on the basis of God's merely passing over or closing His eyes to sin. God saves sinners on a completely righteous basis consistent with the divine holiness of His character. This is called grace. It relies on God so man cannot work for salvation, neither can he deserve it. We need to realise that the creation of this vast unmeasured universe was far less an undertaking than the working out of God's plan to save sinners.

However the acceptance of God's salvation by the sinner is the most simple thing in all of life. One need not be rich, nor wise, nor educated. Age is no barrier nor the colour of one's skin. The reception of the enormous benefits of God's redemption is based upon the simplest of terms so that there is no one in all this wide universe who need be turned away.

How do I become a Christian?

There is but one simple step divided into three parts. First of all I have to recognise that I am a sinner (Romans 3:23; 6:23; Ezekiel 18:4; John 5:24).

Secondly, realising that if I want a relationship with Almighty God who is perfect, and recognising that I am not perfect, I need to look to the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Saviour (1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 Peter 2:24; Isaiah 53:6; John 3:16).

Thirdly, by the exercise of my own free will I personally receive the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour, believing that He died personally for me and that He is what He claims to be in an individual, personal and living way (John 1:12; 3:36; Acts 16:31; 4:12).

The results of Salvation

The results of this are unbelievably wonderful:
My sins are taken away (John 1:29),
I possess eternal life now (1 John 5:11,12),
I become a new creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17),
The Holy Spirit takes up His residence in my life (1 Corinthians 6:19),
And I will never perish (John 10:28-30).

This truthfully is life's greatest transaction. This is the goal of all people; this is the ultimate of our existence. We invite and exhort any reader who has not become a Christian by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ to follow these simple instructions and be born again eternally into God's family (Matthew 11:28; John 1:12; Acts 4:12; 16:31).

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
CHAPTER 1	3
CHAPTER 2	16
CHAPTER 3	21
CHAPTER 4	27
CHAPTER 5	34
CHAPTER 6	41
CHAPTER 7	49
CHAPTER 8	53
CHAPTER 9	62
CHAPTER 10	77
CHAPTER 11	84
CHAPTER 12	92
CHAPTER 13	97
Doctrinal index	104

NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 1**INTRODUCTION**

In the Hebrew Canon of Scripture this book forms the second half of the story that begins with Ezra. There is present debate about which man precedes the other into the land of Judea and does his work, but the Hebrew order in the scriptures would indicate that Ezra is first. Let us return to that question by the time we have gone through the thirteen chapters and see what our conclusion is at that time. All the evidence from the text and history would place this little book in the Persian period. I will highlight these little pieces of evidence as we go through.

No plausible attack upon the historicity of this book has been sustained, and my position is that it is good history, not later “mythic history” written to teach some principle or another by a person centuries after the events described. That being said, we must recall the words I wrote at the end of the book of Ezra. Biblical history is not like secular history; as it does not follow all the events of the life of people, but only the actions and events that are central to the Plan of God. Both men are apparently “satraps” of the Persian Empire, and so they will not mention things that the government didn’t want mentioned – what we call today the “juicy bits” of history. They are left out deliberately as these are Empire men.

Nehemiah’s story is the account of the historical actions of the man who is the human means of beginning the final ticking of God’s prophetic clock for the history of man upon this temporary planet we call “earth”. The prophetic revelation of Daniel had made it clear that seventy weeks were determined for Israel until the end and Messiah came; 69 weeks until his first advent, and then an indeterminate gap, and then the final week before His arrival upon the earth to rule as King of kings. **Daniel 9:24-27.**

The clock for this time frame begins with the decree to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, and Nehemiah is the Jewish leader who gets to fulfil that decree, and see the clock begin its path towards the arrival of Messiah. Once again as we go through this book we will see the differences in the way the Lord tells a story, and the way we tell stories. As with the account of Ezra, there is much that we wish was here, but isn’t recorded. Refer to the BTB studies on CHRIST – FIRST AND SECOND ADVENTS, GOD – THE PLAN OF GOD, PROPHECY – DANIEL’S SEVENTY WEEKS, EMPIRES IN DANIEL, SEQUENCE OF END TIME EVENTS.

Our central character is Nehemiah, the Jewish Persian Governor of the province of Judea for two periods in the later years of the fifth century BC. He is an example of how high many Jews had risen in the Persian Empire, and a reminder that the nature of the Exile in Babylon had changed the demographics of the Jewish people. In and after the exile, the Jewish people excel in government, military, trading, and cultural spheres, and they excel way out of proportion to their small numbers. The reason for this historic phenomenon is found in their “selected” gene pool after 597 BC.

Nebuchadnezzar’s deportations had been targeted only to the upper echelons of society; only the best, the most intelligent, and the most technically gifted, had been deported. The vast majority of the population, in the middle and at the bottom of society, were killed in the battles and sieges that raged through the land during the period 606 – 586 BC. The result of the two great Jewish rebellions against Nebuchadnezzar, (ending 597, and finally in 586 BC) was that, apart from a few hundred survivors of the last siege, only the best from the Jewish gene pool survived the invasions and destruction and ended up in Babylon. The vast majority of the bottom and middle of society was swept away in death through the sword, famine or disease. Jeremiah 5:3-25, 9:16, 14:11-18, 21:7-10, 24:1-10. As in the last parable of Jeremiah, only the “good figs” survive, and so the entire nation is transformed by the Exile. **Ezekiel 5:2-17, 6:3-12.**

This change in the genetics of Israel was permanent. This meant that when the Jewish people rebuilt their strength in the Exile in Babylon and later Persia, their population contained only people from the top ten percentile of the population, and so the average intelligence and genetic origin technical ability of the Jewish population was, and remains, far higher than any other nation in the history of man. Whereas all other nations have a bell curve of intelligence and abilities in the arts and crafts, the Jewish people are heavily loaded towards the top end.

The actions of Nebuchadnezzar led to the phenomenon we see today, where the Jewish people, at a fraction of the world total population have produced the largest number of Nobel prizes, and have the highest tertiary qualifications per head of any people group on the planet. Their gene pool simply contains more intelligence than any other nation as a result of Nebuchadnezzar’s selective culling action. This changes the course of Jewish history, and the prophetic clock begins to tick for this completely changed group that returns from Babylonian Captivity.

They are not the nation any longer that David led, or Isaiah preached to, or even Jeremiah tried to warn. They are now a transformed group of mainly highly intelligent people, descended from artisans, army officers, priests, nobles, and other leaders. Most of the thick and stupid members of their society are dead, and their inferior genetic inheritance is gone forever, and as a result, these new families of intelligent survivors will demand intelligent leadership, not the thick kings of yesterday. Zerubbabel, Joshua, Nehemiah, and Ezra gain respect, not by their lineage, but by their Holy Spirit controlled nature and their intelligence and abilities.

The Jewish people will value only intelligence and competence from this period onwards in their history. This will lead to a pride centred problem that will plague them through their history, but it will also open the door to their impact on the later Greek and Roman worlds. The great classical cultures knew that this nation was quite different to any other they had ever come across. Let us see the life of one of these intelligent and able Jews of the Persian period; a man who

rises to the top in the Persian Government, as Daniel had done before, and whose position opens the door for him to be used in the Plan of God.

NEHEMIAH 1:1-11

1 The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. And it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace, **2** That Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. **3** And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire. **4** And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven, **5** And said, I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments: **6** Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned. **7** We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses. **8** Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations: **9** But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there. **10** Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand. **11** O LORD, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer.

REFLECTION

Verses 1 – 3. It is the twentieth year of the reign of Artaxerxes when Nehemiah receives a message from one of his Jewish brethren about the state of affairs for the returned exiles in the province of Judea. The Age of the Gentiles began in 605BC, and the dating of all events is since then by reference to Gentile kings, not Jewish ones. Nehemiah is in one of the new capitals of the Empire, at Susa (Shushan here, and Memnoneion to the Greeks) as a servant of the great king. The court moved between the great palaces of the Empire through the year depending on the seasonal weather, so that local food supplies, water table, and transportation systems were not exhausted. For about three months of every year the court resided in Susa at this time.

Nehemiah is a senior palace official in the Persian Court. He tells us that he is of the family of Hachaliah, but that does not help us much, except to distinguish between him and the other two men named Nehemiah. Ezra 2:2, Nehemiah 3:16. This is one of the clues that the book was written at the time of Nehemiah, when the identity and family of Nehemiah was so well known that there was no need to detail his ancestry further than this. Tradition records that he was of the tribe of Judah, and as they are the most numerous tribe of survivors that is most likely, but it is sheer speculation.

Nehemiah has a great life of wealth, power and influence. He lives in palace apartments, and travels with the king in times of peace, and on military campaigns, and is there to hear and partake in the great discussions about the future direction of the entire Empire. We do not know his age at this point, but he has lived a life that all would envy, with all he could ever want for physical provisions to make life pleasant, and all he could ever need to make it exciting and satisfying. He could have remained distracted by his life of wealth, excitement, and prosperity, all his long life, but he had a heart for his people and their destiny. When a distant relative visits the palace for some reason or other he seeks first hand knowledge of the state of affairs in Judea. What he hears shocks him, for the keys words to describe their state are, "affliction, reproach, broken, burned".

Verses 4 – 7. Nehemiah's reaction to the news is like Ezra's to the same sort of news; he takes in the full spiritual implications of the description of the state of affairs, and he sees that the Jewish people remain under the judgement of God. This is a busy man immersed in the politics of his day, and unable to take holidays or time off in the way we can today. He cannot stop his working obligations, but he takes time out from personal activities, and he fasts and prays about this news. He prepares his heart in grief based sadness about the reality he has discovered, in order to seek what he might do to be part of the remedy.

These are the three essential parts of intercessory prayer. **First** such prayer is about the news that has been heard; it is the sad reflection upon it, and the grieving with the Lord over the news. **Secondly** there is the confession of sin associated with the news, for calamity indicates that the people involved need to do business with God, for they face either testing or judgement. **Thirdly** there is preparing oneself for the question as to what we ought to do to assist the Lord's people. If we hear of a need of the people of the Lord, we are hearing of it because we are meant to do something about it. God wants us "active" in prayer, seeking guidance, not passive in any "God wills it" theology.

Nehemiah takes time with his prayers. He does not rush and expect a solution and answer to them within the day, but prays and fasts for days. We are too hasty in our prayers and too demanding in our expectations of the Lord. The Lord is working to a timetable and our job is to get onboard with His timetable not our own and to sit long enough with a problem

in prayer so that we truly hear from the Lord all about it that we need to understand. His formal prayer begins only after several days of preparation for it. This in itself is a lesson to us, for we are quick to talk to the Lord at times, often well before we have really thought about what we want to say! It is good to keep up a constant flow of prayer to the Lord through each and every day, but when a really big issue crops up, we are to be advised to follow Nehemiah's example and think a great deal before we ask the Lord for a solution.

Notice that Nehemiah begins his prayer in verse five by reminding himself as to the character and plan of God. It is always a good place to start when facing any problem. If we begin our contemplation in the CHARACTER OF GOD, then our problem is in the right context to start with, for nothing is "big" when we place it before the creator of the Universe. No problem of ours is "big" to God! This is why **1 Peter 5:5-9** is a vital passage for all believers to apply in the context of the CHARACTER and PLAN of GOD. Nehemiah starts his prayer with the awesomeness of God and the limited comprehension he has about what is happening in Jerusalem, and he takes his pain about what he has heard, and he lays it before the throne of the One true God of history.

He also begins by remembering that the Lord our God is a God of judgement for sin, but a God of mercy and love towards those who obey His commandments. **Psalm 103:8-12**. We do not quote the Lord's words on this from John Chapter 15:14, and 16:33, enough. "You are my friends if you do whatsoever I command you to do...in this world you will have trouble, but do not despair, I have overcome...". We preach and sing about being the friends of God, but we must remember the conditional nature of this; we are only friends if we are doing what He has commanded!

Nehemiah begins with CONFESSION OF SIN, and he seeks forgiveness for his people. He stands in the breach and prays on behalf of his people for the Lord's forgiveness for them. We are called to do this for our own nations and churches. If we know of great sin in our church or our land, we are to pray to the Lord for forgiveness for those involved that they might be lifted up back into fellowship and service again. Nehemiah sees that the great judgement upon the nation is a direct fulfilment of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-29. The FIVE CYCLES OF NATIONAL DISCIPLINE have been visited upon them because of their sins. They have failed to obey the commands they were given and so they have reaped the consequences in the events that have happened to them.

Nehemiah looks however beyond that awful reality to the hope that is there. He sees that the people have survived and they have prospered, and a number are back in the land. All these things, he knows to be evidence of the hand of God upon them, and so he seeks for the Lord's direction from here, and seeks his part in the plan from this point. This principle is a vital one throughout all of history; if we find ourselves alive in the midst of great difficulty, then there is hope, and there is a part for us to play in the plan. When there is no hope, nor any part for us to play in the plan we will know, for we will be looking at the Lord face to face! (We will already be dead!)

Verses 8 – 11. Nehemiah remembers Moses words in Leviticus 26:33 and following, and Deuteronomy 4:26-28, 28:58-67. He recalls the clear words of God regarding judgement for disobedience, and sees that as a nation they have ignored these things for centuries. He also recalls the great promise of re-gathering and restoration that is also part of the five cycles of judgement passages. Leviticus 26:39-42, Deuteronomy 4:29-40, 30:1-20. Nehemiah quotes the Lord's words through Moses as the basis for his prayer request and he claims these words for the people of Judea in his own day. It is always wise to quote the promises of the Lord back to the Lord. The promises of the Word of God are given for this purpose and the Lord wants to see us take His promises seriously and use them in our prayers.

It is of note that Daniel prays this way for his people in the previous century, and it is only after Daniel's great prayer for forgiveness that the Lord gives him the vision of the seventy weeks. The two men run a parallel course in their spiritual lives; each spends time in prayer for their people, and the Lord lifts them from their knees to serve their people. This is the pattern for us to follow today also. Nehemiah sees that it is the mighty hand of God alone that has redeemed his people from the Babylonian Captivity. He looks back and sees that the decree of Cyrus was clearly the hand of God, and their return under the leaders Zerubbabel and Joshua, is nothing short of the miraculous.

On the basis of God's mighty hand delivering so far, Nehemiah expects the Lord to continue His mighty work with His people as they face their present problem. As God has dealt with them in the past, just so Nehemiah expects God to deal with them in the future. This MENTAL ATTITUDE is based upon good biblical knowledge and ought to be the one we have today. If we know God's work amongst His people in the past, we have the best evidence for how the Lord is going to deal with His people in the future. Knowledge of the Word of God is the basis for all confidence and powerful prayer in the believer's life, for as the Lord has been, so He will continue to be! Hebrews 13:8.

Nehemiah knows he is not alone in his prayers, for he has been told more about the state of affairs in Jerusalem by Hanani than just that the walls are still broken down. He has clearly been told that the prayers of the people in Jerusalem are focused upon their state of desolation and the shame that they live in a still destroyed city. Nehemiah knows that as he bows before the Lord in Susa, there are fellow believers bowing in Jerusalem praying the same way. He has also come to the place where he believes he knows what he is to do. He knows that he has the skills to do what is required from his previous work for the King. Wall building requires specialist assistance, but Nehemiah knows where he can get that in the Empire, and his own skill is as a project manager.

We must remember that when we are called to do a job for the Lord, we are not necessarily expected to do everything, but we do need the skills required for our role in the task well in advance of the Lord's call. The Lord only uses prepared people, and this is why young believers need to be encouraged to build all useful skills whenever they can. The more skilled and able we are, the more we are able to be used by the Lord down track.

He knows that what he needs is the support of the King for this enterprise, for without that he is unable to do anything. He is a senior court official and can do nothing without the king's approval and commission. He also knows that to leave such a senior court position in the Persian Empire (but this is true for all political "cabinets") is to open the door to intrigues that will mean he will never get back into the place he once held.

Politics is a dirty business and if you take a break from a key role you will tend to be permanently replaced. Nehemiah is placing his future on the line here. He is ready to risk it all in order to do what he feels burdened to do. He prays for the Lord to go ahead and work upon the king so that when the matter of concern comes to light, that the king is supportive, and that he is going to be able to do the job, and then later return to his role in the palace.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. Let us not be distracted by the details of life, but keep our heart for the Lord's people and their needs. If we have our heart clearly focused upon the Lord's plan for our life we will discover the things the Lord seeks for us to do to assist his people. Nehemiah is in the palace of an earthly king, but his heart is always in the throne room of God seeking his will for his life. This is the right way to deal with the details of daily life, whether we are rich or poor.

2. When we hear of the needs of God's people we are to prepare ourselves to pray for our brethren, but also to examine our own hearts as to what we may be able to practically do to assist them. Let us be prayerful and thoughtful as the days grow darker, for the Lord expects us to do things to assist others in the midst of the testing times that are coming.

3. If we are alive, then there is hope for us, and there is certainly a part to play in the Plan of God for us. We live and move and have our being in the Lord alone, and one second after we have finished our earthly course we will be in heaven looking at the Lord. We have no need to doubt our role, we simply need to sit prayerfully before the Lord long enough to hear his voice and discover what we are to do. Let us take our burdens to the Lord in prayer and wait for the Lord's answers to our deepest needs and so discover the path we are to walk.

4. Let us urge our people to prepare for the work of the Lord in all ways they can. Every training course that can be done by a young person should be done, for they are, by studying and gaining mastery of subjects, positioning themselves for later usefulness. Let us be busy learning things, as every item we learn places us in a more useful place for later. When the call to service comes, let us be ready to risk all else in life. Let us trust the Lord for our "job security", retirement funds, and health and welfare. Let us trust the one who called us to provide for us. Let us just get moving and do the job!

DOCTRINES

CHRIST – FIRST AND SECOND ADVENTS

1. Old Testament saints had difficulty in distinguishing between the two advents of Christ. (1 Peter 1:10,11)
2. Old Testament prophecy has Christ coming as a gentle lamb led to the slaughter. (Isaiah 53:7)
3. Old Testament prophecy has Christ coming as the conquering King and Lion of the tribe of Judah. (Isaiah 11:1-12)
4. Jesus commenced his ministry announcing the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. (Matthew 4:17) This connects the first and second advents.
5. Old Testament Prophecy showed that the Messiah would:-
 - a) Be born of a virgin. (Isaiah 7:14)
 - b) Be of the tribe of Judah. (Genesis 49:10)
 - c) Be of the house of David. (Isaiah 11:1, Jeremiah 33:21)
 - d) Die as a sacrifice. (Isaiah 53:1-12)
 - e) Be crucified. (Psalm 22:1-21)
 - f) Be resurrected from the dead. (Psalm 16:8-11)
 - g) Return to earth at his second advent. (Zechariah 8:3)
 - h) Be seated at the right hand of God. (Psalm 110:1)
6. It should be noted that the return of Christ for the Church (the Rapture) as given in (1 Thessalonians 4:14-18) was not revealed in the Old Testament – it is a mystery doctrine of the Church (Colossians 3:4-6)
7. The day of the Second Advent is characterised by supernatural darkness
 - a) When Christ returns every eye shall see him (Matthew 24:29-30) Christ is the light of the world and he will return to a world covered in darkness (symbolic of sin).
 - b) The darkness is similar to the darkness of the day of our Lord's crucifixion which hid the Lord Jesus Christ from man's sight whilst he was bearing our sins. (Mark 15:33)

- c) The Second Advent delivers the Jewish believers besieged in Jerusalem by the King of the North. (Daniel 11, Zechariah 12:1-3, 14:1-4)
- d) Other passages indicating that the day of the Second Advent is a day of total darkness on the earth. (Isaiah 13:9-10, Ezekiel 32:7-8, Joel 2:10-11, Joel 3:14-15, Amos 5:18, Zechariah 14:6, Matthew 24:29-30, Luke 21:25-27, Revelation 6:12-17)

8. Heralds of the Two Advents of Christ

A herald is a person who preceded a king in ancient times to announce his arrival. The King that we study is the Lord Jesus Christ.

a) First Advent

- i) Human herald – John the Baptist (Matthew 3)
- ii) Angelic heralds – Angels (Luke 2:1-15)

b) Second Advent

- i) Human heralds – Moses, Elijah (Revelation 11)
- ii) Angelic herald – The mighty angel (Revelation 10)

GOD – PLAN OF GOD

1. In eternity past, God designed a plan for every believer, which takes into account every event and decision in human history.
2. The plan centres on the person of Jesus Christ. (1 John 3:23, Ephesians 1:4-6)
3. Entrance into the plan is based on the principle of grace (Ephesians 2:8, 9) where the sovereignty of God and the free will of Man meet at the cross. God brings salvation which is complete, Man brings his faith.
4. God's plan was so designed so as to include all events and actions. (1 Peter 1:2)
5. Under His plan God has decreed to do some things directly and some through agencies, Israel, the Church.
6. Without interfering with human free will in any way God has designed a plan so perfect that it includes cause and effect, as well as provision, preservation and function.
7. There are many functions in the Plan of God. They all constitute one whole comprehensive plan which is perfect, eternal and unchangeable.
8. The plan of God is consistent with human freedom and does not limit or coerce human free will. Distinction should be made between what God causes and what God permits. God causes the Cross but permits sin. God is neither the author of sin nor sponsors sin.
9. His plan portrays that man has free will. God never condones sin in the human race. Man started in perfect environment and innocence. Man sinned of his own free will. Man will sin in the perfect environment of the Millennium.
10. Distinction should be made between the divine plans which are related to the plan of God and divine laws which regulate human conduct on the earth. Divine laws occur in time, divine plans occur in eternity.
11. God's plans derive from His foreknowledge. He recognised in eternity past those things which are certain. The foreknowledge of God makes no things certain, but only perceives in eternity past those things that are certain.
12. There is a difference between foreknowledge and fore ordination. Fore ordination establishes certainty but does not provide for the certainty which is established. It is the plan that provides. (Romans 8:29, Acts 2:23, 1 Peter 1:2)
13. Therefore the elect are foreknown and the foreknown are elect. God knew in eternity past what way each free will would go for each particular problem in life. God does not coerce human free will but He does know what way each freewill will choose at any given time. As free will decides so God provides.
14. Since God cannot contradict His own character He plans the best for the believer. God is perfect, His plan and provisions are therefore perfect.
15. The cross was planned in eternity past but the human free will of Christ decided for the cross at Gethsemane. (Matthew 26:39-42) God has provided salvation through the cross and it is a free will decision as to whether one accepts it or not.
16. No plan in itself opposes human freedom but once a choice is made from the free will then the plan limits your human freedom. At the same time it gives you the freedom to love and appreciate God. God lays down the means of living the Christian life.

PROPHECY – DANIELS’ SEVENTY WEEKS

1. Scripture:- Daniel 9:24-27

“Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity and to bring in everlasting righteousness and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. “ (Daniel 9:24)

2. What is a week? In the ancient world both Greek and Latin philosophers knew the week, as the week of years. In this system one week equals 7 years. Thus seventy weeks equal 70 x 7 years = 490 years.

3. What Type of Year? The year used in scripture of Daniel’s time was the Jewish year which Abraham had preserved from his Chaldean home. Abraham’s year was the lunar year and consisted of 360 days. The period stated then is 70 x 7 x 360 days giving a total of 176 400 days.

4. Who are Involved? ‘Thy people, thy holy city’ refer to the Jews and Jerusalem or Judea. We therefore have a period of 490 years involving the Jews and Jerusalem.

5. When Does this Period End?

a) In the second half of verse 24 the end of the period is given by six separate events:

- i) to finish the transgression – the start of the Millennium at the 2nd advent.
- ii) make an end to sins – perfect environment starts at the 2nd advent and continues for a thousand years. (Romans 8:19-21)
- iii) make reconciliation – since AD 70 the Jews have been dispersed amongst the nations, they will continue to be dispersed until Jesus Christ calls them back to their land at the 2nd advent.
- iv) bring in everlasting righteousness – the millennium starts a period of everlasting righteousness with the reign of Christ, this everlasting righteousness continues into the eternal future. This period starts at the 2nd advent.
- v) to seal up the vision and prophecy – the 2nd advent fulfils the Abrahamic, Palestinian and Davidic covenant and this prophecy.
- vi) to anoint the most Holy – at the 2nd advent Jesus is anointed King of Israel.

b) The terminal point in all six statements can therefore be said to be the 2nd advent of the Lord Jesus Christ or the midnight hour of (Matthew 25:6). We thus have a period from (Daniel 9:24) of 490 Jewish years each having 360 days terminating at the 2nd Advent.

c) In the next three verses the period of 70 weeks is carefully divided into three sections.

d) “Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks (49 years) and three score and two weeks (434 years):the streets shall be built again, and the wall even in troubled times. “ (Daniel 9:25)

e) We have therefore three periods into which the 70 weeks is split – 7 weeks + 62 weeks leaving a balance of 1 week. Expressed in years we have 49 years + 434 years + 7 years.

6. What is the Starting Point?

a) There were three edicts issued by Persian princes dating after the time of Daniel and relating to the Jews returning to their homeland, they were:-

- i) The edict of Cyrus in 538 BC to rebuild the house of the Lord (Temple) (Ezra 1).
- ii) The edict of Darius in 520 BC to rebuild the temple which is found in (Ezra 6) Darius’ edict was to confirm Cyrus’ previous order, the temple works having been stopped after the death of Cyrus.
- iii) The edict of Artaxerxes Longimanus to rebuild Jerusalem in 445 BC (Nehemiah 2)

b) Inspection of Daniel 9:25 shows that the critical commandment which starts the 70 weeks clock ticking was the order to rebuild Jerusalem not the temple. The correct order was the edict of Artaxerxes in 445 BC The practice of Persian Kings was to issue such orders on their New Years day, the 1st of the month of Nisan. Using the services of the Astronomer Royal in London, Sir Robert Anderson, was able to determine that the 1st Nisan of 445 BC occurred on 14th March 445 BC. We therefore have the following date:-

c) 14th March 445 BC – 490 years – 2nd Advent

d) It also states that Jerusalem will be rebuilt with its walls completed after 49 years (7 weeks) in difficult circumstances. There is considerable biblical evidence that Jerusalem was rebuilt under very difficult circumstances.

e) “And after three score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself. “ (Daniel 9:26a)

7. Who is the Messiah? – Jesus Christ!

In Luke’s gospel on entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, just prior to his crucifixion, the crowd welcomed Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah (Luke 19:38) this being the only time when he was so called by the mass of the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

8. When was He cut off?

According to (Luke 3:1) Jesus Christ was baptised in the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar. As his ministry was three years in length, the entry into Jerusalem occurred in the 18th year of Tiberius. Searches of literature including, ‘The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire’ by Gibbon, has shown that Tiberius became Caesar in 14 AD Entrance into Jerusalem was therefore on Palm Sunday 32 AD Again by computation the date of Palm Sunday 32 AD was 10th Nisan or 6th April AD 32, the crucifixion occurring on 9th April AD 32.

9. If this is correct, we should find correlation between the 483 Jewish years to the cutting off of the Messiah and the time between 14th March 445 BC and 6th April AD 32. The time between these two dates is 476 years and 24 days. Total number of days are therefore as follows:-

476 years x 365 days = 173,740
 14/3 to 6/4 = 24
 Leap years = 116
 TOTAL = 173,880 days.
 Jewish time: 483 x 360 = 173,880 days

10. Our scale now shows:-
 14th March 445 BC – 483 years – 6th April 32 AD

11. The following questions now arise:
 Has the second advent of Jesus Christ occurred? – No.
 Is it longer than 7 years since Jesus Christ rode into Jerusalem? – Yes.
 Therefore there must be a gap between the 69th week and the 70th week.
 445 BC – 483 years – 32 AD – GAP – 7 years – 2nd Advent

12. This gap has been filled in God's view of history by the church age. (see topic of Intercalation).
 The 70th week which is 7 years in length therefore starts at the end of the church age – at the Rapture. These 7 years of the 70th week are the worst 7 years in the history of man – the tribulation.

13. CONCLUSION The course of this 70th week is denoted in (Daniel 9:26b, 27).
 a) "and the people of the prince (the dictator of the Revived Roman Empire) that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary, and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and until the end of the war, desolations are determined.
 b) And he (the dictator) shall confirm the covenant (mutual defence pact) with the many (the Jews) for one week (7 years) and in the midst of the week (3 1/2 years) he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, (this refers to the erection of a statue in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, see Revelation 13:11-15). Even until the consummation (the 2nd advent) and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate (the dictator will be judged and cast into hell, see Revelation 19:20)."
 c) We thus have Daniel's 70 weeks divided as shown:-
 d) 445 BC – 483 years – 32 AD – CHURCH – unspecified period of time – RAPTURE – 7 years – 2nd Advent

PROPHECY – EMPIRES IN DANIEL

1. General Scripture (Daniel 7:1-8) portrays empires which would affect Israel as well as world history. In this passage the empires are represented by four great beasts which came from the sea. The sea represents the Gentiles so these empires are Gentile empires.

2. Whilst there are four beasts, five empires are in fact represented, with the fourth beast representing not only the Roman Empire (SPQR) but also the Revived Roman Empire of the Tribulation period. Two other empires mentioned in scripture, the Egyptian and Assyrian, are not mentioned here because by Daniel's time these empires were historical. This vision occurred in 556 BC-

3. The Empires are Chaldea (Daniel 7:4), Persian (Daniel 7:5), Greek (Daniel 7:6), Roman (Daniel 7:7) Revived Roman (Daniel 7:8).

4. At the end of the Revived Roman Empire Jesus Christ returns (Dan 7:9-14) and destroys the last of man's empires and sets his everlasting empire in position (Daniel 7:14). This parallels (Daniel 2). (See Nebuchadnezzar's Dream).

5. THE CHALDEAN EMPIRE – THE LION WITH EAGLES WINGS

a) The Chaldeans came from the mountains of southern Iran and migrated towards the Arabic Gulf concentrating themselves in the swamps. From time to time they would emerge from the swamps to conquer and as a result ruled from Babylon periodically. King Merodachbaladan (Isaiah 39:1) was one such King.

b) Nabopolassar the father of Nebuchadnezzar was asked to rouse an army to assist Assyria against its enemies. He marched into Babylon and revolted against Assyria and with the help of the Medes and Scythians destroyed the Assyrian empire in 612 BC.

c) The Chaldean Empire became great as portrayed by the Lion and spread quickly over the known civilised world as shown by the wings of the Eagle. Its power reached its zenith under Nebuchadnezzar being the richest empire ever seen on the earth.

d) As often happens a great king was followed by a poor ruler. The Chaldean empire soon declined under Evil-Morodach his son who was killed in a revolution by Nergalsharezer who is mentioned in Jeremiah 39:3 as a prince of Babylon.

e) Nergalsharezer became the king. He succeeded to the throne but only reigned for four years. In 556 BC Nabonidus was elected ruler. Being quite old, Belshazzar was made co-regent and ruled from Babylon. He had no interest in God. The lion with wings had declined to an arrogant man. The empire continued to decline and in 538 BC during a drinking party with 1,000 of his nobles the Persians took Babylon by force. The Chaldean empire was over. (Daniel 5).

f) The Lion with Eagles wings parallels the Head of Gold of the vision of Nebuchadnezzar in (Daniel 2:32,38).

6. THE MEDIO-PERSIAN EMPIRE – THE BEAR WITH THE RAISED PAW

a) During the relatively short Chaldean Empire, two groups were constantly struggling to gain control over each other, the Medes and the Persians. Whilst they fought with each other, they always united against outside enemies. Eventually the Persians gained ascendancy over the Medes. This is shown in the raised paw of the bear. They became a very powerful force.

b) In 546 BC Cyrus the Great conquered the fabulously rich city of Sardis, the capital of King Croesus of Lydia. Darius the Mede, eight years later, conquered Babylon with the Persian army under Gobryas, entering the city by the only opening in the wall where the river entered the city. (Dan 5:28). Daniel was made chief administrator of the empire (Dan 6:1,2).

c) It is apparent that Cyrus was a believer. He was certainly used by God and is mentioned often in scripture (2 Chronicles 36:22,23; Ezra 1:1,2,7,8; 3:7; 4:3,5; 5:13,14,17; (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1; Daniel 1:21; 6:28; 10:1). Cyrus made it possible for the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple (Ezra 1).

d) There were a number of Persian kings who followed Cyrus who had influence on the Jews and are mentioned in the Bible. Cyrus' son Cambyses ruled Persia for ten years and is the Ahasuerus of (Ezra 4:6). The next king was anti-Semitic and stopped the building of the temple but he was soon assassinated and Darius 1 The Great confirmed Cyrus' edict with his own in (Ezra 6). It was during his reign (521-486 BC) that the Jews returned to the land in 516 BC after their 70 years of captivity. Darius is also mentioned in the books of Nehemiah, Daniel, Haggai and Zechariah.

e) Darius was succeeded by Xerxes 1 (486-465 BC), the Ahasuerus of the book of (Esther) who, in turn, was succeeded by Artaxerxes Longimanus who, by his edict in 445 BC, ordered the rebuilding of Jerusalem thus starting Daniel's 70 weeks. He is mentioned in (Ezra 7:1-8 and Nehemiah 2:1).

f) After Artaxerxes the Persian Empire declined. The Greek Empire in the west started to rise. With the invasion of Alexander, the Persian Empire, the silver shoulders of (Daniel 2:32,39), had ceased to exist.

7. THE GREEK EMPIRE – THE LEOPARD WITH FOUR HEADS

a) During the height of the Persian Empire, the Greeks and Macedonians had been fighting each other in a series of interstate wars. The Spartans, Thebians, Athenians and Macedonians were but a few of the combatants.

b) Philip of Macedon, having been released as a hostage by the King of Thebes, utilised many of the military tactics he had observed during his captivity in organising his own army in the mountains to the north of mainland Greece. He married a redhead, Olympias of Epirus, and to them was born a son, Alexander.

c) Alexander was tutored by Aristotle and succeeded to the throne when Philip was assassinated. Alexander was 20 years of age. At his death Philip had conquered Greece but a language barrier caused significant weakness in the large Greek army which Alexander was intending using against Persia. With his brilliant mind, Alexander conceived a common or Koine Greek language, a highly accurate and specific language which became the precise language of the New Testament.

d) In 334 BC Alexander started his conquest of the Persians. He successfully campaigned in Asia Minor, Palestine, Egypt and North Africa before overwhelming Persia. He passed through into Northern India. The bear had been replaced by the leopard. His army finally stopped in central India where a group decided to sail home. They cut down a forest and sailed along the Persian Gulf, producing an encyclopaedia of natural science en route.

e) Alexander returned to Persia and settled down in Babylon where he died due, mainly, to excessive drinking at an early age. Like Nimrod, he tried to form a super race and a brotherhood of man in Babylon. His early death can be seen as judgement by God on an international system.

f) His empires did not long survive him. Eleven of his serving generals fought each other for some twenty years until four succeeded in wresting kingdoms to rule SELEUCHUS, PTOLEMY, CASSANDER and LYSIMACHUS. These are the four heads of the leopard, the leopard representing Alexander's empire because of the rapidity of conquest. (See also NORTH AND SOUTH and WINDS OF HEAVEN.) The belly of bronze also represents this empire. (Daniel 2:32,39).

8. THE ROMAN EMPIRE – THE IRON MONSTER

a) To the west, whilst the Greek city states were warring, peasant shepherds living on the banks of the Tiber moved up into the safety of the seven hills that were to become Rome. Having consolidated the power of Rome expanded to

conquer parts of Italy. Rome therefore took its place with Macedonia, Persia and Carthage as powers in the civilised world.

b) Rome's real expansion commenced with the three Punic wars against Carthage, which resulted in the complete destruction of the Carthaginian Empire and its leader, Hannibal. Rome now turned eastwards, pushing against the Seluchids, the King of the North in (Daniel 11). Rome expanded into Syria, Egypt, Gaul, North Africa, with the Mediterranean becoming a Roman lake.

c) The Romans made good use of iron in their conquests with the famous Roman short sword, the Machaira of iron being the main offensive weapon. With very few delays the might of Rome trod and crushed all their enemies.

d) The prosperity under the Roman republic caused decadence to set in and Rome might well have collapsed, had it not been for one of the greatest geniuses of all time, Gaius Julius Caesar who, by the concepts he adopted, was able to extend the life of Roman power by some 500 years.

e) There followed a period of great stability during which Jesus Christ came into the world (Luke 2:1; Gal 4:4). With this stability came the opportunity for Christianity to spread. The Jews, however, after the death and resurrection of Christ, forgot God and the Romans crushed them in the terrible siege and destruction of Jerusalem by Titus and his three legions in 70 AD

f) During the middle of the first century decadence again set in but due to the spread of Christian principles, Rome enjoyed a golden age for almost a hundred years under the Antonine Caesars from AD 96. Again there were peace and maximum evangelism.

g) In the fourth century religion and state were combined under Constantine and slowly the Roman Empire declined until Rome was eventually sacked by Odovacar, the German in 466 AD The legs of iron represent this empire in (Daniel 2:33,40).

9. THE REVIVED ROMAN EMPIRE – THE SEVEN-HORNED HEAD AND THE LITTLE HORN

a) We now move from history, as far as we are concerned, to prophecy. To Daniel, of course, all of these empires, with the exception of the Chaldean Empire, were prophecy. After the age of the Church which has been inserted into history by God, the Roman Empire is revived.

b) The picture we see here is that of ten national groups. Three have to be conquered by the emerging dictator of that empire known as the Beast. The dictator is seen as a horn with eyes and a mouth speaking blasphemies. The little horn plucks out three horns.

c) The revived Roman Empire lasts only for the seven years of the tribulation before being destroyed as the last empire by the return of Jesus Christ at the Second Advent.

d) The toes of clay and iron represent this kingdom in (Daniel 2:33, 41-43).

e) In (Revelation 17:10) it mentions seven kings or empires, five of which had fallen, one is, and the other is not yet come. Remembering these words were written by John in AD 96, 'that which is' is the Roman Empire. The Empires are as follows:

- i) Those that have fallen:- Egypt, Assyria, Chaldea, Persia, Greece
- ii) That which is:- Roman
- iii) That which is to come:- Revived Roman Empire

10. In both Nebuchadnezzar's dream in (Daniel 2) and this passage in (Daniel 7), man-made empires are destroyed by God. Worldwide empires tend to elevate man to a place of self-glorification, whilst all glory should go to God. God promotes nations (Genesis 10), and judges internationalism (Daniel 2, 7).

PROPHECY – SEQUENCE OF END TIME EVENTS

1. Note: Some of the events in the Tribulation may occur in a slightly different sequence.

2. CHURCH AGE

- a) Rapture of the Church (1 Corinthians 15:51-58, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).
- b) Judgement Seat of Christ (believers only – purpose is rewards) (1 Corinthians 3:12-15).

3. TRIBULATION (first 3 1/2 years)

- a) Revival of Roman Empire, Ten Nation Confederacy (Daniel 7:7, 24, Revelation 13:1, 17:3, 12, 13).
- b) Rise of Middle East Dictator (Daniel 7:8, Revelation 13:1-8).
- c) Temple rebuilt in Jerusalem
- d) Seven seals judgements (Revelation 6:1ff) and seven trumpets judgements (Revelation 8:7ff).
- e) Two witnesses preach from Jerusalem until killed.

- f) Peace treaty with Israel (Daniel 9:27).
- g) World church established (Revelation 17:1-15).
- h) Russia attacks Israel about four years before the second coming of Christ (Ezekiel 38, 39).

4. GREAT TRIBULATION (second 3 1/2 years)

- a) Peace treaty with Israel broken
- b) Antichrist sets up Abomination of Desolation and demands worship (Matthew 24:15,21).
- c) World government, world economic system, world religion begins (Daniel 7:23, Revelation 13:5-8, 17:16, 17).
- d) Seven bowl judgements (Revelation 16:2ff).
- e) Martyrdom of many Tribulation Saints and Jews (Revelation 7:9-17, 13:15).
- f) Catastrophic divine judgements poured out on the earth (Revelation 6:17).
- g) World war breaks out in Middle East; battle of Armageddon (Daniel 11:40-45, Revelation 9:13-21, 16:12-16).

5. SECOND ADVENT OF CHRIST

- a) Second coming of Christ (Matthew 24:27-31, Revelation 19:11).
- b) Tribulation surviving believers proceed into the Millennium (Matthew 3:12).
- c) Unbelievers cast off the earth (Ezekiel 20:33-38, Matthew 3,12, 25:31-46, Jude 14, 15, Revelation 19:15-21, 20:1-4).
- d) Satan bound (Revelation 20:1-3).
- e) Resurrection of Old Testament saints and Tribulation martyrs (Revelation 20:4).

6. MILLENNIUM

- a) Millennial kingdom begins (Revelation 20:5, 6).
- b) Christ reigns on earth for 1,000 years in perfect environment and peace (Revelation 20:4-6).
- c) Satan released at the end of the Millennium (Revelation 20:7-9).
- d) Rebellion of Gog and Magog at the end of the Millennium (Revelation 20:7-10).
- e) Resurrection of all unbelievers (Revelation 20:5a).
- f) Great White Throne Judgement (unbelievers only – purpose is judgement) (Revelation 20:11-15).

7. ETERNITY

- a) New heaven, new earth, new Jerusalem (Revelation 21, 22).
- b) Believers blessed forever with Christ (Revelation 21 – 22:5).
- c) Unbelievers punished forever with Satan (Matthew 25:41).

GOD – CHARACTER OF GOD

1. Whilst God is three persons all three persons have exactly the same essence or character:

a) SOVEREIGNTY

The Father (Ephesians 1:11, cf. Isaiah 40:8, Matthew 6:10, Hebrews 10:7, 9)
The Son (John 5:21, Revelation 19:16)
The Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:11, cf. Hebrews 2:4)

b) RIGHTEOUSNESS

The Father (John 17:25)
The Son (Luke 1:35, Hebrews 7:26, 2 Corinthians 5:21)
The Spirit – The Holy Spirit

c) JUSTICE

The Father (Job 37:23, cf. 8:3)
The Son (Acts 3:14, John 5:22, Revelation 19:11)
The Spirit (Nehemiah 9:20)

d) LOVE

The Father (John 3:16)
The Son (Ephesians 5:25, 1 John 3:16)
The Spirit (John 16:7-11, 1 Corinthians 2:10)

e) ETERNAL LIFE

The Father (John 5:26)
The Son (Micah 5:2, cf. John 1:1-2, 1 John 5:11)
The Spirit (Isaiah 48:16)

f) ALL-KNOWING

The Father (Hebrews 4:13, cf. Matthew 11:27, 1 Peter 1:2)
The Son (John 18:4, cf. Matthew 9:4, John 2:25, 1 Corinthians 4:5)
The Spirit (Isaiah 11:2, cf. 1 Corinthians 2:11)

g) EVERYWHERE

The Father (2 Chronicles 2:6)
The Son (Matthew 28:20, cf. Ephesians 1:23)
The Spirit (Psalm 139:7)

h) ALL-POWERFUL

The Father (Mark 14:36, cf. 1 Peter 1:5)
The Son (Hebrews 1:3, cf. Matthew 24:30, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Philippians 3:21)
The Spirit (Romans 15:19)

i) UNCHANGEABLE

The Father (Hebrews 6:17, Psalm 33:11)
The Son (Hebrews 13:8)
The Spirit (John 14:16)

j) TRUTH

The Father (John 7:28, John 17:3)
The Son (1 John 5:20, cf. John 1:14, 14:6, Revelation 19:11)
The Spirit (1 John 5:6, cf. John 14:17, 15:26, 16:13)

CHRISTIAN LIFE – CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

1. Forgiveness is by the death of Christ (Matthew 26:28, Revelation 1:5)
2. Divine forgiveness is to all who believe in Christ (Acts 10:43, Acts 16:31)
3. The penalty of sin was paid by Christ on the cross. (Hebrews 9:22, 2 Corinthians 5:21)
4. When a believer sins his fellowship with God is disrupted. God forgives these sins upon confession and cleanses from the unknown sins in the believer's life as well as known sins. (1 John 1:9).
5. Jesus Christ is our propitiation. (1 John 2:1,2)
6. In human forgiveness we are told to forgive others even as God has forgiven us (Ephesians 4:32). This can only be accomplished by the filling of the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 5:18, Galatians 5:22,23)
7. Steps towards restoration of fellowship
 - [a] Examine yourself for genuineness of motivation. (2 Corinthians 14:5)
 - [b] Act on what you see (Romans 4:7-8)
 - [c] Deal with any sin by confession. (1 John 1:9, Psalm 66:18)
 - [d] Forget the sin you have confessed. Do not proceed into a pattern of guilt. (Philippians 3:13-14, Psalm 103:10-12)
 - [e] Resume your active spiritual walk. Avoid areas where you might be tempted by the sin which so easily besets us. (Hebrews 12:12-13)
 - [f] Be reconciled to others once you have been reconciled to God. (James 5:16)
 - [g] Get moving and grow up. (2 Peter 2:17-18)

CHRISTIAN LIFE – PRAYER

1. We may know the provision of God but we must communicate with Him in order to obtain this provision.
 - a) Prayer is the believer's means of communicating with God.
 - b) The Bible is God's way of communicating with man.
2. Promises Involving Prayer
 - a) Matthew 21:22 We should ask believing.
 - b) Matthew 18:19 The power of corporate prayer.
 - c) Psalm 116:1, 2 God is always available to hear our prayer.
 - d) Isaiah 65:24 God will answer while we are yet praying.
 - e) Matthew 7:7 We are commanded to pray.
 - f) John 14:13-14 We can ask for anything in His name.
 - g) Philippians 4:6 The prayer should be with thanksgiving.
 - h) 1 Thessalonians 5:17 We should pray without ceasing.
 - i) Hebrews 4:16 We can come boldly to the throne of Grace.
3. Prayer Divided into 4 Segments
 - a) Confession of sins (1 John 1:9)
 - b) Thanksgiving (1 Thessalonians 5:18)
 - c) Intercession for others (Ephesians 6:18)
 - d) Petitions for one's own needs (Hebrews 4:16)

4. Power of Prayer

- a) Individual – Elijah and the burnt offering (1 Kings 18:36-39)
- b) Corporate – the release of Peter from prison (Acts 12:1-18)

5. One Prayer that could not be Answered

The prayer of our Lord on the Cross (Psalm 22:1-18)

6. To Whom are Prayers Addressed?

- a) Directed to the Father – (Matthew 6:5-9)
 - b) In the name of the Son – (Hebrews 7:25)
 - c) In the power of the Spirit – (Romans 8:26-27)
- The Son (Jesus) and Spirit are interceding for us.

7. Prayers can be Divided into Petition and Desire

- a) Petition – What you ask God for (e.g. a new car).
- b) Desire – The desire behind the petition (e.g. happiness because you have a new car).

8. Four Possible Combinations

- a) Petition answered – Desire not answered. Psalm 106:15 – The quails of the Exodus generation. 1 Samuel 8:5 – A king to reign over Israel.
- b) Petition not answered – Desire answered. Genesis 18:23 – The preservation of Sodom. 2 Corinthians 12:7 – Removal of the thorn in Paul's side.
- c) Petition answered – Desire answered. 1 Kings 18:36-37 – Elijah requests fire for the offering. Luke 23:42 –The penitent thief's prayer. Type c) represents the perfect prayer.
- d) Petition not answered – Desire not answered. Type d) unanswered prayer has 8 main reasons which are shown in paragraph 9.

9. Reasons for Unanswered Prayer

- a) Lack of belief (Matthew 21:22)
- b) Selfishness (James 4:3)
- c) Unconfessed sin (Psalm 66:18)
- d) Lack of compassion (Proverbs 21:13)
- e) Pride and self righteousness (Job 35:12-13)
- f) Lack of filling of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:18)
- g) Lack of obedience (1 John 3:22)
- h) Not in the Divine will (1 John 5:14)

Most of the reasons for unanswered prayer, is some form of sin in the life, which can be solved by confession of known sins as per paragraph 3 a) under the concept of 1John 1:9.

10. Intercessory Prayer

- a) This is one of the four factors in a prayer, which are:-
 - i) Confession of sins
 - ii) Thanksgiving
 - iii) Intercession
 - iv) Own needs.
- b) The power of intercessory prayer is taught in (1 Kings 18:42-46) the principle being found in (James 5:16-18)
- c) The power of prevailing prayer is shown in (Acts 12)
- d) The prayer for the unbeliever (Romans 10:1)
- e) Prayer for an unknown believer (Colossians 1:3-11)
- f) Prayer for the known believer (Ephesians 1:15-23)

NATIONAL DIVINE DISCIPLINE (THE 5 CYCLES OF DISCIPLINE)

1. Leviticus 26 states the five cycles of discipline

If the people in the nation do not want to do things in God's way God will hit them in five cycles of increasing discipline until He completely destroys the nation.

2. First cycle – v 14-17 – sickness, depression, economic problems, people losing their strength of character, lack of power in the nation.

3. Second cycle – v 18-20 – this is an intensified form of the first cycle with recession turning into depression, they become even less enthusiastic.

4. Third cycle – v 21-22 – the situation further intensifies, psychological problems in the nation multiply, people behave like animals, the wild animals are prowling on the streets both physically and symbolically. It was not safe to go out. Here you have a breakdown in a nation with psychiatric problems and criminal problems.

5. Fourth cycle – v 23 – 26 – this is the invasion of your land with defeat with all the things that go with it, with food rationing, with privation.
6. Fifth cycle – v 27-39 – this shows nation collapse and the removal of the nation from the land.
7. The parallel passage in Deuteronomy 28 indicates that God deals with the nation that rejects his Word in a systematic way.

CHRISTIAN LIFE – MENTAL ATTITUDE

1. Definition: Attitude or Mental attitude is the state of mind where the mind is set on a course of action on the basis of the whole function and thinking of the soul.
2. Every believer faces the inner conflict of divine versus human viewpoint. These two attitudes are at war in humanity in human history from the time of the fall. (Isaiah 55:7-9)
3. We are commanded to have divine viewpoint in our souls not the viewpoint of Satan (worldliness). 2 Corinthians 1:7, 10:5. (Via Doctrine in the Soul)
3. Attitude determines both the life and character of a person – what you think is what you are (Proverbs 23:7)
4. As Christians we are commanded to have our thinking in tune with the mind of Christ. Gods plan for our lives calls for a new attitude in our souls, a new viewpoint, without any human viewpoint or mental attitude sin (1Corinthians 2:16, 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 Romans 12:2, Philippians 2:5, 2 Timothy 1:7)
5. Fellowship within a church is based on believers all being in tune with what the Bible teaches. Philippians 2:2.
6. Knowledge of the Bible (the mind of Christ, 1 Corinthians 2:16) and control by the Holy Spirit renews the mind of the believer, giving divine viewpoint. (Romans 12:2)
7. The right mental attitude produces joy (Philippians 2:2), confidence (2 Corinthians 5:1,6,8), stability (Isaiah 26:3-4, Philippians 4:7, 2 Thessalonians 2:2), true giving (2 Corinthians 9:7), love (1 Corinthians 13:5)
8. Human viewpoint is called worldliness. (Romans 12:2, Colossians 3:2)
9. Evil is what you think as you are following Satan's policy. Matthew 9:4, Galatians 6:3. Mental attitude sins produce self induced misery. (Proverbs 15:13)
10. Without clear thinking there is conflict in the mind of the believer. Isaiah 55:6-9, James 1:7-8.
11. True stability of Character comes only this way. Philippians 4:7, 2 Thessalonians 2:2.
12. Giving is a mental attitude. 2 Corinthians 9:7. Love is a mental attitude. 1 Corinthians 13: Deuteronomy 6:5,10:12.
13. Worldliness is a mental attitude: It is all non-grace thinking i.e. Anti Gods Plan, Colossians 3:2.
14. Confidence in service and living generally flows from having "Divine Viewpoint" which has other advantages such as
 - [a] Stability in life – James 1:8
 - [b] Prosperity of soul – Philippians 4:7
 - [c] Giving to the Lord – 2 Corinthians 9:7
 - [d] Spiritual rather than worldly – Romans 12:2, Colossians 3:2
 - [e] Purity rather than evil – Matthew 9:4
 - [f] No arrogance – Galatians 6:1-5.
 - [g] Inner beauty – 1 Timothy 2:9,10,15.

NOTES

CHAPTER 2**INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter we see the actions of a prepared man who has thought before he prayed, and keeps on thinking and praying about the execution of the task the Lord has given him. This is a man who waits for the right time to make his request to the king also. He waits for over three months before speaking to the king, and he knows by then exactly what he will need to achieve the purpose, and is ready to specifically ask for it. As a senior court official he also understands the politics of the governors beyond the river and so gets the needed permission for all he needs to do from the king in writing, and he is ready for the negativity of these governors, and for their future violent actions. They may not have remembered him from their visits to Susa, but he certainly remembers them and their natures. He is a realistic man who knows that you cannot trust people, and he secretly plans for the worst scenarios, and so is ready for anything. **John 2:25-26.** Remember these two verses – Jesus didn't trust people!!!

This is a man who also mentors good project management, and assists us to understand the best way to get the needed facts before taking the needed actions. He keeps his own counsel until he is ready to move, and so by the time the enemy get news of his actions he is doing them. In days when woolly thinking and slack management often characterise the local church's administration this man Nehemiah gives us a glimpse of a Holy Spirit controlled man powerfully doing the will of the Lord under pressure and in spite of opposition. This man is thoughtful, prayerful, and careful of whom he trusts. He is prepared by Holy Spirit received ability, life experience, and training, and he is capable of 100% concentration without distraction upon the important tasks before him. Let us learn everything we can from this man and his methodology. Let us be strong, stable and structured in our thinking, planning and execution of our tasks.

NEHEMIAH 2:1-20

1 And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence. **2** Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? This is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid, **3** And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire? **4** Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven. **5** And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it. **6** And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him,) For how long shall thy journey be? And when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time. **7** Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into Judah; **8** And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertained to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me. **9** Then I came to the governors beyond the river, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me. **10** When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel. **11** So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days. **12** And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon. **13** And I went out by night by the gate of the valley, even before the dragon well, and to the dung port, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire. **14** Then I went on to the gate of the fountain, and to the king's pool: but there was no place for the beast that was under me to pass. **15** Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall, and turned back, and entered by the gate of the valley, and so returned. **16** And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did; neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work. **17** Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. **18** Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work. **19** But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? Will ye rebel against the king? **20** Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem.

REFLECTION

Verses 1 – 2. When Nehemiah heard of the problems back home in Jerusalem it was around November-December. Remember, the months of this time were lunar months and are a little out with our own solar calendar. By the time he gets the opportunity to raise the matter with the king it is around April. He waits for four months, for exactly the right time to raise this subject. He waits for God's time, and while he is ready to move, he waits until the Lord's time, when the door opens. Refer to the BTB study GUIDANCE, THE WILL OF GOD. Answers to prayer are always about timing, never God's reluctance to bless and deliver us.

Timing is everything in the Lord's work. It is vital that we walk with the Lord and wait for His timing to do great matters, so that the door is opened by the Holy Spirit, at the right time for God's will to be done, not kicked open by our human plans and will. The palace at Susa was only used in the winter months, and so by the time the door opens for Nehemiah to speak of this concern of his, the court is most likely in another palace altogether. He has waited a long time to speak, but he has not wasted time until he does get the opportunity. While he waits, he has thought and prayed a great deal, right up until the day that the God given opportunity comes. God must open the door of service; God alone!

This particular day Nehemiah had, without realising it, become quite depressed within his heart. Today seeing people who are at times sad is normal, but it was not so in the Persian Court. It was an offence to come before the Persian king with a sad face, for in Persian Law the king made all people glad by his benevolent reign, and so to appear sad was to indicate that the king had failed in his duty to be the "Sun" of the land. To frown at the king, was to be a traitor. It was therefore a serious matter to have a sad look in this court, and Nehemiah is not fully aware of his sad appearance, and is quite shocked and worried when the king comments upon it.

It was an art to serve the wine to a king, and even Xenophon, the Greek General who visited the Persian court around 405 BC, commented upon how skilled and graceful the servants of the king were as they served the wine. Nehemiah is concentrating on his job, and doing it well, but his worry about Jerusalem, and possibly his concern at the delay in having the opportunity to speak to the king shows on his face. The king directly tells him that he is sad, and asks what it is that has made him sad, for he knows he is not physically ill. Nehemiah is very afraid at this point, but he immediately sees in the King's question the will of the Lord being worked out and he speaks with confidence and courage.

Verses 3 – 5. His answer to the king is honest and straight forward. He takes a great risk here, for his comments could be taken as a criticism of Persian administration, and as such traitorous. He sees this as the God given opportunity and boldly steps up and speaks fully his heart's concern. Note how prepared by prayer he has needed to be!

This is a prayer saturated man who is ready to speak correctly, and moves with the confidence of one who has positioned himself in the place where he desires the Lord's will only, and if not that, then death. It is this mental attitude that is required for great work! Half hearted commitment does not work when the matter before us is great; only a 100% focus upon the will of the Lord will have any impact upon the big tasks. Nehemiah reports the sadness of his heart is caused by the fact that his ancestral city is still ruined, and the gates of his old city are still charred wrecks. The settlers there are unable to securely close the gates for the protection of the people of his capital city, and also he notes that the graves of his forefathers lie abandoned, and the area of the tombs of the kings is still filled with rubbish.

He has noted his concerns in three key points that the king would understand and that are at the centre of his own value system; the city of his fathers is still a waste land, the graves of his fathers are untended, and the gates of the city that provide security at night are still wrecked from the fires of over 100 years before. The Persians wanted the cities of their provinces to be grander than they had been under previous rulers, and saw as a matter of Empire pride that each city was to be more magnificent under the Persians than it had ever been before. A Poor Province was an embarrassment.

They also understood the veneration of the noble dead, and the care of the tomb of Cyrus was an important part of their national identity, so the cleaning up of the tombs of the past kings of Judah was a priority to them also. The security of any city was in its gates and walls. Nehemiah doesn't mention the walls in this speech, and so the only conclusion can be that Nebuchadnezzar had broken many holes in the walls, but not totally destroyed them as the Romans would later do, but that every gate was burned and unable to be closed properly for good security against robbers and brigands. Security was a concern of the Persian Empire also, and so this is work that under their own values they would want done.

The king then asks what it is that Nehemiah requires by telling him this. The Persian governmental attitude is summed up in this question. Their attitude was, don't tell us anything unless there is something that you want done about it. And if you want something done about a problem, be sure that you identify what it is that you are going to do as part of the plan. Like all good senior managers the king believes a problem should only be raised with a suggested solution to it, and a readiness on the part of the junior manager to be part of that solution. A problem must have a plan for solution.

Nehemiah then replies immediately with his prayed through 'script' that he has spent four months readying him self to deliver. He seeks the king's authority to return in an official capacity to Jerusalem and rebuild it in glory so that it can fulfil its place in the Empire as a great city again. Notice the way he describes the city; as "the city of my father's graves". The key aspect of this reference is the veneration of the past noble dead, and this is what the Persians saw as the uniting factor in their empire; as each people-group was encouraged and supported to honour their past, then they could all look forward to ongoing prosperity under the Empire into the future. The Persians would assist them to honour their past, as they committed to the Persians for their future.

Verses 6 – 8. The king's main concern is losing his trusted cup-bearer and advisor, and so he asks how long Nehemiah thinks he will be away. At this point Nehemiah notes that the queen is also with him in this situation. The Persian Court did not operate with the queen present if there were affairs of state being discussed so this must be a private audience that is being described here, and it is an indication of just how trusted and important a man Nehemiah was to this king. We have had three important clues that answer earlier questions we have raised in these few verses also.

1. Nehemiah speaks of Jerusalem as “the city of his fathers”, so it appears that he is of the tribe of Benjamin or Judah.
2. He does not mention the walls being broken down as a major concern but only emphasises the gates and the general rubble filled city as his concern. This tells us that the gates are indeed the main concern, and that the great walls, although holed at key points are not all broken down. This and later comments answers the question of many about the size of the city that Nehemiah rebuilt. Most argued it was a small affair, but this and other comments indicate that it was the full large city of Uzziah-Hezekiah’s day that is rebuilt, and that it probably covers a great deal of the area the Moslem city wall now covers, possibly more. The Persians wanted “grand” rebuilds, and the temple is already grand, and Nehemiah will ensure that the city is also grand. The size of it is such that he will need to draft people to live there so that its security is guaranteed.
3. Nehemiah is possibly of the royal line, as he speaks with passion of the tombs of his fathers, and the only great tombs are the royal ones. He seeks to honour his father’s memory by repairing the tombs of the kings and clearing the area around them of rubble.

Nehemiah is able to set a time for his work, and this is an amazing feat given the distance and scant information he has from Hananiah about the task before him. It appears he has gone out of his way to secure more information from others through this four month period, and he is able to estimate fairly accurately the time required. He will ask for what he knows he needs, and from the population of the returned Exile community he knows how many people he will require for the work. He knows he needs lots of prepared timber for frames, cranes and gates, but not much stone. He will not ask for stone or for masons, but for the wood that will be required for the three main tasks; for the gates to be made, the buildings to be re-floored and re-roofed, and for the building of the cranes that he will need to lift the great stones of the wall back from the surrounding valleys into their original place and so fill the gaps.

This tells us a great deal about Nebuchadnezzar’s destruction of the city. From Jeremiah’s description in Jeremiah 52:12-14, the fires were the Babylonians main tool to render the city a ruin. Every wall was “broken down” and that has traditionally been taken by commentators in terms of how the Romans broke down walls, with every stone removed, but clearly that did not happen under the Babylonians. They didn’t take the great time required to do that, but simply knocked key sections out of each and every wall, so that there were gaps everywhere.

It appears that the Babylonians didn’t do the damage that the later Romans would do, or anything near to it. The Romans levelled sites and took months to do it with their full legions employed on the task. The Babylonians didn’t waste that much time, (indeed Jeremiah tells us that it was only a day or two that they took to destroy things) and it was the expectation of most that the people would return at some point and rebuild, so the walls of houses were mostly left intact to speed that process. The Babylonians rendered the city indefensible, but most of the walls were left intact, and it appears also most of the buildings were also left intact; just their roofs and interiors were burned. This was the common practise of the ancient world, and went right into our modern world.

Just yesterday a friend back from Scotland spoke of recently staying in the Benedictine Abbey in Scotland that was built in 1230 AD. It had been “ruined” in the Reformation in the early 1540s and left without any roofs until 1948 when it was given back to the monks. They simply got timber and re-roofed the buildings and restarted their Abbey, and it functions well today inside the original walls of 1230. This is apparently what occurred here in Nehemiah’s day. The site was not levelled as it would be in 70 AD, but all houses were burned. Their roofs and any internal wooden floors, and wooden panelling and lining on ceilings and walls were burned, but the rubble filled shells of the buildings remained, for they were made of strong stone, with the notches in the walls into which the beams fitted before, and could again.

Unlike the mud brick cities of the central Middle East, Jerusalem was built of Jerusalem stone, and so it didn’t weather away through the 130 years since 586, and the old house/palace walls were probably still mostly standing in Nehemiah’s day. All that was needed was the removal of all the charred rubbish and it being dumped outside the city, and then the placement of new second floor support joists/beams, and roof beams, and the building of the new floors and roofs on the new beams. Very quickly the palaces and houses could be made habitable again. They would have “Spartan” interiors, but would be weather tight.

This rebuilding of the great palaces and public buildings is clearly on Nehemiah’s mind. He knows that he will need an official residence and buildings for the military and other officials, and so he will need to get these large buildings cleaned out of the old fire rubble from 586 BC, and then re-floored and re-roofed quickly. He has a good idea that this can be done quite quickly, and he is right. Cranes will be required to lift heavy blocks from the valleys into which the Babylonians have knocked them from the gaps they made in the walls, but most beams for second floors and roofs can be man handled by two to four men into place.

Construction of these great stone or fired brick buildings was done in a similar way right through into the nineteenth century of our own era. Stone/brick work was laid in such a way as to form notches in the walls into which the floor and roof beams were slotted to cross the void spaces between the walls. Once these were back in place it was a quick and easy task to place flooring boards, or build the framework for a weather tight roof. It is a great deal of timber that Nehemiah will need, and he wants the official keeper of the king’s forest to support him and provide what is needed. The king approves the plan and grants the request within the time frame that Nehemiah has stated. We are not told here of the specific time frame, but it must have been at least two years, as the journey to and from Jerusalem took four months of hard walking from Persia. I suspect he has asked for two to three years “leave of absence” to complete the work.

Once approval is granted Nehemiah swings into action, orders the beams of hard wood that he could estimate he will need at the court in Persia, from the official in charge of all forests. He will have ordered beams for the buildings and the cranes in their thousands, and he will be sure to have a vast quantity heading towards the land at the same time he is heading that way, so that the wood will arrive within weeks of his own arrival from all the forests that the man in charge will direct to meet the order. Today bulk timber comes in set lengths, and in the ancient world it was the same, with beams for floors and roofs of fairly standard dimensions for most buildings, and just requiring trimming on site. These same beams can be assembled and used, with pulleys and ropes as cranes very easily. By getting his first order in before he even leaves the palace, he ensures there will be no delay in starting work once he arrives, and so once he has his group of men assembled, he moves off for the land. The evidence for this supposition of mine will be seen below in verses 17-18.

Verses 9 – 10. Nehemiah has not come unarmed this time, as Ezra had done several years before. Ezra 8:22. The serious opposition that Ezra had faced has meant that Nehemiah is taking no chances on this journey and he takes a full army contingent with him. The reference to the plural of "captains" indicates he may have around one thousand, or possibly more, armed men with him. This is a serious expedition, and he is a senior figure in the Persian Court, and so anything less than this would be unthinkable. He arrives across the Euphrates River, and the other governors eventually hear about his arrival in pomp and strength, and they are seriously upset. He doesn't go out of his way to meet them, as he wants the element of surprise to operate, and he wants secret time in advance of their arrival to have things ready for the work he wants to do.

The dynamic between governors of the Empire is "interesting" to say the least in the Persian period. Governors were much like independent kings of their areas, with almost total control over their area as long as they fanatically applied Persian Law and delivered the required annual taxation and army levies when required for expeditions. They had great independence, other than these basic demands, and could live like kings without the Persian king being threatened by their wealth and power.

The best example of this independence and use (some would say abuse) of power is the case of the Persian Satrap of Caria (Greek name of Halicarnassus), Mausolus, who with his wife Artemesia, built one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was their tomb, and it gave the world the word Mausoleum after its grand construction. This Satrap couple lived like a king and queen and built this great structure to their own grandeur between 377- 353 BC, and they did this without any problems from the Persian king Darius of the time. They may have descended from Artemesia I the female general/admiral of Helicarnasus, who commanded a fleet at the battle of Salamis. She was an earlier Satrap.

Nehemiah understands how the Persian Empire works, and its weakness in the strength of the satraps. He also sees that it is the very strength of the Empire, for if he is strong then he can out wit and out manoeuvre his enemy satraps to the north. The satraps of the northern area are opposed to anything that will benefit the Jews to the south. It appears that they were determined in their pro-Samaritan viewpoint, and that they didn't want the Jews to be too strong militarily, or powerful financially. This ANTI-SEMITISM is an indication of the Satanic policy towards the Jews as God's chosen people. These men are literally the servants of the enemy of the Jews, and Nehemiah sees this truth and plans and works to counter their schemes and malice.

Verses 11 – 15. Nehemiah was careful, prayerful, and cautious about sharing his mission with anyone he hadn't had the opportunity to assess thoroughly. He is in Jerusalem for three days before he even sets out to fully assess the damage to the walls and gates, and before doing this he has not told anyone of his plans and role in Judea. He is taking his time, because the main thing in any project work is the people, not the physical work itself. He is sizing up the character of the people of Jerusalem and their leadership, because learning who he can trust and who he cannot, is crucial to the fulfilment of his job role. Keep your own counsel as a leader, until you know who is who!

On the third night he is fully rested, and has met all the important people and had time to socialise with them. He has had time to inspect the major public buildings and see the amount of work required to clean them up, and possibly has set his troops to work to clean out the old military headquarters for their use. It may be that he has selected the old citadel of David for his headquarters, as there are the old palace buildings and quarters for the troops, and the walls are seriously thick there. This is the area known as the "Lower City" and is outside the present Moslem walls of the city.

These palace areas have recently been excavated by Eilat Mazar. Refer to the Biblical Archaeological Review article for March-April 2009, as it appears Nehemiah realigns the wall around the area of David's old palace, using the strong walls of the palace as the new city wall at that point, as that would ensure his soldiers were right there on the wall for defensive purposes. We must remember that Nehemiah had an advantage we do not have in Jerusalem. The city was still a ruin after 130 years, but could be cleaned up and rebuilt on mainly original foundations. The city we see today was literally "scraped" clean by the Romans, and then again by the later Arab and Crusader conquerors, and nothing other than foundations survive, and many of these were overbuilt and modified by later rebuilders.

It is very hard to work out who built what piece of wall, but what is emerging in this one site of Mazar's is that Nehemiah's wall was quickly built, and wasn't too pretty or precise, and utilised existing monumental structures where possible as its foundation. Only a very small section of Nehemiah's rebuild has survived in this area but it gives us a good snap shot of his re-use of rubble from the 586 BC destruction, and his use of generally unskilled masons in the work. His own Persian officers would have had the required wall building/destroying skills as military officers, and I suspect they were the overseers, as they were all taught these military engineering skills. His experts were working on the gates.

Nehemiah describes very carefully the places he goes on this ride in the moonlight through that night around the walls. It is not a short ride, and he spends most of the night out looking at the damage to the walls and the extent of the rubble in certain places. The city is of extensive size, not the truncated place that the archaeologists are still arguing it was. He rides and walks all night on this expedition; it is not just the 12 acres of the old lower city that he is surveying here, although that is involved, and he leaves and re-enters at the "Valley Gate", that was probably the one in the head of the Tyropean Valley, overlooked by the wall of the Lower City on the east and the Upper City wall on the west.

He is surveying, and that means he is preparing a plan for rebuilding and identifying where he will require the most work and what line the wall is to go in places where the destruction has altered the slopes of a hill. The depth of rubble in some places leads him to rebuild some sections of the wall further up the hills, with the thick and strong walls of the palaces being used as the external walls for the rebuild of at least one section of the city wall. The gates he mentions do not greatly assist us, for the identification of the modern gates with these ones is purely conjecture. Some may be the same, but we cannot be sure, and even archaeologists guess at the names of gates discovered. Don't get side tracked by trying to identify the actual route of his ride, as most commentators begin with the false premise of a small Jerusalem rather than a large one. The standard preconceptions about the small size of the city are proven wrong by the text here!

Verses 16 – 20. Nehemiah's night reconnaissance has been a secret one, begun possibly after 10pm when others were asleep, and his own guards were covering his tracks and ensuring he wasn't seen or disturbed. He has not brought anyone into his confidence about his full plan at this point. Even his own team of officials are not fully briefed to this point. As I have mentioned above, this man operates within the standard military dictum of, "Need to know, Nice to know". If a person "needs to know" a plan then they are told at the right time to execute their part in the plan, but not any earlier so that a careless word could slip out to anyone else. Nehemiah practises the greatest security in his task, and so the great venture he is involved in is kept secret and secure. Let us learn from this man. He tells no-one until he has all the facts he needs about the task to be done; not priests, nobles, or rulers of the people, until he is ready to give instructions for action to occur.

Once he has seen the scope of the work and has drawn up the basic plan for it, he is ready to develop a real plan and tell the people his plan. He waits until he has every fact he needs, and from his knowledge of the people he has, the people he has met, and the numbers of workers he now knows are available, he can develop the final briefing plan to mobilise the work force. We are not told of the time delay between his ride and the meeting he calls. It may be that he waits for several days while he draws up the detailed plan for the rebuild, for certainly he has this overall plan, and the individual orders for each section of the wall ready for the day of the meeting, as the teams will leave that meeting and start work that day! He calls the meeting of the local leadership to brief them on his plans when they are ready, and the wood required has arrived.

The arrival of vast quantities of wood was probably the signal to Nehemiah for the meeting time to be set, and certainly this wood's arrival would have focused the people's mind on the great task, for as they looked at the piles of wood, they would all have understood that for the first time they had everything they needed now in the city to do the job of rebuilding. Verse seventeen begins his very short formal speech to them all. It is a formal and written speech, well crafted, and designed to motivate and encourage. It is a statesman's speech to unite his people for a great job to be done, and has echoes of the later speeches of Winston Churchill to the British people in World War 2. Verse 17 is a summary of the speech given, and it would have been longer than what we have here, but not much longer; for like all genuine leaders, he is short on words and long on actions!

I suspect he has already received the first major wood delivery, for that will be needed to make the cranes to lift the fallen wall blocks from the valleys up to the holes in the walls, and also for the gates to be rebuilt. His speech is designed to be responded to by immediate action, for that very day the people start the work, with every fit male working on the broken wall section assigned to them, under their own elders, and with support and expertise from Nehemiah's Persian army officers. To be able to start immediately pre-supposes at least the first consignment of wood for building has arrived.

The work is done for some days before the spies of the northern satraps report to them what is happening. Their response is to initially ridicule the Jew's efforts, and accuse them of rebellion against the Empire. To fortify a city was potentially to prepare it for a siege, and so the accusation of rebellion was to be expected from these enemies of God's people. They will do anything to stop the Jews being able to defend themselves, but Nehemiah is ready for their malice and has his written orders from the Persian king to cover himself when the time comes to prove his right to rebuild. Nehemiah bluntly tells them that they have no right to comment or interfere in the work, and their observations are an irrelevancy to him.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. Nehemiah is ready to speak to the king, and has his script ready to deliver, but he waits for the Lord to open the door at the right time. He waits for over four months, and is ready to swing into action as soon as the king asks the question. He has thought through the things he will require well in advance, so that when he is asked for a list of required provisions he is ready to write it. He believes that the Lord will open the door and so he is ready in advance to walk through the open door. Let us be as prayerful as Nehemiah was, and also as ready to move when the door opens as he was. This is faith in action, for he believes the Lord will move in history, and when He does, he is ready to instantly obey and move out into the will of God.

2. Nehemiah is ready to deal with the malice of the enemy. He has a realistic viewpoint regarding the attitudes of these satraps and their men towards the Jewish people. Nehemiah is not so foolish as to think well of all people. He knows men can be evil and he expects evil, and so is ready for its attacks. Let us be "as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves" just as Nehemiah is here. **Matthew 10:16, John 2:24-25**. He is wise and guarded towards evil men, and "harmless" towards the innocent and weak that he protects. Wisdom must carry a sword in the devil's world, and Nehemiah is ready to fight evil quite literally if he is required to. He doesn't seek conflict, but he is ready to defeat the enemy if they attack him. Let us beware of speaking of peace when there is no peace! Woolly headed liberalism is both stupid and dangerous to the safety of the weak when there is a real threat to the safety of people. Let us be like Nehemiah, not the weak politicians who refuse to see danger because it violates their false theology. Let us know the following verses by heart, for they will be life and health to pastors who understand them, but sudden and violent death will await those who forget them. **Jeremiah 6:13-15, 8:11, Ezekiel 13:10-16**.

3. Let us be 'short on words and long on actions' in our own leadership style. The Lord calls us to work, not to "speechify"! Too many of the Lord's people think that speaking about a task is the same as doing it. We are called to action not committee meetings! Let us be more like Nehemiah and less like the politicians who love drawing wages for useless meetings attended. This man is also not distracted by the abuse of the enemy. He doesn't waste his time in long replies to irrelevant people, nor does he give them any energy; all is focused upon the job at hand. It is too easy to allow foolish or evil opponents to rent space in our heads with their comments. The insults of hell bound fools are never to distract us from our task before the Lord. It is to the Lord alone that we are responsible, and the comments of others are irrelevant. Let us not be distracted from our God given task in this life; and let us advance in the Lord's service in focused power and determination.

DOCTRINES

GOD – DIVINE GUIDANCE: THE WILL OF GOD

1. Three categories of will in history

- a) Divine will (sovereignty)
- b) Angelic will.
- c) Human will.

2. Main areas of the will of God (1 John 3:23)

- a) For the unbeliever – salvation (2 Peter 3:9)
- b) For the believer – spirituality (Ephesians 5:18)

3. Christ has free will (Matthew 26:42, Hebrews 10:7, 9)

- a) No free will in mankind would imply no free will in Christ.
- b) The basic principles of divine guidance however is based on the fact that man possesses free will to choose for or against God.

4. Type of will of God as related to the human race (e.g. Balaam)

- a) Directive (Numbers 22:12) – what God directs.
- b) Permissive (Numbers 22:20) – What God allows
- c) Overruling (Numbers 23) – When God overrules

5. Principles of Guidance

- a) Knowledge of biblical principles in the believer (Psalm 32:8, Proverbs 3:1-6, Isaiah 58:11, Romans 12:2)
- b) Surrender and filling of the Holy Spirit (Romans 6:13, Romans 12:1-2, Ephesians 5:17-18, 1 John 1:9)
- c) Growth – to eat meat and not rely on milk (1 Corinthians 3:1-4)

6. Categories of the will of God

- a) Viewpoint will of God – What does He want me to think?
- b) Operational will of God – What does He want me to do?
- c) Geographical will of God – Where does He want me to be?

7. An example of the will of God (Acts 11) – the Guidance of Peter

- a) Guidance through prayer (vs 5)
- b) Guidance through the mind (vs 6)
- c) Guidance through the word (vs 7-10)
- d) Guidance through providential circumstances (vs 11)
- e) Guidance through the filling of the Spirit (vs 12)
- f) Guidance through fellowship and comparison of data (vs 13-15)
- g) Guidance through remembering Scripture (vs 16)

ANTI- SEMITISM

1. God's promise to Abraham – whoever blesses the Jews, God will bless; whoever curses the Jews, God will curse (Genesis 12:1-3).

2. History shows a correlation between the rise and fall of Empires and their treatment of the Jews.

- a) Anti-Semitic – Spanish Empire 16th century, Russian Empire 19th – 20th century, Nazi Germany 20th Century.
- b) Pro-Semitic – Britain in 19th century, United States of America in 20th.

3. The concept of Israel

- a) Racial Jew – one who is descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
- b) Religious Jew – one who practices Judaism.
- c) Regenerate Jew – born again, now part of the body of Christ (Romans 9:6-8)

NOTES

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

It is really tempting to try to identify exactly where each family or group of workers toiled away, but it is not possible to be specific with anything like 50% accuracy from this distance in time. Some commentators take you on an imaginative tour of the walls, but that is exactly what it is, an “imaginative tour”. Archaeology has not had the required access to the areas where this wall is likely buried, and it is seriously buried under the destruction levels of later centuries. Only if we had a clear site would it be possible to really be sure where this ancient wall went, but if we note the gates we get some clues and also the emphasis upon the gates reinforces my earlier thesis, that the walls are basically intact, but have holes broken in them in places. The gates were the main problem for the repairers. Gates were always the weak points of all ancient cities, and the strongest fortification and care was taken around gates, and after a city was taken, the gates were given the worst damage to ensure the city could not be quickly re-fortified.

If a conquering foe wanted to disable the defences of a city they would firstly break holes in the middle sections of all walls, and then knock away the parapets where men could stand, as all this was relatively easy to do from the inside and would take minimum time for them. This sort of damage however was easy to repair with a crane at each break, to simply gather up all large stones from the glacis slope below and plug the gaps. (Quite small teams with a crane can repair these gaps in the wall over a period of weeks from the rubble at the bottom of the slopes.) The really secure way to make a city indefensible, and to delay its rebuilding process, was to burn its gates and destroy the means of attaching new gates to the existing walls. This would take a serious amount of time to repair, and would require vast amounts of hard wood for the rebuilding of the reinforced wooden gates, and then relaying of the stonework before being able to bring cranes to bear, to then re-hang the great gates securely between the rebuilt watchtowers.

The teams of workers listed here below are listed as mainly involved in the wall repair work, and this tells us that the length of wall involved is significant. It is the large city of Uzziah-Hezekiah that is being rebuilt here, not just the Ophel fortress of the old Jebusite city. I cannot help but think that the repairers of the gates were chosen for some specialist skills, but they may have simply had the skilled supervision of the Persian Army Officers who came with Nehemiah, for serious skill will be required at each gate post. The holes in the wall will each be able to be repaired with a crane team to lift and place the stones from outside the wall back into the best place in the gap, possibly even into the place they came from. The small piece of Nehemiah’s wall recently discovered indicates that they used all the rubble, both small and large to plug the gaps.

NEHEMIAH 3:1-32

1 Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep gate; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel. 2 And next unto him builded the men of Jericho. And next to them builded Zaccur the son of Imri. 3 But the fish gate did the sons of Hassenaah build, who also laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof. 4 And next unto them repaired Meremoth the son of Urijah, the son of Koz. And next unto them repaired Meshullam the son of Berechiah, the son of Meshezabeel. And next unto them repaired Zadok the son of Baana. 5 And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their LORD. 6 Moreover the old gate repaired Jehoiada the son of Paseah, and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah; they laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, and the locks thereof, and the bars thereof. 7 And next unto them repaired Melatiah the Gibeonite, and Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon, and of Mizpah, unto the throne of the governor on this side the river. 8 Next unto him repaired Uzziel the son of Harhaiah, of the goldsmiths. Next unto him also repaired Hananiah the son of one of the apothecaries, and they fortified Jerusalem unto the broad wall. 9 And next unto them repaired Rephaiah the son of Hur, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem. 10 And next unto them repaired Jedaiah the son of Harumaph, even over against his house. And next unto him repaired Hattush the son of Hashabniah. 11 Malchijah the son of Harim, and Hashub the son of Pahathmoab, repaired the other piece, and the tower of the furnaces. 12 And next unto him repaired Shallum the son of Haloheh, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem, he and his daughters. 13 The valley gate repaired Hanun, and the inhabitants of Zanoah; they built it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof, and a thousand cubits on the wall unto the dung gate. 14 But the dung gate repaired Malchiah the son of Rechab, the ruler of part of Bethhaccerem; he built it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof. 15 But the gate of the fountain repaired Shallun the son of Colhozeh, the ruler of part of Mizpah; he built it, and covered it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof, and the wall of the pool of Siloah by the king's garden, and unto the stairs that go down from the city of David. 16 After him repaired Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, the ruler of the half part of Bethzur, unto the place over against the sepulchres of David, and to the pool that was made, and unto the house of the mighty. 17 After him repaired the Levites, Rehum the son of Bani. Next unto him repaired Hashabiah, the ruler of the half part of Keilah, in his part. 18 After him repaired their brethren, Bavai the son of Henadad, the ruler of the half part of Keilah. 19 And next to him repaired Ezer the son of Jeshua, the ruler of Mizpah, another piece over against the going up to the armoury at the turning of the wall. 20 After him Baruch the son of Zabbai earnestly repaired the other piece, from the turning of the wall unto the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest. 21 After him repaired Meremoth the son of Urijah the son of Koz another piece, from the door of the house of Eliashib even to the end of the house of Eliashib. 22 And after him repaired the priests, the men of the plain. 23 After him repaired Benjamin and Hashub over against their house. After him repaired Azariah the son of Maaseiah the son of Ananiah by his house. 24 After him repaired Binnui the son of Henadad another piece, from the house of Azariah unto the turning of the wall, even unto the corner. 25 Palal the son of Uzai, over against the turning of the wall, and the tower which lieth out from the king's high house, that was by the court of the prison. After him Pedaiah the son of Parosh. 26 Moreover the Nethinims dwelt in Ophel, unto the place over against the water gate toward the east, and the tower that lieth out. 27 After them the Tekoites repaired another piece, over against the great tower that lieth out, even unto the wall of Ophel. 28 From above the horse gate repaired the priests, every one over against his house. 29 After them repaired Zadok the son of Immer over against his house. After him repaired also Shemaiah the son of Shechaniah, the keeper of the east gate. 30 After him repaired Hananiah the son of Shelemiah, and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph, another piece. After him repaired Meshullam the son of Berechiah over against his chamber. 31 After him repaired Malchiah the goldsmith's son unto the place of the Nethinims, and of the merchants, over against the gate Miphkad, and to the going up of the corner. 32 And between the going up of the corner unto the sheep gate repaired the goldsmiths and the merchants.

REFLECTION

Verses 1 – 2. The way the rebuilding is described it appears to be a circular description, starting from the sheep gate and then with each group described in order as the writer walks around the city walls, finally finishing in verse 32, with the team building on the other side of the sheep gate. The best guess, (and that is exactly what it is, a guess) is that the description goes in a counter clockwise direction, heading from the northern wall towards the east, then south, around the bottom of the Ophel, and then back to the northern wall of the Temple enclosure. If this is right we get some clues as we go that this wall, following mainly the old walls of the days of Uziah and Hezekiah enclosed a great area indeed, but most of it is under the existing city and so no excavations can be done. In a few places the modern Moslem wall follows the old line and so some work has been done beneath its foundations to identify the earlier structures, but the Roman destruction in 70AD and their rebuilding on the site of a new city a century later obliterated much of the evidence we would like to see.

Let's get an overview of the entire wall by walking through the verses of this chapter. Let's note the gates and the towers that are specified. Look at the back of your Bible and locate a map of the city of Jerusalem and see how many of these places are noted on your map, but then see whether they are noted with a question mark after them, for many of these places are now unknown, well buried by the rubble of many sieges since the Babylonians.

1. The Sheep Gate to the Tower of Meah. The priests work this gate and the section of wall.
2. Two wall building teams then work on repairs to the first section of the northern wall. Verse 2.
3. The Fish Gate then a longer section of possibly the northern wall that four teams are repairing. Verses 3-5.

4. The Old Gate then leads to a new section of wall, possibly now heading south, on the north-western side of the city. Three wall repair gangs worked on the wall from the Fish gate to the “Throne of the Satrap”. This may possibly be around the area where Herod later built his palace on the western wall.
5. Three further teams of specialist jewellery workers and chemists work on the wall repairs down to the “Broad Wall”. This may be the remnant of the wall that has been discovered in the south west corner that dates from Hezekiah’s day, and it was very broad indeed.
6. Five repair gangs then repaired through to the “Tower of the Furnaces”. This is possibly at the southern end of the south-west ridge. Another gang then worked on the section of wall leading to the “Valley Gate” that was likely in the neck of the Tyropoean Valley.
7. It is 1500 feet from that gate south to the “Dung Gate” and then there is not much wall until the next gate, called “Gate of the Fountain”. These two gates are most likely in the southern end of the Ophel area of the Lower City of David. We are sure of the general location because of the reference to the Pool of Siloam and the king’s garden around it in that southern part of the Lower City of David. A flight of stairs also apparently went up to the wall around that place, although probably on the Kidron Valley side.
8. The tomb of David and the “palace of the mighty” is the next landmark on the eastern slopes of the Kidron valley as the wall heads back to the north. This clue gives us the evidence that possibly the barracks of the Judean soldiers did indeed survive the Babylonian destruction and is possibly the area discovered in the recent excavations. The wall of Nehemiah here is far further up the slope than it was in the later days of the monarchy.
9. There are then a number of repair gangs working on the wall that goes up the Kidron valley, and it isn’t a straight line, but has a specific “turning point” and then realigns for its line back to the northerly point where the “Horse gate” is found and then around the corner to the original sheep gate. The “turning” of this eastern wall is at the armoury below the Temple platform. Around this point is the “king’s high house”, as distinct from the original palaces in the Lower City. It was here that the “court of the prison” where Jeremiah was kept was still to be found.
10. The fact that we are heading back up the outer Temple enclosure wall is clear from the priest’s work gangs that repair that section of the wall. The next gate here is “The Water Gate”, and it may have been possibly around the Gihon Spring site. Around this area there is also “the tower that lieth out”; this is likely a projecting defensive tower that enabled archers to cover both walls to the south and the north.
11. There is then a “Great Tower”, and at that point the whole scheme breaks down with the reference to the Ophel, which is (as far as our description is concerned) in the south. When we get to that place in the text we will see what this can mean, for clearly the walls described are on the Kidron Valley side.
12. The next gate is the “East Gate”, probably the “Golden Gate”. This gate has been excavated enough to identify that the present one sits upon an earlier gate that may go back beyond the Roman period.
13. To the north again is another Gate, called the Miphkad Gate. It may be on the north-east wall with a section of wall between it and the Sheep Gate.

The over all impression of this tour of the gates and the wall sections is of a city that is every bit as large as the present one within the Moslem walls, although with different placement of walls in many places.

Verses 1 - 5. Both the Sheep Gate (the gate through which sheep were driven into the Temple complex), and the Fish gate (through which the Syrian merchants brought their fish for sale, and the Galilean merchants brought the fish from that sea) were to the north, and on the northern wall to the north of the Temple Mount. Our starting point is therefore quite clear. Notice that the priests build the gate through which the sacrificial animals come, and they dedicate it for the solemn purpose for which it is intended. The tower of Meah is unknown, but it may be the tower later known as the tower of Hananeel. Notice next that the men of Jericho are building in this area. These gates are not the gates that lead to Jericho and so their expertise may have been such that they would be best suited to this section of the wall. It is also a reminder that Nehemiah has taken time to gather all the available manpower before he starts the job. He believes that the task will take about two months (50+ flat out days!) and so he gathers all the men before announcing the start so that the enemy cannot interfere before the work is well under way. The enemy may think he is just gathering - for audit.

Notice the amount of work in the rebuilding of the gates. There is the wood work to make the gates, and then the metal work to hold them together and then set up the hinges and the bars to lock the gates. The “tower of the furnaces” may have been a tall tower associated with a metal smelter to do the required work for the metal work of the gates. If this is the case, it means that Nehemiah has been very busy before he starts the work to ensure he has the wood arriving, and the metal work able to be forged close to the site of the gates. The work to rebuild the walls and the gates is hard manual labour, and the men must take directions from the Persian specialists to ensure the work is done well enough to hold together. Some do not like taking such orders, and the nobles of Tekoa are mentioned as a group that refused to do the manual work and get their hands dirty. No further mention is made of these men, but in the midst of the role of honour they have the infamous place of the men who felt the work beneath them! Let us beware of those who believe the dirty work of the Lord is beneath them. Let’s be ready to get our hands dirty.

Verses 6 – 12. I am not going to spend much time on the walls and gates, as I believe what we have noted above is enough for keen students to discover more. There is a great study here from both biblical and archaeological sources. A great deal has been discovered in recent years in digs around the ancient city and new facts are emerging all the time about the identity of the gates and wall sections mentioned here. Let us be encouraged that enough has been discovered to be absolutely sure that we are dealing with history here, not myth, but we cannot be 100% sure about some of the lines of these ancient walls. The key point to me is that the description here is of a great city, not a small one. It will remain under-inhabited for a number of years, but as the population grows the city will fill with people and be a bustling metropolis by the time of Alexander the Great in 332 BC. My speculation is that the throne of the Governor is

around the point where Herod would later build his palace, and that seems to fit with the basic layout of the enlarged city. Notice that the ruler of probably this western half the city is Haloesh, and he has no sons, but his daughters work on the wall rebuilding. Don't let anyone tell you that ancient women were demure, veiled wimps who kept in the background; these women are handling rocks and cranes! Most women were in support roles, but Nehemiah reminds us that there were women in the front line, just as at all times in Jewish and Persian history.

Verses 13 – 15. These two gates here are crucial ones. The old wall enclosed the Tyropoean Valley on both sides with the "Valley Gate" at the top. This created a perfect defensive position as anyone approaching the city from this route had a wall overlooking them on either side. The only reference to distance is that from the neck of this valley to the end of the Ophel where the Dung Gate was. This was the gate through which refuse was taken down into the valley of Hinnom. The lower gate would be the main thoroughfare to the Dead Sea, and it was reached through the old city of David and was probably the royal entrance to the city, and called the Fountain Gate. It led directly into the old royal apartments, palaces, the pool of Siloam, the royal gardens, guard houses, and the diplomatic quarters of the government that was based on the Ophel Hill of the old Jebusite stronghold. Most city areas that had the royal apartments would also have a secret exit/entrance down the hill from a small gate in the wall, and I believe that this is the "staircase" that Nehemiah refers to.

Verses 16 – 19. The wall skirted the Ophel hill, probably following the ancient line of the old Jebusite fortress wall. It is of note that the Babylonians didn't destroy the tomb of David or the other royal tombs around it. Their habit was to destroy and desecrate the tombs of the ancestors of all defeated kings, but the instructions given by Nebuchadnezzar must have been very precise and respectful. Not only are the royal tombs intact, but the barracks for the soldiers are also able to be identified and apparently rebuilt. This strengthens my belief regarding these matters from the earlier chapters. At a key point the armoury was built hard into the wall, or its outer wall formed the wall, and it formed a fortress-strong point at a turning of the wall as it headed further up the Kidron Valley.

Verses 20 – 25. It would also appear that the High Priest's palace was built against the outer wall and formed a part of the defences. This was not unusual as the wall from this period that has been uncovered utilises the walls of large buildings as its structure. The walls of these buildings are up to eighteen feet thick at one point! Such a building was a serious strong point in the wall and several have been found, possibly one of the buildings mentioned here. It appears that there was a distinct "corner" further up the valley also forming another strong point. These structures jutting out into the valley provided enfilading fire and added to the strength of such a long section up the Kidron valley. A major tower jutted out from the newest of the king's palaces, and it looks as if this was on the southern corner of the Temple Mount itself.

Verses 26 – 32. The reference to the Ophel here is initially problematic, but on reflection makes sense. The first reference is a reminder that people lived all over the old city, even in houses that had previously been royal apartments. The Nethinims dwelt on the hill called the Ophel, which formed the old Jebusite city and the starting point for David's building programs. They are living in what may have been an early palace 600 years before, but was just another ruin requiring renovation at this point. The men of Tekoa, who were also working to the north, also assisted in this south eastern section and from Nehemiah's words here, they filled in where required from the Water Gate right down to the southern end of the Ophel. It may be that their task to the north was fulfilled quickly and then they moved to the southern section. The priesthood repairs the walls around the temple mount and it appears that they lived in dwellings that were hard against the inside walls of the wall itself. Most ancient cities had this arrangement and it is an interesting insight into the wall at this time. The external wall of the city formed the outer wall of the dwelling of the people who held that section of the wall in the day of battle. The earliest example of this we have in the Bible is the family of Rahab in Jericho. Joshua Chapter 2.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. Beware of those who do not want to get dirty in the Lord's work. Always be suspicious of those who think manual work is beneath them. The Lord calls us to be ready to do anything, anywhere at any time. Let us be ready to serve the Lord in any capacity. There is no room for laziness in the Lord's work, and those who will not work, let them not eat! 2 Thessalonians 3:7-15. Refer to the BTB study WORK.

2. The priests, Levites and Nethinims, who lived by the wall had the responsibility of repairing the sections that they lived hard against. They gained from the protection of the wall and they were expected to support its rebuilding by their houses. Where we gain from the work of others we are expected to put in effort to reinforce that work. Let us be ever ready to work hard when we are called to, for the benefits we inherit from others who have gone before us. These people moved into a city that was ruined, but where they could claim a house and re-roof it, and enjoy it from then onwards. They had not built the walls, nor laboured to establish the foundations, but by roofing the structure they gained it. In many places in this life we inherit the blessings won by others toil, and we have to add little ourselves to get great gain. Let us be ready to toil to reinforce the work of the past and so secure our own future.

DOCTRINE

WORK

1. Since the Fall, we have all had to work for a living by the sweat of our brow. Genesis 3:17-19.

2. Our attitude to work as believers should, however, be an offering of praise to God. Romans 8:19-32, 1 Corinthians 10:31

3. Our attitude to work is witness to all. Workers are told to follow some simple guidelines to open the door for witness in the work place – Titus 2:9,10.

a) “Be Obedient” - The Greek verb *hupotasso* is the same one used for wives of their husbands, and involves responsiveness to the will of the other. The believer is to be the best worker in the situation and is to be known as the one who can be trusted to perform what is required.

b) “Not answering again” – Talking back, or “back chat” has always been a problem where authority is resented. Such resentment is to have no place in the Christian’s life as they are to see every situation they find themselves in as one where they are called to show themselves servants of their master in heaven and live up to his standards and their high calling as ambassadors of Christ.

c) “Not purloining” – It was always a temptation for slaves to steal, as they had been “stolen” and the only way to get freedom was to buy it with money they saved. Paul’s point here and elsewhere, was that freedom was not to be the goal, rather service for the Lord. Freedom was not to come at any price! The believer was to pay taxes and to recognise others wealth as the other person’s property and not steal it, even if that other person was not “entitled to it”. Ephesians 4:28.

d) “Showing good fidelity” – The Christian worker was to show by all he or she did that they were trustworthy in all things.

e) “Adorn the doctrine of God” – Become a credit to the doctrine of God. The English word for cosmetics comes from the word *adorn*. It means to decorate or present in a good light. As men will take a second look at a woman who is well made up with cosmetics so Paul wanted the masters to take a second look at slaves who served well and so hear what made them different from the rest, namely the gospel. 2 Corinthians 5:20.

These principles apply to all workers and managers in industry today.

4. Christian employers must be a just and fair. Ephesians 6:5-9, Colossians 3: 22-4:1, 1 Timothy 6:1-8.

5. All Christians who can should be working for their living. If they are unable to work they will be able to do something for the Lord, and such service should be supported by the church. 1 Thessalonians 3:10-12

6. Even Paul who ministered nearly full time, was a tent maker by day and a preacher and Bible teacher by night. 1 Corinthians 9:18, 1 Thessalonians 2:9-12, 4:11-12

7. Paying the pastor is legitimate, following the principle of the oxen treading out the grain; it ate whatever it needed to keep doing the job. 1 Corinthians 9:6-14, Galatians 6:6, Romans 15:27, Deuteronomy 25:4, 1 Timothy 5:17, 18.

8. Everything we do is to be looked upon as service to the Lord. Colossians 3:23.

NOTES

CHAPTER 4**INTRODUCTION**

The enemy doesn't take long to get moving, but Nehemiah has ensured by the secrecy he has practised, that he has been started for some time before the enemy can move. He and the Jewish people have momentum by the time the enemy moves, and that is crucial when any attack is coming. The people moving strongly forward with good heart and spirit will be able to handle the attack of the enemy if they keep their spiritual focus forward. This chapter reminds us of just how important secrecy is when moving on any great venture. Sanballat does not know Nehemiah's real status as confidante of the king, and Nehemiah has settled into his role and is working well before Sanballat hears of his arrival, and discovers through his spies his move to rebuild the walls. Nehemiah wants to flush this man's negativity out, for by doing this he will ensure that his opposition is permanently negated.

It appears up until this point that Sanballat is the senior satrap of the provinces "Beyond the River", but he does not know exactly how much power, authority and influence Nehemiah has. Nehemiah leaves all that information until Sanballat reveals himself and plays his hand fully. This way, the evil man has already compromised himself with the king, for he has gone against his direct orders, and is from then, on the defensive. Nehemiah's good leadership and brilliant foresight ensures his people are able to achieve their goal without fighting, but he has ensured that they are all ready to do so.

NEHEMIAH 4:1-23

1 But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. 2 And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? Will they fortify themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they make an end in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned? 3 Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall. 4 Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity: 5 And cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked thee to anger before the builders. 6 So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work. 7 But it came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth, 8 And conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it. 9 Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them. 10 And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall. 11 And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease. 12 And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us they will be upon you. 13 Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows. 14 And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the LORD, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses. 15 And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work. 16 And it came to pass from that time forth, that the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah. 17 They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. 18 For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me. 19 And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another. 20 In what place therefore ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us. 21 So we laboured in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared. 22 Likewise at the same time said I unto the people, Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and labour on the day. 23 So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, saving that every one put them off for washing.

REFLECTION

Verses 1 – 3. The key enemies of the people of God at this time are the men Sanballat, who apparently is Persian Satrap of the province of Samaria (or possibly Syria-Samaria) and Tobiah, who is possibly the Persian satrap of Ammon. These men are locals, but working for the Persian Government, just as Nehemiah is. They have a hatred of the Jews that lacks any logic other than that from hell itself; they are satanically inspired men. They may be descendants of the first Satraps of the days of Zerubbabel who stopped the work on the temple itself for many years. The satrapies were often inherited if the ruler ruled well and loyally to Persia, and so these local rulers became like dynastic kings after a few decades.

Notice this man's arrogance, sarcasm, and malice. By the time he hears of the news the work is well under way, but his spies report well to him, and the Ammonite spies know just how weak the wall is in some places, as we will later see below. Sanballat's rage is way out of proportion for a governor of Persia. The building of another city should be an irrelevance to him. There is a deep and satanic source to this pointless malice. It is immediately revealed in open malice and mockery. When men mock others it tells you a great deal about those who are the mockers. When men speak words that flow directly from their emotions they reveal a lot about their inner workings. This man reveals his satanic hatred of the Jews, and he has no basis for this, except sheer envy. It may be that the separation of the province of Judea from Syria-Samaria was a gradual thing, and the control of the southern area may have ebbed to and fro with Nehemiah being the last step in total separation into a new entity. This meant the loss of taxation revenues for Sanballat. If this was indeed the case, his envy may have been financially driven. Refer to the BTB studies, MENTAL ATTITUDE, ANGER, FEAR, JEALOUSY, CHRISTIAN LIFE – CONFIDENCE.

He believes this rebuilding means rebellion against the Empire and calls his army out and briefs them as if he is about to lead them into battle. He believes the sacrifices the Jews may be about to offer are sacrifices for the success of their rebellion. Now these Satraps had authority to put down local rebellions and they would win credit for themselves if they did so quickly in their own areas, but Judea is not Sanballat's area and he must move carefully. He knows little (at this point) about the new governor of Judea, and his talk to his army and the local nobles reveals he is ignorant of just how well placed Nehemiah is with the king. He has clearly at some point before this time set up his throne in the city of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 3:7), and may have had some power over it until Nehemiah's appointment (as senior Satrap for the west provinces; we are simply not told, and there are only tantalising hints at this. He clearly thinks he has more power than he has, and Nehemiah has a nasty surprise for him when he finally gets to read Nehemiah's written orders.

The Ammonite ruler has good information that rubble is being used to repair the wall and at places it doesn't look too strong to the spies. Their report that a fox would break it down is however over-exaggerated. The modern archaeologists report on the wall states that it is roughly put together, but its foundation has still lasted 2500 years, so it must have been strong! Both these evil men know the extent of the rubble in the burned out houses and unused streets. The rubble of the Babylonians fires has been added to for over the last 140 years with the build up of wind blown dirt and animal mess.

The whole city is a filthy rubbish tip in many places. The Jews have rebuilt the temple and settled in some places, but these men's comments tell us that the vast city is still mainly uninhabited, and they think the Jews have no heart to rebuild and become great again. They under-estimate the whole-hearted zeal of the Jews, the thoughtful preparations of Nehemiah with the timber and metal working now occurring on site, and the directed energy that the Jews are putting into the task. The enemy believes that they have more time to stop this work than they in fact have.

Verses 4 – 6. Nehemiah's intelligence gathering network is as good as the northern satraps, and he hears of their meeting, and the nature of the speech of Sanballat to his troops. Nehemiah's response is absolutely correct; he passes the entire thing over to the Lord for protection, guidance and destruction of the evil plans. 1 Peter 5:5-9. Having prayed he will then prepare for the worst, trusting in the Lord's protection over him and the project as he takes all required military actions. Notice his prayer by its elements:

1. Hear Lord their words – when the enemy attacks we are not to take any of their words personally, for they are directed at us as servants of the Lord, not as individuals. John 15:18-25.
2. Turn their reproach back upon them – when the enemy declares war on the Lord, all their power can be used by the Lord back against them. We are to pray that all their malice might rebound upon them.
3. Let them be the ones taken captive by their own malice – they have planned to march the Jews back into captivity as rebels and as slaves, but they are the ones in danger of judgement, for they are working against the king himself.
4. Lord, do not forget their malice against you – it is the Lord's holy name that has been insulted and their sin is against God. Nehemiah asks for justice and judgement, and this is legitimate.
5. We will keep on working. Nehemiah is not going to be distracted by these people's attacks.

While Sanballat has been plotting and gathering the opponents of the Jews together, Nehemiah has not allowed anything to distract him from the task he faces. He keeps the work gangs labouring hard on the gate and wall repairs, and by the time the challenge comes strongly they have the holes in the wall filled to half their old height. The city is now defensible against a sudden assault by Sanballat's army. They cannot now just surge through holes in the outer walls and fall amongst the Jews, although they apparently still think that they can.

The gates are still not 100%, but it would appear that their repair (at least to temporarily close them at night) is advancing strongly. From this chapter I deduce that the effort of the Persian specialists with Nehemiah has been particularly focused upon the speedy repair of the gates, and that this work is nearly finished because of that focused concentration. Once the gates are repaired and functional all the work gangs can be deployed onto the walls and the repairs finished and battlements and strong point towers put in order securely. Visually this provides maximum confusion to observers, as they think the walls may be more vulnerable than they are, therefore they delay attack, and that is all the city needs...

Verses 7 – 9. The news finally reaches all the scattered peoples who were the traditional enemies of the Jews. These include the inhabitants of Ashdod, the survivors of the Philistines, also returned exiles from Persia due to Cyrus' grace and mercy. These people ought to have been working on their own lives and joining with the Jews in alliance as part of the Empire that had blessed them both. Their malice is also satanic, not logical, or with real cause. They hear that their opportunity to surprise the Jews and get amongst them to slaughter them is gone, and that the wall is now closed up and the building is advancing quickly.

The rage that is expressed is great, but their delay is compounded by their widely spread locations, and by the time Sanballat coordinates their malice it will be too late. Now Nehemiah realised all this was likely in advance, and so he has had enough wood on site to repair all gates, build all cranes, and later start the flooring and roofing of many of the larger buildings. Nehemiah is a man of prayer, and a man of action; he has already said “Amen” to his prayers with his builder’s plans, and his builder’s trowel, and now he will say “Amen” with his sword.

By being so well prepared, with all the needed resources, so secret in his planning, and so speedy in his execution of them, he is ready for the enemy’s malice and has been able to neutralise their power by his already completed actions. The enemy are ready to actually launch a full scale military assault on Jerusalem. We are not told that they physically camped against the city, but that they had gathered in malice against it in some form; possibly with various camp sites from which an assault could be launched. Nehemiah doesn’t let himself get distracted by these facts, but keeps the gangs working on the walls and gates, and his men are armed, and good look out watches are set. They are ready for trouble if it comes, but they are not heading out looking for it.

We are called to do the Lord’s work and allow the enemy to disclose themselves by acting in malice first. We are to be ready for anything they might do, but let them make the first move so that our counter strike is overwhelmingly powerful. If they are foolish enough to stand against God we are to act with speed and thoroughness against them, but if they back away, then we are to let them go with the Gospel message ringing in their ears. These people could have been blessed rather than cursed, but they have failed to hear God; they listen only to the malice of the evil one.

Verses 10 – 13. The level of fitness of these settlers is high, but the work required is strenuous and the days are long. The people are getting exhausted in their work. They may have been working for twenty or more days now, and they will be feeling muscles are sore where none were before. This is hard work! There is so much rubbish to clear away now before they can get to more good building stones, so there are now delays. This is not uncommon in a repair job after a natural catastrophe. They take Sabbath days off and the one in seven rest will restore them for harder work.

Often the destroyed area has lots of good building blocks lying loose on the surface initially, but once these are removed and placed back in the walls, the rest of the old wall stones are found to be buried in other rubbish and wind blown debris, and may need to be dug out. The job slows and becomes more tedious and difficult after the half way point. The additional pressure on the people is psychological, for the spies of the enemy have infiltrated the ranks of the Jews out in the country areas, and have started to spread fear and despondency by saying that the enemy are preparing sudden attacks to surge through the last gaps and low areas of wall and slay the isolated groups of builders.

The message regarding the planned attacks upon the work may be true or false, but they are repeated ten times to the country dwellers amongst the Jews, and so they head into the city and report to Nehemiah the things that are being said to them. The promise of the enemy is that from as many directions as the Jews have come to build the city, these enemies will surge over them, and then drive them away in an equal number of directions. This is a very Middle Eastern battle curse upon an enemy force.

Nehemiah takes good military actions immediately and takes all the surrounding populations who have provided builders into the still desolate city and sets up camps and homes in the ruins of the great buildings, and places the families in close association with their menfolk so that their motivation to fight will be high, and the families will be encouraged to see their own men folk standing fully armed at their work places on the wall. There is no chance now for the enemy to surprise these family groups. The rising walls of the old city must have brought real comfort to people who had been living in the wild lands of Judah with their menfolk working in the city and they will all be happy that they are now close to their men.

I suspect however that most Jews stayed in their farming areas, but all who had men folk who were working on the city walls were now close by them in the city. We must remember that many communities would not have sent all their men to the rebuilding of the walls, as they still had farms to run and flocks and herds to protect. Many communities would have operated short handed through this time, and lived behind their own walls in their small towns. The threat is against Jerusalem, not directly against other centres, for it is the strong city wall of the great city that the enemies of the Jews don’t want rebuilt.

Notice in closing this section the quantity of good weapons that Nehemiah had at his disposal also. The men have close quarter weapons, like swords and spears, but also they have the bows and arrows for longer distance protection. They are ready to fight with weapons, and that means they must have been taught to use them also, for weapons alone are no protection. Some time each day must have been spent training in weapons use, and the provision of so much equipment, (for every man is armed now), tells us that Nehemiah has had to plan to provide this well in advance, and must have arrived with a camel train of equipment for the people’s later use. This man has thought things through totally.

Verses 14 – 18. Nehemiah then calls all the leaders of the people together. He gives them a battle briefing that is to be passed on to each work gang in their posts, and will have been written down in a formal manner to ensure the right message gets across at each place. Nehemiah calls the people to battle mindedness. Notice the orders:

1. Do not be afraid – let faith in God replace fear of man.
2. Concentrate upon the Lord – for He is our strength.
3. Fight for your marriages, your families and your homes.

The briefing Nehemiah gives them is obviously effective, for it is a trained and determined group of citizen-soldiers that now stand on their unfinished walls and glare defiantly out at any enemy they see. Once the enemy heard that their "surprise attack" was well known to the Jews, and can see that they were armed and dangerous, and waiting for them, they melted away. Readiness to meet an enemy is often enough to deter the enemy from attacking. All men then returned to working on the wall once the immediate threat was removed. It appears from this comment that the enemy did field an army of sorts at some point within striking distance of Jerusalem, and that while it was there Nehemiah had his men man the incomplete wall and stand there in full armour looking out at the enemy, ready for their attack.

The threat of combat gives the work gangs a mid-point break from their labours, so even the worry about this possible major attack had a good outcome. The men are now rested, and also have all received training in arms and will be feeling a lot more confident about their ability to defend this great city now. From the time of the potential major attack onwards Nehemiah divided the men of each gang into two groups, one of which worked on the wall and the other which stood ready to fire arrows at a moments notice. Every few hours they would change places, and so the workers on task were always fresh and strong.

This tells me that while the enemy may have decamped from their main attacking position, there were still riders or parties of enemies who appeared on the hills at times. The atmosphere is one of constant threat for the last part of the building program, but it continues apace, and after their rest the men work harder and in a more focused manner than ever before. Everyone works armed now, and Nehemiah is posted at a key point to receive intelligence about any potential attacks and he has his bugler at his side ready to blow the alarm if the enemy are spotted.

Verses 19 – 23. The city is large and the workers are few and well scattered. Nehemiah wants to concentrate his forces if there is an attack of any sort, and so he gives the instruction to "run to the sound of the shofar". Where-ever the shofar is sounded from, to that place the armed men are to move quickly. It is another reminder that the city was large, not a small affair. It is a vast area and a few thousand workers are lost within it, but when they gather in one place they will be formidable. When you are out numbered it is crucial to concentrate all forces, so that in the locality of the battle the odds are as good as they can be.

Nehemiah knows that the nearly complete walls will hold up any enemy for some time, and that by having his men work the interior lines that the now cleared city streets give them they can quickly move men to all the different places in the city. They are alert all day, and the men sleep in their clothes, with their armour on throughout the last phase of the rebuilding. They did wash their clothes and clean their armour and sharpen their weapons, but only when there were others taking the guard. Everyone is alert from one end of the city to another, and no-one on the building job is allowed to sleep outside the city, as Nehemiah doesn't want to allow one of these men to be captured, and so run the danger of having the strengths and weakness of the city given away to their enemies.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. Never under-estimate the malice of the enemy when a great work is being done. Satan hates us, as he hates the person and work of our Lord. Do not be surprised when the attacks are violent upon your person, your health, your reputation, your friendships, or any other aspect of your earthly life. He has limits set by the Lord, just as with Job, but the Lord can give Satan a long leash at times, because He wants us to bring great glory to the Lord Jesus Christ. The greatest glory to the Lord Jesus Christ is to have His sons and daughters walk in His presence and the Holy Spirit's power, and so defeat the worst that Satan can throw at them. Let us remain mindful of the Angelic Conflict, for the pressures we face at times are great indeed.

2. Let us be as thoughtful as Nehemiah is here. Believers ought to be examples of, and mentors for good project management. Of all people we ought to be efficient and effective in all we do for the Lord. Let us be better in our working practise than any unbeliever. Refer to the BTB study WORK. Let us be 100% focused upon any task we have to do, for the Lord seeks devoted and concentrated service from His people. Let us also be ready to work with our swords on. In our day this means to be ready to defend the innocent from real or possible threats to their safety. Often believers in Christian work do not take enough physical precautions to stop harm occurring to their people from the assaults of evil men. Let us be wise in this matter and be ready to fight to protect those whose lives are entrusted to us.

3. The believer's armour is defensive, not offensive. We are not told to head out and hunt Satan or his troops, but we are told to get our armour on and stand against his attacks. Let us be obedient to the Lord in these things. This means we stand and defend ourselves from satanic attack, getting down behind the shield of faith and using the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Let us train our people to be good soldiers of the Lord. Let us always be ready to say "Amen" to every prayer with a trowel, a spade or a sword!

DOCTRINES

CHRISTIAN LIFE – MENTAL ATTITUDE See page 14

ANGER

1. The explosion of uncontrolled anger is always wrong. Titus 1:7.

2. Exploding does not solve the problem. Only a fool gives way to anger. Proverbs 29:11, Proverbs 10:19, Proverbs 15:28.
3. Anger in itself isn't necessarily wrong. There are some things that we should be angry at, like injustice, evil, sin, etc. God is righteously angry at sin constantly. Psalms 7:11, John 2:17, Mark 3:5.
4. We should learn to deal with anger without sin getting hold of us. Ephesians 4:26. Anger must be examined, analysed, and dealt with properly so that what caused the anger is being faced and solved.
5. Any anger that has no legitimate source in righteousness must be confessed in accordance with 1 John 1:9 as the sin it is.
6. If the anger has a legitimate source (namely, it is anger at something that God hates also), then the believer is faced with the task of working out what God would have him/her do to follow God's prescription to face the issue.

FEAR

1. Fear is seen in two ways in scripture.

[a] Firstly as a mental attitude sin that is incompatible with our status as children of the most high, the ruler of the universe.

[b] Secondly it is used to describe the correct attitude towards God the Lord for all his creatures.

There is godly fear, awe, and respect for God as God, and there is inappropriate fear, which is the cringing fear of one who believes the other is able to hurt them. This second kind is wrong for us as children of God, for none can harm us without God's permission for we belong to Him.

2. Our occupation with the persons and majesty of God is often spoken of as "fear" in the legitimate sense for believers. 2 Sam 23:2-3, Neh 5:9, Job 28:28, Ps 19:9, 34:11-12, 111:10, Prov 1:7, 9:10, 10:27, 22:4, Mal 3:16, Eph 5:21.

3. Fear as a mental attitude sin is spoken of in, 1 Samuel 17:11, 24, Proverbs 29:25.

4. In God's grace plan for us fear has no place. His plans for us are always divinely good, and any testing situation is for our good. Romans 8:28.

5. Fear is an expression of a failure of faith in the plan. Exodus 14:13-14, Deuteronomy 31:6-8, Joshua 8:1, 1 Chronicles 28:20, Isaiah 41:10, 2 Timothy 1:7.

6. Spiritual death is one way of describing Satan's kingdom and is the place of the source of fear. Hebrews 2:14,15

7. In spiritual death, Adam was afraid. Genesis 3:10, this fear motivated Adam to produce religious activity (fig leaves) and lies. Genesis 3:7

8. Salvation removes the basis of fear, which is condemnation from the Justice of God (spiritual death).

9. Spiritual maturity provides freedom from fear. 2 Timothy 1:7; Hebrews 13:6, 1 John 4:18, 1 Corinthians 13:5b

10. Carnality and any form of religious activity that leads us away from grace and daily obedience to the Word enslaves the believer to Satan through fear. Galatians 5:1; Romans 8:15

11. The mature believer is commanded to fear nothing he may suffer in life, for by means of God's grace provision all we ever may need is provided for us. Revelation 2:10

12. The baby believer is sustained by believing God's Word, obeying his commands hour by hour to daily life, and rest upon his promises. Hebrews 4

13. As we become mature believers we continue with this resting on the promises but in addition to this we are sustained by our understanding / application of entire categories of God's Word - we have then moved beyond the promises to confidence in the very character of God itself.

14. Illustration: A woman who asks every hour, "Do you love me?" needs assurance through many promises, and many actions backing the promises up. Once she gets to truly know her husband, and her love is fully established in him through his faithfulness to her, she has absolute assurance, and doesn't need constant reminders of his love by specific words. She is full of confidence through knowledge of her husband's character.

15. Chapter's 3-6 of Hebrews deal with the falling away from growth and confidence by these believers. The spiritual principle of Chapter 4 is the means of getting them back on target.

16. In Hebrews 13:6, we see the objective of the writer, freedom from fear by their daily, moment by moment living the awareness of the love of Christ for them, and the power of Christ available to them.

17. The writers of Scripture identify correctly that when the believer is fearful, he imitates the unbeliever ("cowardly" – Revelation 21:8), and that is not right given our great position. Hebrews 11:27 "By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing Him who is unseen." This is our standard!

18. Fear is a mental attitude sin that shows our mind has moved away from thinking of the Lord. 1 Samuel 17:11,24
19. Fear is a sign of falling back into domination by the "prince of this world". 1 Samuel 18:12,29, 21:12, 28:20
20. Absence of fear is a big part of maintaining a dynamic mental attitude. Hebrews 13:6, 11:27
21. There is only one legitimate fear; it is the fear of failure to enter spiritual maturity. Hebrews 4:1
22. Love demands absence of fear. 1 John 4:18 They are two opposing mental attitudes.
23. Fear is not part of the Divine Plan for the Believer. 2 Timothy 1:7; Exodus 14:13-14; Joshua 8:1; Isaiah 41:10; 2 Samuel 1:7
24. Courage and lack of fear is a sign of mature spiritual status. Psalm 3:6, 56:3; Hebrews 11:27
25. Fear is the power by which the Evil of Satan rules among mankind. Hebrews 2:14-15; Genesis 19:30 (Lot); 1 Kings 18:9-14 (Obadiah), both Lot and Obadiah show how the failing believer lives in constant fear.
26. Fear is the word used to mean "Occupation with Christ" when related to the attitude of the mature Believer toward Christ. 2 Samuel 23:3; Nehemiah 5:9,15; Ephesians 5:21; Job 28:28; Psalm 19:9, 34:10; Proverbs 1:7, 9:10, 10:27; 1 Peter 2:17

SIN – JEALOUSY

1. Jealousy is the strongest of the mental sins. (Proverbs 27:3,4)
2. Jealousy is the most cruel of all sins; it turns a person into a monster.
3. Jealousy removes all happiness from a believer; it is a mental sin by which you make your own misery.
4. Some people cannot stand the success of others; consequently jealousy destroys the basis of friendship.
5. So great was the sin of jealousy that a whole offering of the Levitical Code was prescribed for it. (Numbers 5:11-31) It is the only offering that was designed for one sin only.
6. Jealousy is the basis for the destruction of married love. (Song of Solomon 8:6)
7. The same jealousy which destroys love can also destroy the normal function of the soul. (Job 5:2; Proverbs 14:30) This is the explanation of some cases of psychoses and neuroses.
8. Jealousy motivates to revenge. (Proverbs 6:34)
9. Jealousy of Joseph motivated his brothers to sell him into slavery. (Acts 7:9)
10. Therefore jealousy takes real or apparent wrongs out of the Lord's hand and intrudes on divine judgement. (Deuteronomy 32:35; Romans 12:19)
11. Jealousy split the nation of Israel. (Isaiah 11:13 – Ephraim's jealousy of Judah)
12. Jealousy was the motivator of the religious leaders who crucified Jesus Christ. (Matthew 27:18; Mark 15:10)
13. Jealousy rejects the teaching of the Bible truths. (Acts 13:45; 17:5)
14. False doctrine of apostasy produces jealousy (1 Timothy 6:3,4).

CHRISTIAN LIFE – CONFIDENCE

1. The source of confidence. (Jeremiah 17:7)
2. The results of confidence:-
 - a) Protection. (Proverbs 3:25-26)
 - b) Strength. (Isaiah 30:15)
 - c) Blessing. (Jeremiah 17:7)
3. Examples of confidence:-
 - a) In God's provision. (Genesis 22:18)
 - b) In God's sovereignty. (Genesis 50:20)
 - c) In God's deliverance. (Daniel 3:17-18)

- d) In God's power. (1 Kings 18:36-39)
- e) In God's presence. (Psalm 71:5)
- f) In extremity. (Job 13:15)

4. Confidence relating to prayer:-

- a) Confident access. (Ephesians 3:12)
- b) Confidence to draw near. (Hebrews 4:16)
- c) Confidence to enter. (Hebrews 10:19-22)
- d) Confidence to ask. (1 John 5:14-15)

5. Confidence in the day of judgement. (1 John 4:17)

6. Confidence to complete His work in the believer. (Philippians 1:6)

7. Exhortation to maintain confidence. (Hebrews 10:35-39)

WORK See page 25

CHRISTIAN LIFE – SOLDIER IN EPHESIANS 6

1. General Scripture Ephesians 6:11-17.

This passage relates to the armour which the Roman soldier wore and analogises its use into the spiritual realm.

2. USE OF THE ARMOUR Ephesians 6:11

“Put on the whole armour of God.” Ephesians 6:11a. We are instructed to “put on” (ENDUO Gk) – this means “to clothe” – it is a command by God to the Christian soldier. We are to “clothe ourselves” or to “dress ourselves”. “Whole armour” (PANOPLIA Gk) – the complete armour “of God” (THEOS Gk) true source of the armour is God.

The whole armour of God is given in Ephesians 6:14-17. It comprises:-

- a) The Belt of Truth Ephesians 6:14a
- b) Breastplate of Righteousness Ephesians 6:14b
- c) Boots Ephesians 6:15
- d) Shield Ephesians 6:16
- e) Helmet of Salvation Ephesians 6:17a
- f) Sword of the Spirit Ephesians 6:17b

PRINCIPLES:

- i) The Roman soldier wore all his armour for his own safety and protection.
- ii) When the Roman soldier was highly disciplined he ruled the world.
- iii) When the Roman soldier became degenerate the Empire declined and fell.
- iv) The Roman soldier was in the army 7 days a week.

3. SPIRITUAL ANALOGY

- a) As Christian soldiers we wear our armour for our own safety and protection.
- b) When we are highly disciplined in the Christian life we are very effective in our warfare.
- c) If we become degenerate or apostate our Christian witness and effectiveness declines and we become casualties in the spiritual warfare.
- d) The Christian soldier is in the battle 7 days a week. A part time soldier never amounts to an effective soldier.

“That ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” Ephesians 6:11 b.

“to stand” (histemi (Gk) – to hold your ground. We are in a spiritual warfare and the purpose of the armour is to hold our ground against the foe. “the wiles (methodeia dia Gk) – tactics, cunning or fraud” “of the devil” (diabolos Gk). We therefore have the whole armour of God to enable us to stand firm against the devil's tactics.

PRINCIPLE: By learning the tactics likely to be employed by your opponent the Christian soldier is able to go on the offensive using the sword of the Spirit – the Word of God. (verse 17).

4. THE ENEMY (Ephesians 6:12)

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world against spiritual wickedness in high places. “

“Wrestle” – “the wrestling” (he pale estin Gk) hand to hand combat not wrestling as a sport. “not against flesh and blood” – not against other members of the human race, but against:-

- a) PRINCIPALITIES (arche Gk) Ruling demons.
- b) POWERS (exousia Gk) – Demons with authority, officers in the demon army.

c) RULERS OF THE DARKNESS OF THIS WORLD (kosmokrator Gk) – world rulers, demons close to the seats of government such as the demons of (Daniel 10:13, 20).

d) SPIRITUAL WICKEDNESS IN HIGH PLACES (pneu matikos poneria Gk) – the demon army.

Quite clearly our fight is against a spiritual foe. From Hebrews 2:7 we know that as human beings we are inferior to angels. Therefore in order to have success against superior forces we must have God's armour.

5. BE PREPARED (Ephesians 6:13)

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all, to stand."

Since the resurrection ascension and session of Jesus Christ the attack of Satan has moved from the line of Christ to the individual believer. Our dependence on the whole armour is imperative yet many believers reject part or all of the armour. There are many casualties as a consequence.

We are again exhorted to put on the whole armour of God.

6. THE BELT OF TRUTH (Ephesians 6:14a, Isaiah 11:5)

"Stand therefore having your loins girt about with truth."

The Roman belt was a wide girdle of leather worn around the waist from which hung the scabbard for the sword and loops for rations and equipment. The leather belt was supported by a cross shoulder strap studded with metal plates with thick leather strips hanging down to protect the lower body. The belt therefore was the basic armour on which the defence of the soldier was based.

PRINCIPLE: Our basic defence is the truth contained within the Word of God. The sword of the Spirit hangs securely to the believer by means of the promises contained within it. The greater our trust in the truth of God the greater our protection against the enemy.

7. THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (Ephesians 6:14b, Isaiah 59:17)

"and having on the breastplate of righteousness."

The breastplate (thorax Gk) was usually made of leather overlaid with metal strips. Shaped like a sleeveless coat it was in the higher ranks often covered with gold or silver. The belt held the breastplate firmly in place, its primary function being to protect every vital area of the soldier's body.

PRINCIPLE: The righteousness of Christ protects us. We stand in his righteousness alone. He gave us his righteousness at the cross (2 Corinthians 5:21). Our continued protection through his righteousness is through the filling of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) (See topic Holy Spirit: Filling of the Spirit).

8. THE BOOTS (Ephesians 6:15, Isaiah 52:7)

"And your feet shod, with the preparation of the gospel of peace".

The boots (caligae Gk) were made of hobnail studded leather soles 15mm (1/2") thick secured with a leather tie over the instep and round the ankles. Good footwear is essential for the soldier with infantry still being essential even in these days of sophisticated armaments.

PRINCIPLE: In spiritual terms the feet are often analogised to service. The feet take one towards the enemy. The gospel of peace is a direct attack on the enemy. Peace in this context talks of reconciliation between God and man. (Romans 1:1 4-16, 2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

9. THE SHIELD OF FAITH (Ephesians 6:16; 1 John 5:4)

"Above all taking the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

The Roman shield (thureos Gk) was shaped like a door being made of glued planks wrapped in canvas or calf skin, the top and bottom edges being protected by iron. The shield was the most active of the defensive armour carried by the Roman soldier. Loss of shield often meant death to the soldier.

PRINCIPLE: The Christian soldier's shield is walking actively in the promises and principles set out in the Word of God. If we do not use our faith we can become spiritual casualties. Using the shield of faith we can claim –the 7,000 promises for the Christian walk including Isaiah 41:10; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 1 John 4:4.

10. THE HELMET OF SALVATION (Ephesians 6:17a; Isaiah 59:17)

"And take the Helmet of salvation."

With the exception of the standard bearer who wore a wolf's head, every Roman soldier wore a metal helmet (perik Gk) usually of bronze over an iron skull cap. This protected the most important part of the soldier – his head.

PRINCIPLE: Before a person can be a soldier for Christ, he has to be born again. He has to wear the helmet of salvation. One of the wiles of the devil is to make the believer feel that he has lost his salvation. If a believer loses his assurance of salvation he takes his helmet of salvation off and is totally vulnerable to the attack of the foe.

11. THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT (Ephesians 6:17b)
"and the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.

The sword referred to is the machaira or Roman short sword. The sword represents the basic offensive weapon for close combat. It was only effective when out of its sheath.

PRINCIPLE: The sword in its sheath is potentially devastating but it is only effective when it is used to combat and defeat the enemy. We must therefore conquer using principles, promises and doctrines from the Word of God.

NOTES

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION

It is an interesting thing about the fallen-ness of human nature, that some will always try to make merchandise of their brethren in times of trouble. Greed is an ugly thing, and it drives people to seek the pleasures of wealth for a brief time and creates great evil in the process. Greed is a self centred motive, and like all self centeredness it has its origin in Satan's kingdom. It is a thing that gains temporary pleasures in return for eternal judgement. Too many of the Lord's people through the centuries have drunk of the wells of evil in this area of materialism, and they seek wealth at any cost to the loss of their health, their marriages, their families, and their reputations. The great evil Nehemiah faces here, we continue to face today. In my own church men have gone to prison in recent years for defrauding their own brethren and spending the money they stole on overseas trips and high living, and then returning to the church to serve as greeters at the door!

The problem in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas is that those nobles, with inherited money from their family's successful time in Babylon, have been using their capital to loan to their brethren, and been charging interest rates in violation of the Mosaic Law. Exodus 22:25-27, Leviticus 25:35-39, Deuteronomy 23:19-20. The rules were clear and concise; there was to be no money making with interest payments from your brethren. The people who have been charging interest at high rates to their brethren, were their own leaders, and they have been piously leading the prayers also! This level of hypocrisy is possible only with the people involved not seeing their evils, and believing themselves to be above the rest, and just "good business people", who help "losers". They feel entitled to make any money they wish, they feel above their brethren, and they despise them. We are not strangers to this evil ourselves. This is a dangerous element in our modern church, that has worshipped at the shrine of the worst of modern Hollywood culture, and started to see the Lord's blessing in solely materialistic terms.

The great evils associated with the collapse of the world economic system in September of 2008 were due to this self centred philosophy that had been gaining control of the church and our society through the previous twenty years. Let us enter this chapter with fear and trembling, for many in our own churches are guilty of the very things Nehemiah will criticize his people for. We live in a money fixated world, where the obtaining of vast wealth is taken as a measure of social and even spiritual success. The obscenity of the bankers taking bonuses as their banks failed was not even seen by them as wrong; they were baffled at the hatred their evil behaviours stirred up. Even the foolish departing US President said, "have faith in the system", and yet the system had delivered fraud and corruption that was unheard of in the history of the world. Nothing is new under the sun, for the same greed led the young province of Judea to near collapse, and the people making the money out of their brethren didn't see it until publicly confronted by Nehemiah and shamed by him. Let us learn from this man Nehemiah.

NEHEMIAH 5:1-19

1 And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews. 2 For there were that said, We, our sons, and our daughters, are many: therefore we take up corn for them, that we may eat, and live. 3 Some also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth. 4 There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute, and that upon our lands and vineyards. 5 Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and some of our daughters are brought unto bondage already: neither is it in our power to redeem them; for other men have our lands and vineyards. 6 And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words. 7 Then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them. 8 And I said unto them, We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? Or shall they be sold unto us? Then held they their peace, and found nothing to answer. 9 Also I said, It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies? 10 I likewise, and my brethren, and my servants, might exact of them money and corn: I pray you, let us leave off this usury. 11 Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them. 12 Then said they, We will restore them, and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest. Then I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise. 13 Also I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out, and emptied. And all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the LORD. And the people did according to this promise. 14 Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year even unto the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that is, twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor. 15 But the former governors that had been before me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God. 16 Yea, also I continued in the work of this wall, neither bought we any land: and all my servants were gathered thither unto the work. 17 Moreover there were at my table an hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, beside those that came unto us from among the heathen that are about us. 18 Now that which was prepared for me daily was one ox and six choice sheep; also fowls were prepared for me, and once in ten days store of all sorts of wine: yet for all this required not I the bread of the governor, because the bondage was heavy upon this people. 19 Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people.

REFLECTION

Verses 1 – 6. The time frame for this complaint is unclear. Nehemiah's answer includes his summary of his twelve years as Governor-Satrap of Judea and so it may have occurred at any time in the twelve years of his work amongst them. It is written as if it occurs immediately after the walls were built but that cannot be so, for his criticism of them refers to his long standing benevolence towards their leadership, and his shock that the leaders who ate freely at his table have been charging one percent per month to their brethren.

There is real hardship in the land, and apparently a famine of some sort ("dearth" is spoken of in verse 3). The interest rate being charged is 12% (one percent per month). This is a compounding rate if the people cannot pay, and so had led to most of the people who had borrowed money losing their homes, their land, their businesses, and being sold as slaves (under the Law supposedly for only seven years) to repay the debt. It is also doubtful whether the Mosaic Law was even being followed in this matter, and the people may have been in real danger of being sold on an open Gentile slave market and becoming permanent slaves owned by pagan buyers.

Having been part of rebuilding their nation, and building the walls of Jerusalem, some of these great patriots now find themselves in danger of losing everything they have fought for to their own elders, who have made merchandise of them. This is a problem for all nations, races, and cultures. The Scottish Clans faced this same problem in the Highland Clearances of the late 1700s. Their own chiefs drove the clansmen off their lands and replaced them with sheep. It led to the deaths of thousands and the great migration of the Scottish highlanders to the four corners of the earth.

All through the centuries self centred men have valued money more than their own people when greed dominated their "Old Sin Nature". Refer to the BTB studies, MONEY, OLD SIN NATURE. Nehemiah discovers what has been happening and is enraged beyond words at the evil that has been secretly going on under his very nose. He has the same level of rage that the Lord has when He drives the money changers from the Temple. Luke 19:45-46, John 2:17. It is a shameful thing that even the priesthood seem to have been involved, or at very least, turned a blind eye to the evil. Nehemiah will make them part of the solution.

Verses 7 – 10. Nehemiah takes his time to think this issue through, and he refers to the Bible for guidance, for what he decides to do is what is demanded in the Mosaic Law. Like Ezra earlier, he will require that the Law be applied fully by all levels of society. I cannot help wondering where Ezra is in all this, but we are not told what part he played, or whether he was possibly dead by this time, or absent in Babylon. Nehemiah firstly privately rebukes the nobles who have been the key culprits in taking money from their poorer brethren, and then he calls a major public meeting to deal with the problem nationally.

The starting point is that there was in existence a Trust fund that wealthy and truly noble Jews had established to buy back Jewish slaves from gentile buyers and then set them free. This noble work was supported by Nehemiah and was being undermined by these evil men who were selling more Jews into slavery that the trust fund was able to release. It was an evil, and the comparison between the two groups of wealthy men was meant to shock the people, and it did, and it shamed the wealthy extorters of their brethren. Slavery was forbidden for Jews to profit from. A system of bonded service was instituted for bad debts, but that involved the care and protection of a family on hard times, in return for service, but for no longer than seven years. Leviticus 25:39-41, Deuteronomy 15:7-15. Selling a fellow Jew for money as if he was an object was to earn the seller the death penalty! Exodus 21:16.

The guilty men had no answer to the accusation, nor any response to the evils done; they were convicted totally and publicly. Nehemiah shows them no mercy, for they have shown none to their brethren when they sold them as slaves. He does not seek the death penalty (although I suspect he reminds them of the Law), but a total change in the way society works. He speaks of their evil, and tells them bluntly that they have ceased to fear the Lord, and that is a very foolish thing to do. They are surrounded by enemies, and to violate the Mosaic Law in such a blatant manner was to invite the judgement of God, just as their ancestors had done in 586. He invites them to let the fear of the Lord guide them, for there was no shortage of enemy armed forces to execute the Lord's judgement! Their nation stands in jeopardy, and they have sold their brethren, and possibly their own soldiers, into slavery! They have robbed themselves of the very resource they will need if the enemy attack them and they have destroyed the unity and morale of the rest!

The result of dodgy or ruthless financial dealings is that the poorer people lose their faith in the wealthier, and a deep hatred builds between the two groups. As the elders are the group with the money, the respect of the common people for the ruling group drops away. No-one trusts the leadership any more and the unity of the nation has been undermined for the few to grow wealthy and powerful, but in the process they have undermined the very security of their nation. Nehemiah nails their evil, identifying that he and his servants could have demanded the same rights for payments of debts that these men have, but Nehemiah and his servants have followed the principles of grace in the Mosaic Law regarding the poor, and they have waived their rights, in order to preserve the people on the land. They have seen past their financial 'rights' to the needs of the entire community, but these greedy men have exercised their financial rights to the destruction of the community itself.

Verses 11 – 13. The extent of the greed of these lenders is now seen. They had taken the land, vineyards, olive groves, houses, and money from these poorer people, and they had done so by the charging of a one percent per month interest rate. A one percent interest rate doesn't sound much, but it was monthly, so it was way more than twelve percent per annum being charged in a flat agricultural economy. It was the ruin of all the poor farmers and led to the seizure of their equity.

Once that was gone there was nothing left but slavery, but not the bond-service of the Mosaic Law that led to full restoration of the land after seven years, but life long slavery. God's way was that each person received another chance to make good every seven years, but these men had denied their brethren this grace and shown no mercy upon them. Nehemiah orders the full return of the land, and all equity items and farming operations, and the return of the money charged also, down to the last cent!

The usurers all publicly promise to do this to the last cent, and return everything taken by usury. The priests are called to take solemn oaths and register these oaths at the Temple; that the evil men will do what they have promised. The necessity of tying these men up legally and spiritually is a measure of the lack of faith of Nehemiah in them. If they fail to complete their oath they will be guilty of lying to God and be then subject to the death penalty. It is this serious in Nehemiah's sight! Nehemiah then acts out visually what the Lord will do to the lives and properties of the wealthy men who have abused their brethren if they repeat their offence. He shakes out his clothing in a dramatic gesture and indicates that as the dust is shaken from the garment, so will these people be shaken from the population if they fail to fulfil their oath. This means the death penalty for them if they transgress again. All the people say, "Amen" and praise the Lord, that the Mosaic Law is being upheld and reapplied into the financial management of the nation again. The people who had abused their brethren kept their word; they had learned their lesson in humiliation.

Verses 14 – 19. Nehemiah now testifies to his own unselfish conduct throughout his twelve years as Governor-satrap of Judea. This is the first formal recognition that this is indeed his title and we are given the length of his first term as satrap. Through all his service to the Persian Empire he had paid for all he ate and he fed a vast throng of soldiers and courtiers and elders of Judea also. He did not charge the state or people of Judea for this, but funded all this from his own private allowance. He had not taxed the people for personal gain, as did other satraps like Mausulos, but ruled to benefit the entire Jewish people. Nehemiah is driven by the "fear of the Lord". He fears the judgement of the Lord over his actions, and he wants the people to feel this fear also. The fear of the Lord purifies the heart of the believer, for those who remember that they must stand before the Lord, reflect upon what is really of value eternally rather than just doing things that give pleasure in time. **Romans 14:10, 2 Corinthians 5:10, James 2:13.**

Nehemiah also could testify that he hadn't entered into land speculation and bought up cheap land or businesses. He did not abuse his position for personal gain. Most of our rulers have used their positions to enrich themselves, and even if they governed well, they used their position for great personal gain and pushed poorer people out of the way to achieve their goals. He then notes how many animals and fowls he cooked weekly for the crowds that ate at his table, and he calls upon the Lord to witness to his honesty before the people. This man can testify to his own honesty and call for any to challenge his record. All good leaders must be ready to do this. All pastors must be ready for their lives to be checked

out. God's leadership must be tested, and seen to be godly and moral. Note the qualities of leadership demanded in the BTB STUDY PASTORS AND ELDERS.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. How strong is the church's moral leadership in the financial areas today? Examine your own area pastor and ask what credibility the local church has when it speaks of finances. If we stand for the principles of the Word of God we have a moral place in our society, but if we have swallowed the evils of the greedy men of Wall Street we have no moral leadership at all. Are we with Nehemiah, or have we been with the crooked financiers? Let us be very careful in our observations of what is or is not successful business, for the evils of Nehemiah's day remain in our own.
2. Nehemiah feared the Lord. Do we fear the Lord enough today, or has our fluffy type of faith degraded our morality? We need to be in the fear of the Lord over being judged for the evils we have done rather than being rewarded for the good things the Holy Spirit has led us into. Refer to the BTB study below JUDGEMENT – JUDGEMENT SEAT OF CHRIST.
3. How do we check out in our behaviours? Are we worthy of the Lord who called us to follow Him? The very content of the Mosaic Law spoke of grace and mercy, and Nehemiah calls his people to exercise these virtues, just as the Lord calls us to follow Him in the exercise of the same things. Let us be followers of the ones who mentor good virtues, and let us mentor them in our own corrupt day.

DOCTRINES

SIN – OLD SIN NATURE

1. We are born with a nature, inherited from Adam, which is against God and prone to sin (Ephesians 2:1, Romans 5:12).
2. The old sin nature is perpetuated in the human race by physical birth (Psalm 51:5, 1 Timothy 2:13, 14).
3. We are therefore considered spiritually dead at the point of physical birth (Romans 5:12).
4. Names for the old sin nature:
 - a) Flesh – Galatians 5:16
 - b) Old Man – Ephesians 4:22, Colossians 3:9
 - c) Carnal – Romans 7:14
 - d) Sin – Romans 5:12
 - e) Heart – Jeremiah 17:9
 - f) Member – Colossians 3:5.
5. The believer continues to have an old sin nature after salvation (1 John 1:8, 1 Corinthians 3:1).
6. The believer under the control of the old sin nature is called carnal (Romans 7:14, 1 Corinthians 3:1-3).
7. The old sin nature frustrates true production of the Christian life (Romans 7:15).
8. The old sin nature has two tendencies (Romans 6:6)
 - a) Area of weakness – pushes us towards lawlessness and sins (Hebrews 12:1)
 - b) Area of strength – pushes us towards asceticism and self-righteousness (Isaiah 64:6).
9. The old sin nature is not found in the resurrection body (1 Corinthians 15:56, Philippians 3:21, 1 Thessalonians 5:23).
10. Victory over the old sin nature is achieved by considering your old life dead, surrendering to God, confessing sin and relying upon the filling of the Spirit (Romans 6:6,11, Colossians 3:9-10).

MONEY

1. Money in coin form was unknown until the 7th century BC Prior to coins, money or valuable metal was measured in terms of ingots or rings. Croesus, King of Lydia first preserved his money in coins. When Cyrus the Great conquered Lydia, he picked up the concept of coinage and gave it to the entire world.
2. Money is not evil. It has a legitimate function. (Genesis 23:9, Jeremiah 32:44)
3. The believer is urged to be content with what he has received, in his position, from the Lord. 1 Timothy 6:6-10, Philippians 4:11-13, Hebrews 13:5-6.
4. It is the lust for money and goods that corrupts a man Jude 11.
5. The giving of money is an expression of the believers' priesthood. (1 Corinthians 16:2, 2 Corinthians 8 & 9)
6. Coveting money makes one a slave to his desire. (Matthew 6:24). Money is a useful servant but a harsh master.
7. The danger of money to the unbeliever.
 - a) Salvation cannot be purchased with money. (Mark 8:36-37)
 - b) Money causes the rich man to put his trust in the wrong things. (Mark 10:23-25)
 - c) Money often hinders the unbeliever from seeking salvation. (Luke 16:19-31)

d) Money has no credit with God. (Proverbs 11:4,28)

8. The danger of money to the believer:

- a) Money can become part of a slavery to a vain search for happiness. (Ecclesiastes 5:10-6:2)
- b) Love of money becomes a root of all kinds of evil. (1 Timothy 6:6-12, 17-19)
- c) Money can contribute to pride and self-centredness. (Acts 5:1-10)

9. Wealth is deceitful if a person believes it will buy him happiness or provide security Matthew 6:24-33, Luke 12:16-21. Proverbs 18:10-12, Proverbs 13:7.

10. It is the believer's duty to wisely use his possessions, time, abilities and spiritual gifts which God has entrusted to us.

11. Three illusions about money.

- (a) Money can bring happiness:- for the believer the Christian way of life is the only source of happiness.
- (b) Money provides security:- Grace provides the only real security. (Matthew 6:24-33)
- ! Money can buy many things such as salvation, love, happiness, tranquillity:- all are spiritual assets.

CHURCH OFFICERS – PASTORS / ELDERS

1. Acts 20:17,28 shows that the elder/pastor/bishop/overseer are the same. Each word simply emphasizes a different role.

2. Greek words used of the pastoral role and responsibility.

- a) Presbuteros (elder) – the authority in the church (cf. the elders were the wise judges who sat at the gates of ancient cities). Acts 20:17
- b) Poimenos didaskalos (pastor-teacher) – the shepherd, to feed the flock and protect them. Jeremiah 3:15
- c) Episkopos (bishop/overseer) – the leader/overseer of the church. Acts 20:28, 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7
- d) Diakonos (servant/minister) – the servant in humility.

3. It is therefore concluded that an elder is a pastor holding the office of bishop, overseer or shepherd in the Church. They deal with spiritual matters within the church, shepherding, feeding and protecting the flock.

4. An elder should have the spiritual gift of Pastor/Teacher or Evangelist.

5. Function

- a) To rule. (1 Timothy 3:4,5; 5:17) – the pastor/elders in a church are the authority in the church, under God.
- b) To guard the body of revealed truth from error and perversion. (Titus 1:9).
- c) To oversee the Church as a shepherd of his flock. (Acts 20:28; John 21:16; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-3).
- d) Elders are given to the church by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28).
- e) Great stress is laid upon their due appointment. (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5)
- f) At first they were ordained by an apostle. (Acts 14:23)
- g) Later Church guidance was required in such appointments. (Titus 1:5; 1 Timothy 3:1-7)

6. Qualifications (1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1)

- a) Blameless – you will be blamed for many things – make sure they are not true. You must deal with sin in your life.
- b) Be the husband of one wife or a one-woman man (i.e. faithful, not lusting after other women) – v 11 He may have been legitimately divorced according to scripture.
- c) Be vigilant - clear headed or cool.
- d) Be sober – has self control.
- e) Be of good behaviour – orderly and well co-ordinated, respectable.
- f) Be hospitable – always ready to invite people into your home.
- g) Be keen to teach – keen to share the Word of God with them.
- h) Not given to wine – he should not be addicted to alcohol.
- i) Not be a striker – he must not be a hot head.
- j) Must not be greedy of filthy lucre – he must not be greedy for money.
- k) Must not be a contentious arguer.
- l) Must not be covetous – not envious or resentful of others wealth.
- m) If married, his wife and children must be dignified and under control.
- n) Not a new convert. Train candidates for ministry as deacons, in Sunday Schools and youth groups before appointing them.
- o) He must have a good witness to the unbelieving world.

7. The appointment of pastors is described in (1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11).

8. The gift of pastor-teacher is given to men only – it is not the role of the woman to teach or exercise authority over men in the church (1 Timothy 2:12, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35).

9. Pastoral authority is not a cause for boasting, it is based on service with all humility (John 13:5 -17 2 Corinthians 10:8, Galatians 6:3-5). The pastor's authority is to teach the Word of God so that all will see the truth clearly.

10. Age is not a barrier (1 Timothy 4:9-12).

11. If the pastor does not fulfil his responsibilities

- a) He is to be warned, then rebuked by the elders if he continues (Titus 2:15, 2 Corinthians 13:10, 2 Timothy 4:2).
- b) The Lord will discipline him (1 Timothy 6:3-5, James 5:19-20).

12. The reward of the pastor (Hebrews 6:10; 1 Peter 5:4).

13. Key verses for the pastoral role – 1 Peter 5:4, Ephesians 3:7-13, 1 Timothy 2:24-26, 3:1-9, Colossians 1:23-29, Titus 1:6-9, 1 Thessalonians 2:19, 20, Hebrews 13:7, 17, 6:10.

JUDGEMENT – JUDGEMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

1. There are three types of judgement for believers in the Church Age.

a) Judgement of Sins:- The Lord Jesus Christ on the cross substituted the payment of all man's sins. The penalty of sin is death. (Romans 6:23) There is therefore no judgement for those in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1). The substitutionary death is given in 2 Corinthians 5:19-21, Galatians 3:13.

b) Judgement of Self:- We are told that if we judge ourselves we shall not be judged. Failure to do so brings discipline. (1 Corinthians 5:1-5, 11:31, 32, 2 Corinthians 2:5-7, Hebrews 12:7, 1 John 1:9)

c) Judgement Seat of Christ:- This is the evaluation of the production of believers for the purpose of reward (2 Corinthians 5:10)

2. The Judgement Seat of Christ is a time of reward. Our human works (wood, hay, stubble) will be burned, our works in the power of the Spirit (gold, silver, precious stones) will be rewarded. (1 Corinthians 3:11-16).

3. At the Judgement Seat of Christ the believer can be denied reward but can never lose his salvation. (2 Tim 2:12-13)

4. Backslidden believers have no reward at the Judgement Seat of Christ. (Hebrews 6:7-12)

5. The Judgement Seat of Christ is illustrated by the famous athletic games in the ancient world. (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

6. Rewards at the Judgement Seat of Christ are based on grace. (James 2:12, 13)

7. Since we will be judged by Christ, we are not to judge each other (Matthew 7:1-2)

NOTES

CHAPTER 6**INTRODUCTION**

The enemy is tenacious; his agents will not stop trying to hinder the work of God and hurt the servants of God. Just as we can rejoice in, and be sure of the stability of the CHARACTER OF GOD, we can be absolutely sure of the settled hatred of SATAN and all his angelic and human followers towards us. The deviousness of Satan is however predictable for he hasn't had an original idea in thousands of years, because he doesn't need to. Satan's attacks are remarkably similar through history, because he doesn't need to change them, for most people do not know the Word and God, and so understand the best way to defend themselves against him.

As we enter this chapter we will see the deviousness but also the predictability of Satanic assault on the called and empowered believer, and we will see how Nehemiah works through the distracting barrage that the satanic forces put up around him. We will also see why Ezra was so determined to ensure the Jews put away their foreign and pagan wives, and we will see that some key leaders still have them, and they are the heart of the opposition Nehemiah faces.

NEHEMIAH 6:1-19

1 Now it came to pass when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;) **2** That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief. **3** And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you? **4** Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner. **5** Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand; **6** Wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words. **7** And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together. **8** Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart. **9** For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands. **10** Afterward I came unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee. **11** And I said, Should such a man as I flee? And who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in. **12** And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. **13** Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me. **14** My God, think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear. **15** So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days. **16** And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God. **17** Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters unto Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came unto them. **18** For there were many in Judah sworn unto him, because he was the son in law of Shechaniah the son of Arah; and his son Johanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah. **19** Also they reported his good deeds before me, and uttered my words to him. And Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear.

REFLECTION

Verses 1 – 4. There are three key members of the satanic alliance against the Jews of Judea. The satraps of Syria-Samaria, Ammon, and possibly Arabia, are the three key men. Now they may not all be formally satraps of the Persian Empire, but they are mentioned as equals in the text, and we know that at least Sanballat is a satrap, so my deduction is that all three are in league, as self-interested Persian officials, against Nehemiah and the Jews. Persian politics then was as faction ridden as Iranian politics is now. These men are driven by satanic hatred, and also possibly financial desires to make the money from the province of Judea and its lucrative caravan routes that they had all previously made before Nehemiah took charge.

In this section we also get a glimpse of Nehemiah's approach to the gates. Earlier I had noted that the gates were initially clearly the total focus of a number of teams, and it looked as if they were then switched to the walls at a certain point. Verse two before us tells us that the gates were readied to a certain point, but that only when the walls were completed were all the cranes moved to the main gates and used to get them positioned, possibly with several hundred men being required to achieve this in each place. City gates of this time were seriously heavy, and required great effort to place in position. Until they were able to do this it appears there were temporary means to secure the gate portals and ensure no sudden enemy attack could force their way in through the gaps in the walls.

The next trick the enemy try, after their direct assaults that have been described in the previous chapters, is the “trap and assassination trick”. When as God’s leader you have been tasked with a great role, you are to be very wary of any invitations to functions or meetings of any sort that are neither godly, nor relevant to your role before the Lord. The basic role for the Lord’s leaders is “No Distractions”. If any activity does not move forward the objectives of your role, it is not to be entertained as an option; it is to be seen as a distraction. We are not here to be entertained or entertain, but work!

For Nehemiah the issue is very clear; there is no reason to meet men who have sworn to kill you and who have raised forces to achieve their goal. Without their total, public, and whole hearted confession and surrender, there is no way such people should be met with for discussion. There is nothing to discuss with negative people. Remember the Lord’s words, “You shall know them by their fruits”. Matthew 7:16. People are not to be assessed by their words, but by the fruit of their words in their lives. These men have tried to kill the Jews, and there is no whole hearted public acknowledgement of the wrong of their previous actions, so it is logical that their hearts are still bent upon evil. Even if such confession was made and accepted, such a meeting would still be a distraction from the work, and on that ground alone would still rightly have been refused.

The plain of Ono is what the great Chinese military strategist would call “Dying Ground” for Nehemiah. It is a place where the vastly numerically superior Syrians can stage the death of Nehemiah and blame it on others, and be sure none are alive to tell the truth later. It would be death to go to such a place, but also trouble for Nehemiah if he accuses them of his attempted murder. Nehemiah cannot tell the truth about what he knows to be their plans, or it will back fire on him. There are times when you must not tell the whole truth about why you do certain things, or all you do is give comfort to the enemy and bring confusion upon your own team. Nehemiah knows their plans but keeps this knowledge to himself, for then his sources (spies amongst the Syrians) are kept safe, and keep feeding him useful information. Gedaliah fell for a trap and died, but Nehemiah isn’t as foolish; he trusts no-one! **Jeremiah 40-41, John 2:24-25.**

He gives the excuse of being “too busy”. In effect he says to them, “I would love to meet you for a picnic, but very sorry, I am too busy at present doing the great work I am tasked with”. He hints that he is doing a great work for the King himself, and so won’t be distracted by other servants of the King, but this is a hint they do not take up. They try with four variations on this theme to entice him out of the city and away from his military support. Never leave your support circle to meet with any enemy; let them meet you within your strong point, and on your terms, never meet them in their own! We have nothing to say to the followers of the devil, except to remind them where they are going! Refer to the BTB study JUDGMENT – GREAT WHITE THRONE.

Verses 5 – 8. The first four invitations to what I have called “a picnic of death” were sent by sealed envelope, but the fifth letter is a public and formal one, and it is sent by a messenger who will read this aloud in the main market place of the city to rebuke and accuse Nehemiah and the Jews of treason and rebellion. It is a formal and serious accusation by the senior satrap of the region and is designed to create fear and despondency amongst the general population. The previous threatened attacks upon the Jews were mounted by Sanballat’s men, but without his public written proclamation to make them “official”, now this open letter tells the Jews that he will act officially against them. It is designed to sow fear and doubt about whether they should continue the work facing such great official opposition. The report is from one named “Gashmu” who has reported the rebellion of the Jews. Who is this Gashmu? It is simply another form of the name of Geshem the Arabian, who appears to be the one delivering the information gathered by spies to Sanballat.

Nehemiah sees the plan for what it is and will respond publically immediately. He sees the content of this letter as an attempt to get him to go to the court of Sanballat to prove his innocence of the trumped up charge, and while he is in the court be killed “accidentally”. Nehemiah doesn’t have to prove his innocence at all to the court of the Satrap of Syria, for it is to the king of Persia he answers. Just so with us today; we are called to keep our eyes fixed upon the King of kings to whom we answer and not be distracted by the opinions of the courts of men. Sanballat is cunning and powerful and uses all he has to put public pressure on Nehemiah to attend the death meeting. He knows that many in Judea will urge Nehemiah to attend the meeting, just to settle things, so that they can get on with the work in peace. They foolishly believe that the devil’s people want compromise; when all they want is our defeat and the slowing and the ending of the work of God. Nehemiah does the right thing; he simply writes back an open letter denying all accusations and telling Sanballat that he is inventing things.

Now the next thing that Sanballat accuses Nehemiah of is the very thing that he himself has already done. He accuses Nehemiah of hiring and bribing prophets to speak words of comfort to the people to encourage them in their work on the wall and then to move them steadily into active rebellion against their Persian king. The truth is that Sanballat has used the mixed marriages of the nobles of Judea to get a fake prophet in his pay, and have him pretend to give the words of God to Nehemiah to destroy him. Always be ready for this trick from Satan’s forces. What they strongly and bizarrely accuse you of will normally be the indication of what they are about to do, or have already been doing. They will accuse you of their own sin, so as to throw you off the scent of their evil. By their own bizarre accusations they reveal their own Old Sin Nature and their plans.

I had a very good illustration of this in my ministry many years ago. I worked with a pastor to establish a Bible College to train his youth for further ministry. This was a very successful venture and led to 37 young people being trained to associate pastoral level. During this time this man became insanely jealous of my work, and my preaching. I didn’t realise the source of this growing hatred until I became aware of financial irregularities and started to also suspect he was sexually interfering with young women in the church. I tried to find out the facts, but was blocked by these young women. I left this man, and took my Bible Teaching and Bible College ministry else-where. From the day I left he accused me to

every person he could of being “a man with sexual problems in his marriage”. Those who knew me and my wife just laughed, and I sought no redress against his accusations, but simply left them with the Lord.

On the basis of my knowledge of the Word of God however, I now knew for sure that he was guilty of gross sexual sin within his ministry. I simply waited for the right time to gain the legal evidence I needed to move against him, in order to protect the foolish sheep that he falsely led. That day arrived seven years after I left that man, when two of the young women he had molested, and had now escaped his church, came to me and told me that I had been correct in all my fears. With their sworn Legal Statutory Declarations the Lord allowed me to close that man and his ministry down. In the Lord’s plan it is all about timing, and it is about not being foolish enough to rush to defend your self, but to wait upon the Lord’s timing to defend yourself, and stop the evil. In God’s time this man was silenced.

Verses 9 – 13. Nehemiah saw that the plan was to weaken the morale of the people. He understood the “battle for the minds of men”, and he was determined to win it for his people by defeating the fear of man, with the assurance of the power of God. His prayer is immediately focused upon this issue; that the people might be strengthened in their trust in the Lord, and that their hands might be made stronger to do the work and finish it. He also prays for strength to his own hands, so that he doesn’t fall short of the Lord’s standards for godly service. He knows he is about to face another great test, and as he heads to the meeting in the temple with Shemaiah he wants to be alert to the reality behind this man’s words.

He has no sooner finished this prayer than he receives an invitation from the enemy’s false prophet, although at this point he doesn’t know for sure that this man Shemaiah is a satanic team member. This man is a Jew and an acknowledged prophet amongst some of his people, and he lives in the temple, and so may be of the priestly line. His lineage is given so that he is clearly named and shamed. False prophets must be identified and silenced. No mercy must be shown those who have spoken falsely in the Lord’s name, or they will simply continue leading astray the foolish. There is never any shortage of people looking for the miraculous and the startling, and the exciting and false prophets and miracle workers prey on such people with tricks and lies. We must be discerning in these things for the safety of the local Church. Refer to the BTB study PROPHET AND PROPHECY.

This man had some notoriety as a hermit and prophet, and had shut himself away to pray and serve the Lord by his prayers and prophetic utterances, or so he apparently claimed. Always be suspicious of God’s men who shut themselves away when there is hard physical work to be done! There is a time to pray on your knees and a time to pray while you pour concrete, and the man who is not ready to get his hands dirty will prove himself a danger to you every time. 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12. This lying prophet was only one of a large number of hired false prophets that the enemy had bribed into his service. This may be a shock to you, but sit with this truth, and accept it, or your own ministry will be destroyed by such people. There have always been more false prophets than true prophets of God and you must identify them quickly by the fruit of their life and lips, not trust their lying fine sounding words.

This man’s plan is as cunning as a weasel, and it has the weasel mind of Satan behind it. The people have been made fearful by the open letter of Sanballat and they are looking to Nehemiah to take action that mentors to them the fear of the Lord, not the fear of men. They are looking for Nehemiah to stand firm against evil and set them the example of courage under fire. This is not a time to “dig in” and adopt a defensive strategy, but to remain on the offensive and do the job the Lord has called them to do. The two great leaders of World War 2 show the God given and the satanic approaches to pressure. Hitler, the satanically driven leader of Nazi Germany, lived in bunkers and hide outs, whereas Churchill, the leader of Britain, would walk openly on the roof of the War Offices in Whitehall in the midst of the blitz and watch the Germans doing their worst, bombing London. The king and queen of Britain also did not seek shelter out of the city during the air raids, but remained under fire, and were the example of courage to their people, as was their prime minister. We are always to mentor courage under pressure. We are in God’s hands, and there is nothing the enemy can do to us that is not within the plan – as long as we stay within it every moment also!

This “worm tongue” servant of Satan tries to get Nehemiah to hide away behind the fortress like walls of the temple compound and direct affairs for there. He argues that this will stop him being the target of assassins and will frustrate the enemy’s attempts to kill him. On the surface this advice has apparent logic behind it, but at both the military and the spiritual level, it is false logic. At the straight military level, most successful assassins are well placed traitors, who get into the inner circles of their target, so hiding away does not hinder them. From the spiritual perspective Nehemiah must resist all attempts to do anything other than the Lord’s will. The enemy will try to kill him, but they have no chance while he walks with the Lord, for his life is in God’s hands, not in man’s hands. This is the truth that the lying prophet does not understand, but Nehemiah does. He knows that his place of safety is where God wants him and no-where else. We are not to be reckless, but hiding from our destiny does not save us from it. Nehemiah is ready to die, but he is ready to die when and where the Lord wants, and hiding away when the Lord has called him to stand and lead the people, is active disobedience to the Lord, and cowardice of the worst sort.

Notice Nehemiah’s words to this evil man, for now he sees that he is truly a servant of the enemy. Note each point Nehemiah makes here:

1. Should a leader, tasked with a public role ever flee before threat? No, never should a leader hide away! Paul is an exception to this. Acts 9:23-25, 14:5-7, 19-20, 17:8-12, 14-15. The reason Paul flees, is that he is the under-cover leader of the church, and keeping on the run, keeps the Gospel message moving ahead of the persecution wave.
2. What sort of man would hide away to save his own life, and thereby fail to lead his people and save their lives? Even with St Paul, he is not trying to save his own life, for at each place he is abused in some way.

He is not hiding for his own safety, but seeking the best way to keep spreading the Gospel. He is task focused in all his decision making also.

3. Leaders of God do not flee before evil, they stand against it. (Not stated, but the issue that is understood in the earlier two points). They stand against evil by actions or preaching.

Nehemiah now notes that by his counsel this man is disclosed as a traitor and servant of the enemy, and one of the false prophets hired to lie against God's plan and people. There are significant numbers of traitors in the city seeking formal accusations against Nehemiah, and he cannot move at this point against them and execute them, for they all have Sanballat's ear, and their execution would create a political incident and distract the people from the task. Nehemiah does not allow anything to stop the rebuilding of the walls, even the existence of traitors at this point will be tolerated to ensure no opportunity is given to the enemy.

Verses 14 – 16. Nehemiah now records his prayer at the time. He casts his cares upon the Lord and prays that the Lord will see the actions of these evil men and their hired fake prophets and judge them directly. He names and shames especially a prophet named Noadiah, but indicates that there were many others. Their purpose was to put him in fear, and so distract him from the work, and slow it, and if they could, stop it altogether. He is not hindered, but publicly opposes them by actions (and possibly by words also stated they were false and events would prove them false). We are not told whether the provisions of Deuteronomy 13:1-11, and 18:20-22, were applied to the false prophets and they were later executed. This is what ought to have happened, or at very least these prophets be silenced as the fakes and traitors they were. The wall is finished in 52 days of solid building. It is not mentioned whether they took the Sabbath days off or not, but given the need for a seven day rest, and the fact that if men take a break every seven days they work better, I believe the Mosaic Law was followed in this task and the Sabbath days were taken off. The enemy are greatly disturbed by the success of the Jews, and recognise that what they have done could only be done with the help of God.

Verses 17 – 19. The great surprise of these verses is to discover just how many traitors there were inside the walls of Jerusalem. To write words of comfort or give information to the enemy is traitorous activity, and yet apparently many of the elders of the tribe of Judah have compromised themselves with foreign wives or family alliances because of one of these. This one marriage that is mentioned should never have been allowed because the girl involved had left the Jewish faith and nation to become the wife of the satrap Tobiah, and the result was traitorous behaviour by all her Jewish relatives.

Possibly the marriage of Esther to the previous king had made this sort of marriage seem a reasonable one, but the fruit of it proved its satanic origin, just as the fruit of Esther's marriage proved it was of God. Tobiah used this relationship with the Jewish nobles to write letters to them and try to indicate to them that he was a reasonable man and looking for a compromise, and that it was Nehemiah who was being unreasonable. This two way flow of letters means that the enemy has his people right in Nehemiah's leadership team giving words of comfort and warning from their enemy and all designed to undermine Nehemiah. They also did the unthinkable, and reported Nehemiah's conversations to Tobiah. Such traitors amongst them, and their previous dodgy financial dealings, meant Nehemiah couldn't trust the Jewish nobility to take responsibility in leadership of the nation.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. We are not here upon this earth to meet and greet the enemy; we are here to defeat them in the power of the Holy Spirit. No believer ought to be involved in meetings with pagans and heretics to be involved in any apparently "worthy" project in the community. We have the greatest project of all before the Lord, and to HIM alone we are responsible. Let us not be distracted by the wiles of the devil, for he ever seeks to distract us into false paths that will stop us doing our great work for the Lord.

2. Let us not be distracted by the rewards or threats of powerful men. The medals and honours of kings are given to those who served their purposes, and at times we can legitimately win these medals by doing what the Lord has called us to do, but to seek them is a dangerous thing. We are not to seek the vindication of the courts of men, nor the rewards that governments give their corrupt servants. We are to fix our hearts and minds upon the "well done" of the Lord only. Refer back to the BTB study on the JUDGEMENT SEAT OF CHRIST.

3. Let us be ready to speak and act against false prophets and preachers of despondency in the churches. Let us teach the nature of genuine prophecy so that the false prophets can be eliminated from the assemblies of those who value the Word of God. We cannot stop these people serving in places where Satan already has control, but we must keep them out of the churches that stand for the Truth. Let us make sure that our churches are protected places, where false prophets are laughed to scorn and driven from the building whenever they sow their discord or speak their nonsense. Let us be fruit inspectors of men's deeds and the result of their actions, and so be able to warn the unwary and protect the foolish until we have the time to train them in intelligent godliness.

DOCTRINES

GOD – CHARACTER OF GOD See page 12

GOD – COMFORT FOR BELIEVERS

1. God is in control. Nothing will ever happen to you as a Christian that you have not had the opportunity to develop resources to deal with. (1 Corinthians 10:13)
2. God's character is stable.
 - (a) If God is for you who can be against you. (Romans 8:31-34)
 - (b) No matter what happens God's love is stable. (Romans 8:35-39)
3. God's promises are secure for He is always with us. (Matthew 28:19-20, Jeremiah 1:19)
4. God's power is always the same:-
 - (a) He will always keep us. (John 10:29, 2 Timothy 1:12,)
 - (b) God does not forget us or lose His power to keep. (Jude 24)
 I Even if we fall away from fellowship we still are saved. (2 Timothy 2:13)
5. God knew before time what we would need in time and has provided for the supply of all our needs. (Philippians 4:19, Hebrews 4:16, Ephesians 3:12,)
6. God has the power to bless us. (2 Corinthians 9:8)
7. God is able to make all grace abound towards us. (Ephesians 3:20)
8. We should grow to the place of real confidence and blessing. (2 Peter 3:18)
9. We do this by feeding on His Word. (John 6:29, 33, 63)

GOD – GOD CARES FOR YOU

1. God knows ...
 - a) Our sorrows. (Exodus 3:7)
 - b) Our devotions. (2 Chronicles 16:9)
 - c) Our thoughts. (Psalm 44:21)
 - d) Our foolishness. (Psalm 69:5)
 - e) Our frailties. (Psalm 103:14)
 - f) Our deeds. (Psalm 139:2)
 - g) Our words. (Psalm 139:4)
 - h) The composition of the universe. (Psalm 147:4)
 - i) All things. (Proverbs 15:3)
 - j) Our needs. (Matthew 6:32)
 - k) About animal creation. (Matthew 10:29)
 - l) Mankind. (Matthew 10:30)
 - m) What might or could have been. (Matthew 11:23)
 - n) His own. (John 10:14)
 - o) Past, present and future. (Acts 15:18)
2. God is able to ...
 - a) Save forever those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ – Hebrews 7:25
 - b) Supply every need – 2 Corinthians 9:8
 - c) Deliver all who are tempted – Hebrews 2:18
 - d) Sustain the weak believer and make him stand – Romans 14:4
 - e) Keep us from falling and make us blameless – Jude 24,25
 - f) Surpass all that we could ask or think – Ephesians 3:20
 - g) Raise us up in resurrection in the likeness of His Son – Hebrews 11:19
3. With God, all things are possible – Matthew 19:26
4. God is in control. Nothing will ever happen to you that you are not able to deal with. (1 Corinthians 10:13)
5. God's character is stable.
 - a) If God is for you who can be against you. (Romans 8:31-34)
 - b) No matter what happens God's love is stable. (Romans 8:35-39)
6. God's promises are secure for He is always with us. (Matthew 28:19-20, Jeremiah 1:19)
7. God's power is always the same:-
 - a) He will always keep us. (John 10:29, 2 Timothy 1:12,)
 - b) God does not forget us or lose His power to keep. (Jude 24)

c) Even if we fall away from fellowship we still are saved. (2 Timothy 2:13)

8. God knew before time what we would need in time and has provided for the supply of all our needs. (Philippians 4:19, Hebrews 4:16, Ephesians 3:12,)

9. God has the power to bless us. (2 Corinthians 9:8)

10. God is able to make all grace abound towards us. (Ephesians 3:20)

ANGELS – SATAN- ADVERSARY

1. SCRIPTURE Genesis 3; Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28; Matthew 4; Revelation.

2. BIOGRAPHY

Satan is the most beautiful creature ever to be created by God. He is an angel who rebelled against God before the creation of man (Isaiah 14:12-15). Originally he was the covering angel, the personal attendant of Jesus Christ in the very throne room of God. Unlike God, Satan is a created being and as such can only be in one place at any one time. He is attended by a vast number of angels (called demons) who have given him unswerving allegiance. After the creation of man, he tempted Adam and Eve to be as gods and to know good and evil by disobeying God. Satan then became the ruler of this world (Genesis 3:1-7). He attacked the human race in many ways prior to the birth of Jesus Christ. Throughout Jesus Christ's life, Satan attacked the Lord. Since Christ's victory at the cross he attacks believers. Satan still has access into heaven where he accuses the brethren. Halfway through the tribulation period Satan is thrown out of heaven (Revelation 12:7-9). This causes him to intensify his attack on the human race. During the millennium he is confined to the bottomless pit, allowing a perfect environment on the earth (Revelation 20:1-3). After a brief rebellion at the end of the millennium (Revelation 20:7-10), Satan is condemned to the eternal lake of fire which was created for the devil and his angels.

3. EVALUATION

Satan is called:

- a) The destroyer (Revelation 9:11).
- b) The accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10).
- c) The adversary (1 Peter 5:8).
- d) Beelzebub, prince of devils (Matthew 12:24).
- e) The deceiver of the whole world (Revelation 12:9).
- f) The great dragon (Revelation 12:9).
- g) An enemy (Matthew 13:28,29).
- h) The wicked one (Matthew 13:19,38).
- i) The father of lies (John 8:44).
- j) The god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4).
- k) A murderer (John 8:44).
- l) The prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2).
- m) The ruler of this world (John 12:31; 14:30).
- n) The ancient serpent (Revelation 12:9).
- o) The tempter (Matthew 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5).
- p) A blinder of minds (2 Corinthians 4:4).
- q) A roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8).

4. PRINCIPLES

- a) Believers are in Christ and therefore in a position of supremacy over Satan (Romans 8:37).
- b) Satan was defeated at the cross once and for all (Colossians 2:14,15).
- c) He can therefore only use devices and schemes, trying to convince the believer that he can still win the battle against God.
- d) Satan, through religion, tries to get man to work independently from God.
- e) A Christian out of fellowship can promote principles proposed by Satan (Matthew 4:8-10; Mark 8:33).
- f) Satan will use Scripture slightly changed, or added to, to try and confuse believers and lead them astray (Matthew 4:3-10; cf. Psalm 91:11,12).
- g) If Satan the adversary is resisted he will flee from you (James 4:7).
- h) Knowledge and application of the Scriptures is essential in understanding the wiles of the devil (Ephesians 6:11).

ANGELS – SATAN'S STRATEGY AND TACTICS

1. Believers are warned against him and his tactics. (Ephesians 4:27, 6:11-13, James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8)

2. We must be ready and alert. (2 Corinthians 2:11)

3. Satan is a deceiver and a counterfeiter. He uses deception - not obviously wrong or sinful – but very subtle changes to the truth (Genesis 3:1). Remember, a counterfeit looks like the original.

4. Satan is described as an “angel of light” – often seeming attractive and “good”. (2 Corinthians 11:14)
5. His tactics
- a) Towards unbelievers.
- i) to blind them regarding the gospel. (2 Corinthians 4:3, 4, 2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10)
- b) Towards believers.
- i) Satan seeks to hinder our growth and witness. (1 Peter 5:8)
- ii) Satan will mislead into false doctrine and legalism. (1 Timothy 5:14-15)
- iii) He persuades believers to ignore the will of God through disobedience (Genesis 2:17, James 4:7-8)
- iv) Satan often attacks our assurance of salvation so that we doubt God.
- v) Worry (1 Peter 5, 7-9)
- vi) Fear of death. (Hebrews 2:14-15)
- vii) He accuses believers of sin both to God and to the believer (using guilt). (Revelation 12:9-10, Job 1:6-11)
- viii) He takes our focus off Christ by getting eyes on self (1 Corinthians 1:10-11), on people (1 Corinthians 1:12), on things (Hebrews 13:5-6)
- ix) When we don't allow the Holy Spirit to control our lives, we open ourselves up to Satanic attack. (1 Corinthians 2:11, 2 Corinthians 2:11, 1 Timothy 5:14-15)
- x) The Lord will allow Satan to attack a believer as discipline for unconfessed sin. (1 Timothy 1:20 cf 2 Corinthians 12:7)
- xi) Satan cannot indwell or possess a believer, only beguile them. (Galatians 3:1)
- c) Towards the world in general.
- i) The World – Satan tries to deceive the nations. (Revelation 20:7-10)

JUDGEMENT – GREAT WHITE THRONE

1. The judgement of the Great White Throne is the last judgement. (Revelation 20:11, 15)
2. Only the unsaved are judged at the last judgement as there is no condemnation for Christians. (Romans 8:1)
3. The last judgement occurs at the end of the Millennium. (Revelation 20:7-15)
4. The unsaved are judged according to their works from the Books of Works (Revelation 20:12)
5. The judgement is to show that the Human works of man cannot satisfy the justice of God. God is totally fair and shows that He is only satisfied by “The Good Work” – the death of Christ on the Cross.
6. Having shown the unsaved they have failed to satisfy the holiness of God, the condemned are cast into the Lake of Fire. (Revelation 20:15)

PROPHET AND PROPHECY

1. The gift of prophecy and the office of the prophet are distinguished in Scripture. In the Old Testament there were those who had the office of prophet, and served in an official capacity within the worship system of Israel but there were also those who at times were given the gift of prophecy to give a special prophecy even though they were not full time prophets. Elijah was a man with the office and the gift, where-as David had the gift at times but not the office.
2. The roles of the person with the office of prophet were many and varied:
 - [a] – Aaron was a preacher Exodus 7:1
 - [b] – In Nehemiah's time the prophet-preacher had a role to exegete the Word of God clearly so that the people would know the truth. Nehemiah 6:7, Hosea 6:5.
 - [c] – As revivalists they were to call people to repentance. Judges 6:7-12, Zechariah 7:7-12.
 - [d] – They were to oppose apostasy so that those who were likely to be misled by a false teacher would have no excuse. 1 Kings 18:36-39, 40, 2 Chronicles 25:15 Ezekiel 2:5, 2 Kings 20:11.
 - [e] – They were encouragers of the people. Ezra 5:2.
 - [f] – They were sometimes song/worship leaders for the people. 1 Samuel 10:5.
 - [g] – They led in prayer at worship. 2 Chronicles 32:20.
 - [h] – They were the advisers to the kings and they were associated with coronations. 1 Samuel 10:1, 1 Kings 11:28, 29, 2 Kings 9:1-6, 2 Chronicles 12:5, 2 Chronicles 15:2-7.
 - [i] – They were spiritual advisers or seers for the kings; they “saw” the immediate future and so were able to advise the kings of the right decisions. 1 Samuel 9:9, 2 Samuel 24:11, 1 Chronicles 21:9, 24:29, 2 Chronicles 19:2, 33:18, 2 Kings 17:13, Isaiah 29:10,
 - [j] – They were fore-tellers of significant future events. 2 Samuel 7:5-16, Amos 9:11, Isaiah 9:6,7, Isaiah 53, Ezekiel 34:22ff, Micah 5:2, Daniel 9:26, Zechariah 13:8, Joel, Zechariah 14, and many more.

[k] – God intended them to be the shepherds and vine-dressers of the nation. As such they were to be the type of Christ who is referred to in the Old Testament as “the great prophet”. Deuteronomy 18:15-19, Zechariah 13:5,6, Matthew 21:11, Luke 7:16, 8:18-20, 24:19,23-26, John 7:40,41.

3. The Methodology of the prophets. There was no “set” formula for the prophets to follow, but certain things were established as “tests” for the people to be sure the prophet was genuine.

[a] – The prophet had to have a spiritual life witness that was like Moses. Deuteronomy 34:10-12.

[b] – God spoke to the prophets by dreams and visions. God spoke to Moses face to face but he was an exception. Numbers 12:6-7.

[c]. – The prophet had to be totally confident of his message, as he was judged by God if there was any falsehood in it. 1 Kings 22:13,14, 2 Kings 5:8.

[d] – There were to be no secret prophecies, everything was to be open and clear, so that all the people might be warned of God. Jeremiah 23:25-29.

[e] – The prophet had to be specific in his message and had to be obeyed literally. 2 Kings 5:10-19, note especially verse 13.

4. There were always false prophets; in fact the great prophets of the Old Testament were always outnumbered by false prophets in their own day. Jeremiah 2:8, Ezekiel 13:1-23.

Our Lord warned us that there will always be false prophets about. Matthew 7:15-23.

NOTE THE LORD’S WORDS HERE in that the personal walk of the prophet is to be paid attention to:-

No spiritual fruit in their life = no truth in their words.

God allows the false prophets to operate without immediate judgment upon them, so that believers are always presented with an obedience test, to see whether we will obey the Scriptures or follow our own lusts to judgment.

False prophets will abound at times of poor Bible teaching. Weeds only grow in poorly cared for soil. Hosea 4:5,6, 9:7,8.

5. Tests that believers must apply when confronting a person claiming the gift of prophecy.

[a] – The words of the prophet will never contradict the Word of God. Jeremiah 23:33-36, 2 Peter 2:1-3, 1 Corinthians 14:32.

[b] – The prophet will never call people away from genuine worship of God. Deuteronomy 13:1-5.

[c] – The prophet will always be specific and the prophecy will be able to be tested. Deuteronomy 18:20-22, Jeremiah 28:9.

[d] – Any prophet who asked for money was to be treated as false. Jeremiah 8:10.

[e] – Any prophet who was a drunkard was to be treated as false. Micah 2:11.

[f] – Any unconfessed sin of envy, jealousy, strife, etc in their life, they were false! Jeremiah 23:11.

[g] – If they were found only in groups they were probably false, as God’s prophets were men alone. 1 Kings 22:5-8, 18:22.

[h] – Does the prophecy accord with Scripture (this is more than just not contradict)? 1 Corinthians 14:37,38, 2 Kings 23:2.

JUDGEMENT – JUDGEMENT SEAT OF CHRIST See page 38

NOTES

CHAPTER 7**INTRODUCTION**

Nehemiah cannot trust any of the local nobles to take charge over the city of Jerusalem as his deputy and so he appoints his brothers the rulership of key positions. Normally you would accuse this man of nepotism, but he has clearly explained in earlier chapters why he couldn't trust the Jewish leadership, and a new generation will need to grow up away from their parent's carnality before they will be able to take charge and rule without corruption or traitorous behaviours. There is also the need to update the census records to work out who are Jews and who are not, and to get more Jews to live in the rebuilt city.

Nehemiah has rebuilt the city as the large place it was under the last kings, but he has less than 10% of the population to fill its streets and man its walls for defensive purposes. He takes action to secure the city and the surrounding area from future attacks by other satraps, or marauding bands from the Arabian Peninsula. There are very specific instructions regarding when the gates are to be opened and when closed, and rosters of guards are drawn up from the population within the walls. The city is too big for the nation as it then was, but it will grow into it over the next hundred years, and the repair of more of the houses and palaces will begin soon after the walls are repaired.

This section repeats the list of names from Ezra Chapter 2. This is strange given that the two books were combined in the Hebrew Bible. It would be more helpful for us to have a current census of Nehemiah's time, and then be able to compare the numbers with Zerubbabel's return, but for some reason Nehemiah re-states the list of the originals who returned under Cyrus' initial edict. It is as if these are seen as the "founding fathers" of the new nation and they are receiving double honour. Being able to trace the genealogy of all the priesthood is also again underlined by this repetition, and the people are reminded that there are powerful spiritual and political reasons behind not mixing with unbelievers outside of Israel.

NEHEMIAH 7:1-73

1 Now it came to pass, when the wall was built, and I had set up the doors, and the porters and the singers and the Levites were appointed, **2** That I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: for he was a faithful man, and feared God above many. **3** And I said unto them, Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun be hot; and while they stand by, let them shut the doors, and bar them: and appoint watches of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, every one in his watch, and every one to be over against his house. **4** Now the city was large and great: but the people were few therein, and the houses were not builded. **5** And my God put into mine heart to gather together the nobles, and the rulers, and the people, that they might be reckoned by genealogy. And I found a register of the genealogy of them which came up at the first, and found written therein, **6** These are the children of the province, that went up out of the captivity, of those that had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away, and came again to Jerusalem and to Judah, every one unto his city; **7** Who came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, Baanah. The number, I say, of the men of the people of Israel was this;

8 The children of Parosh, two thousand an hundred seventy and two.

9 The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two.

10 The children of Arah, six hundred fifty and two. **11** The children of Pahathmoab, of the children of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand and eight hundred and eighteen.

12 The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four.

13 The children of Zattu, eight hundred forty and five.

14 The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and threescore.

15 The children of Binnui, six hundred forty and eight.

16 The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty and eight.

17 The children of Azgad, two thousand three hundred twenty and two.

18 The children of Adonikam, six hundred threescore and seven.

19 The children of Bigvai, two thousand threescore and seven.

20 The children of Adin, six hundred fifty and five.

21 The children of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety and eight.

22 The children of Hashum, three hundred twenty and eight.

23 The children of Bezai, three hundred twenty and four.

24 The children of Hariph, an hundred and twelve.

25 The children of Gibeon, ninety and five.

26 The men of Bethlehem and Netophah, an hundred fourscore and eight.

27 The men of Anathoth, an hundred twenty and eight.

28 The men of Bethazmaveth, forty and two.

29 The men of Kirjathjearim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred forty and three.

30 The men of Ramah and Gaba, six hundred twenty and one.

31 The men of Michmas, an hundred and twenty and two.

32 The men of Bethel and Ai, an hundred twenty and three.

33 The men of the other Nebo, fifty and two.

34 The children of the other Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four.
 35 The children of Harim, three hundred and twenty.
 36 The children of Jericho, three hundred forty and five.
 37 The children of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred twenty and one.
 38 The children of Senaah, three thousand nine hundred and thirty.
 39 The priests: the children of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred seventy and three.
 40 The children of Immer, a thousand fifty and two.
 41 The children of Pashur, a thousand two hundred forty and seven.
 42 The children of Harim, a thousand and seventeen.
 43 The Levites: the children of Jeshua, of Kadmiel, and of the children of Hodevah, seventy and four.
 44 The singers: the children of Asaph, an hundred forty and eight.
 45 The porters: the children of Shallum, the children of Ater, the children of Talmon, the children of Akkub, the children of Hatita, the children of Shobai, an hundred thirty and eight.
 46 The Nethinims: the children of Ziha, the children of Hashupha, the children of Tabbaoth,
 47 The children of Keros, the children of Sia, the children of Padon,
 48 The children of Lebana, the children of Hagaba, the children of Shalmai,
 49 The children of Hanan, the children of Giddel, the children of Gahar,
 50 The children of Reaiah, the children of Rezin, the children of Nekoda,
 51 The children of Gazzam, the children of Uzza, the children of Phaseah,
 52 The children of Besai, the children of Meunim, the children of Nephishesim,
 53 The children of Bakbuk, the children of Hakupha, the children of Harhur,
 54 The children of Bazlith, the children of Mehida, the children of Harsha,
 55 The children of Barkos, the children of Sisera, the children of Tamah,
 56 The children of Neziah, the children of Hatipha.
 57 The children of Solomon's servants: the children of Sotai, the children of Sophereth, the children of Perida,
 58 The children of Jaala, the children of Darkon, the children of Giddel,
 59 The children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattil, the children of Pochereth of Zebaim, the children of Amon.
 60 All the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon's servants, were three hundred ninety and two.
 61 And these were they which went up also from Telmelah, Telharesha, Cherub, Addon, and Immer: but they could not shew their father's house, nor their seed, whether they were of Israel.
 62 The children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred forty and two.
 63 And of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai, which took one of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite to wife, and was called after their name.
 64 These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but it was not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood.
 65 And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and Thummim.
 66 The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore, 67 Beside their manservants and their maidservants, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and they had two hundred forty and five singing men and singing women. 68 Their horses, seven hundred thirty and six: their mules, two hundred forty and five: 69 Their camels, four hundred thirty and five: six thousand seven hundred and twenty asses. 70 And some of the chief of the fathers gave unto the work. The Tirshatha gave to the treasure a thousand drams of gold, fifty basons, five hundred and thirty priests' garments. 71 And some of the chief of the fathers gave to the treasure of the work twenty thousand drams of gold, and two thousand and two hundred pound of silver. 72 And that which the rest of the people gave was twenty thousand drams of gold, and two thousand pound of silver, and threescore and seven priests' garments. 73 So the priests, and the Levites, and the porters, and the singers, and some of the people, and the Nethinims, and all Israel, dwelt in their cities; and when the seventh month came, the children of Israel were in their cities.

REFLECTION

Verses 1 – 3. Once the walls and gates were rebuilt it was necessary to re-organise the Levitical and priestly service for the temple. There was the new task of "Porter" to guard doors and the supervision of these may have been organised to be done by members of the family of Aaron, the priesthood itself. There was also the need to have one authority in charge of the Gates of the whole city, and be over all in charge of the city defences. Nehemiah's two brothers are the men selected for the key tasks, although it appears that one, Hananiah, was already the guard commander of the palace guard that had come with Nehemiah from Persia. The citadel is likely to have been on the East wall at some point between the Ophel palaces and the Temple Mount, as we noted in Chapter 3.

Another brother, Hanani, is placed in overall charge of the city itself, reporting to his father, who is in charge of the Province. This opens the door for the detractors from Nehemiah to accuse him of nepotism, but he is not going to be distracted by that, any more than he has been distracted by other attacks. These are the right men, for they are godly men who serve the Lord in fear of drawing any divine displeasure. They are men who care only for the opinion of God, and their devotion is total to the Lord. The Lord seeks passionate commitment. Matthew 6:21, Ephesians 6:5, Colossians 3:22-23.

Verses 4 – 5. This verse reminds us that the walls built were along the line of the great city walls of the great kings, and that the city covered a large area, possibly as big as the present Moslem walls. The people living in the city are few, and most of the houses are still damaged shells. The cranes used for the walls can be used in moving the

heavy blocks of Jerusalem stone to repair house and palace walls, and the wood ordered will possibly now be able to be used for the beams for second floors and roof framing. Rooms were fairly standard size to fit with timber spans.

The repair of these ancient houses that had most of their walls intact was relatively simple and quite quick. The son of Nehemiah who is in charge of the defence of Jerusalem will have the job of assigning houses to new arrivals also, and then helping them organise the re-flooring and re-roofing. Nehemiah feels led by the Lord to gather all the people and check out the genealogies of them all and ensure that all who claim to be Jewish are indeed Jewish. He locates the first register, probably kept in the temple, and uses that as his starting document.

Verses 6 – 65. The names and their significance have been discussed in Ezra Chapter 2, and so we will skip a long discussion of this section, as it doesn't add much to Ezra's list. These are the heroes of the nation of Judea; they are those who left their by then comfortable exile lives, and headed into the wilderness. They joined with Moses and the Exodus Generation in their great adventure and walked about the same distance in four months as the Exodus Generation walked in forty years, and they entered the land with very similar challenges and they needed faith and hope in God to succeed, and they did succeed.

This Post-Exile Generation did build the temple, and this next one eighty years later has been their spiritual inheritors and they have built the walls of the great city. By listing their ancestors here Nehemiah pays tribute to them and draws the analogy to their own feat through these amazing 52 days. They are worthy successors to their fore fathers under Moses, under Joshua, under David, and under Zerubbabel. Under Nehemiah's leadership they have stood in the great train of history and played their part in God's strength. It's good to be reminded that we stand with heroes! Hebrews 11.

Verses 66 – 73. Many of the exiles who remained in Babylon provided for the first group so that the temple could be built, and those who have remained still in Babylon have also provided for Nehemiah's present mission. The two separate centres of Judaism, Babylon and Jerusalem, are united in their concern that the Lord's work be done for the city of God. There is the recognition by all that Jerusalem is the centre of God's plan, but each is weighing up where they are to serve and doing what they can in the place they feel called to stay and serve within.

Those who have chosen to stay in Babylon have played a part in the work at Jerusalem by their giving, and those in Jerusalem have played their part by their sweat and toil. All who have energetically supported the work of the Lord may now share in the glory of its completion. Those who reneged on the work and who charged interest to their brethren have lost that opportunity to whole heartedly rejoice in the successes of the great venture that has now been accomplished.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. Let us select the right people for the right jobs in the Church. Let us not be distracted by political considerations, but select the men or women who are God Fearers and lovers of the Word. Let us select leaders on the basis of the biblical criteria we read of in Timothy and Titus, and not be swayed from good appointments by any political consideration. Only the best people can be given the power to lead, or the sheep will be made merchandise of! Let us always select the best people, God's people, to each and every task in the Lord's service.

2. Joy is the reward for those who labour in the Lord's vineyard in their assigned place, but frustration and inner distress is the lot of those who do not do what the Lord has called them to do, or add to their call some selfish act that ruins their joy. All our human effort/work adds nothing to the joy of the Lord, and every sinful and selfish act destroys eternal joy. Let us preach clearly this truth that our people might have real and lasting joy. John 10:10. Let us play our part in history in the joy of the Lord and the power of the Holy Spirit. Nothing other than the Lord's "well done" is worth hearing at the end of our lives. Let us play to be worthy of hearing those words from the one who alone matters.

3. In the work we do let us always aim high; at the needs of the church in twenty years, not the needs of the present, for by the time we have done the work it is already dated and inadequate. We have suffered for years from lack of real vision and built for our needs, rather than seeing with the eyes of faith for what we will need in years to come and building for that. Let us see with the eyes of faith and build and work for the glory of the Lord in abundance, not the feeble clap of people who are satisfied with a little. Let us be satisfied with nothing less than the glory and joy of the Lord.

DOCTRINES

CHRISTIAN LIFE – FAITH

1. The Christian life can be divided into three sections or stages.

- a) Stage 1 – Salvation.
- b) Stage 2 – The Christian Walk
- c) Stage 3 – The Christian in Heaven.

2. Man has three means of obtaining knowledge:

- a) Faith – to believe or trust that something is true
- b) Reasoning – using human logic to deduce that something is true
- c) Experimentation – to test and prove something to satisfy yourself that it is true

3. The only acceptable method of gaining grace is by faith, since this means depending upon God without our human merit.

- a) Stage 1 – Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved – salvation (Acts 16:31).
- b) Stage 2 – Trusting in the promises and principles of the Word of God – the Christian walk.
- c) Stage 3 – Trusting in God’s provision – Heaven.

4. To illustrate belief and unbelief we follow the Jews from the plagues in Egypt to crossing the Jordan:

Incident	God’s Promise	Scripture	Response	Result
Last plague	Passover Lamb	Exodus 12:21-30	Trust	Jews spared last plague.
Egyptian Army	Red Sea Crossing	Exodus 14:1-31	Trust	Moses leads Jews over Red Sea.
No Water	Water	Exodus 17:1-7	Trust	By striking rock (Christ) water obtained.
Gold Calf	God’s Doctrine	Exodus 32:15-28	Distrust	Sons of Levi (Priests) slaughtered for leading
Quails	Manna	Num 11:10-33	Distrust	Many deaths due to quails
Giants	Enter Canaan	Num 13:1-14:38	Distrust	Death of fearful spies. Wandering in desert
No water	Water	Num 20:2-13	Distrust	Moses strikes rock in disobedience. Will not enter Promised Land.
Wanderings	Cross Jordan	Joshua 3:1-17	Trust	Israel crosses Jordan on dry ground

5. Salvation faith is the complete trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for your sins and rose from the dead to give you eternal life. (Acts 16:31, Romans 4:20-25)

6. Anything added to becomes works, and therefore nullifies faith (Romans 4:4)

7. Faith is shown outwardly by confession with the mouth. (Romans 10:9-10)

8. Since faith does not depend on our own abilities, anybody can believe. Even little children (Matthew 18:2-4)

9. Assurance is by faith (Hebrews 10:22)

10. Faith is trust which does not ask to know all about God but believe all that God has said.

11. Salvation faith receives Christ as Saviour and Lord. (John 1:12, 3:16, 3:36)

12. Faith of salvation is the complete trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as having been delivered from our transgressions and raised again for our justification. (Romans 4:20-25)

13. By Faith God gives the soul assurance of the reality of things never yet seen by the natural man. (Hebrews 11:1-3)

14. The triumphs of faith in daily life are illustrated for the believer in Hebrews 11:1-39. Abel, Noah, Moses etc.

15. Faith comes from hearing and hearing from the Word of God. (Romans 10:17)

16. Faith is the only non meritorious means of understanding things the other being rationalism and empiricism.

17. To become like a little child is an analogy to faith as a young child only has faith. (Matthew 18:2-4)

NOTES

CHAPTER 8**INTRODUCTION**

Earlier I had raised the question about where Ezra was at the time of the rebuilding of the walls, and raised a number of possible answers. The actual time sequence of events described in both books of Ezra and Nehemiah is still in debate by scholars, but here we find that Ezra is not dead, but had clearly been either away for the time of the rebuilding of the walls, or he had not played a prominent part, other than coordinating the Levites and priests. Whatever the activities or location of Ezra then, he is now back at the side of Nehemiah and steps to the fore-front again. These two men work together for the Lord's glory, at times one leading and at times the other. At this point Nehemiah is the political leader, and Ezra the spiritual, but Nehemiah sets the spiritual example as well, and allows Ezra to take the moral leadership at this crucial time after the walls are completed. Ezra may have been Satrap before him, and may take over afterwards...

As has been noted before, this is "divine history" where the perspective of the Lord is given, not the details that man finds interesting. It would be interesting and possibly useful to our study to know where exactly Ezra was earlier, and when he returned, but we are not told the exact sequence of all events. What we are told, is that when the people gathered to ask that the Law be read aloud he was there ready to do it. God positions His people in the right places at the right time for the sowing and reaping of the occasional positive volition of groups of people towards the purpose, plan, will, and Word of God. Matthew 9:37-38, John 4:35.

In the business world of today we refer to, "the need to position oneself in the place where things are about to happen". By this we identify the principle that the really successful business person sees the trends or directions of the business world, and is ready to exploit them before others. This sort of insight and intuition requires years of devoted study and reflection, but many successful business people have what it takes to apply themselves to this, and their reward is that they make millions of dollars. In the spiritual realm a similar ability operates amongst keen believers who are focused upon the Lord's work, and are desperate to be in the right place to do what He requires of them.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit that produces this spiritual discernment in the life of the called person who is totally focused upon the Lord's will for them. Hebrews 4:1ff. Whole hearted devotion, and a desperate desire to please the Lord, is required of anyone who wants to be in the right place at the right time for achieving something great for the Lord. Luke warmness in any field of endeavour does not ever get great results. James 1:2-8, Revelation 3:15-21.

In the athletic arena, the business world, and the spiritual realm the real rewards come to those who are "sold out" to their goal; they whole heartedly devote themselves to their endeavour and let nothing stop them reaching their goal for glory. For the unbeliever in the business or athletic world the rewards are temporary and death ends the glory for them. For the believer this is not the case, for death ends nothing of value to us. We have the present glory and joy of the Lord and later we enjoy the eternal rewards of the faithful servant. Read the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:19-27, and feel his desperation to "run his race" and win the prize that is there before him. Notice his passion in these words.

It is this same level of passion for the will of the Lord that catches fire in the people of Jerusalem in the days after the rebuilding of the walls. Ezra and Nehemiah have mentored this wholeheartedness and the fire now catches amongst the people. This "wave of the Holy Spirit's fire" sweeps the people up, and they passionately desire to hear and apply the living Word of God into the fabric of their society. Revival occurs when the Word of God is released amongst the people in Holy Spirit power, and that is what we see happening in this chapter before us. Refer to the BTB studies on CHRISTIAN LIFE – CONFIDENCE, CONSECRATION, THINKING BIBLICALLY, REWARDS AND CROWNS, GOD – ELECTION.

NEHEMIAH 8:1-18

1 And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel. **2** And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. **3** And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law. **4** And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam. **5** And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up: **6** And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground. **7** Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place. **8** So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. **9** And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. **10** Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send

portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our LORD: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength. 11 So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved. 12 And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them. 13 And on the second day were gathered together the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests, and the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, even to understand the words of the law. 14 And they found written in the law which the LORD had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month: 15 And that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written. 16 So the people went forth, and brought them, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim. 17 And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness. 18 Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner.

REFLECTION

Verses 1 – 3. The wall rebuilding was completed in the month Elul. Nehemiah 6:15. This month is the sixth month in the Hebrew calendar of the time. The next month is the seventh month and is called Tizri, and falls in September-October. It is the month of the Feast of Tabernacles, and was a significant month for the first group of returned Exiles, for in that month they celebrated the great feast upon the new altar on the still destroyed temple mount. For the first time since the fall of Jerusalem a holy feast day was celebrated again, and it was this seventh month. Ezra 3:1-11. The year for this is probably 535 BC. The Temple rebuilding was halted for many years due to opposition, but was finally completed in the twelfth month called Adar in the Hebrew in the year 516 BC. Ezra 6:14-15. The first great Feast in the new Temple is the Feast of Passover, held in the next month, the first of the Jewish calendar, Nissan. Ezra 6:19ff.

As we enter the days of the rebuilding of Nehemiah and the preaching of Ezra here in this chapter it is probably the year 445 BC. We cannot help but ask why the next generation, after the rebuilding of the temple, stopped the annual celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, given it was the first feast celebrated after their ancestors returned less than eighty years before. What has happened in the land to stop the Feast of Tabernacles being well known by the general population, so that when they hear about it from the books of Moses they weep aloud at what they have been missing out on?

Once again we are not given the reasons for the falling away of the observance of the great feasts, but perhaps the shortage of animals, or opposition of the northern satraps has had a far more powerful effect than we realised. Clearly these satraps hate the fact that Nehemiah is in charge and the province of Judea is prosperous again. We have some clues that have been given to us in this book as to what has been happening. We have the clue that the northern satraps had ruled over the area with the reference to the "throne of the satraps" on the western city wall. Nehemiah 3:7. We also know that poverty has driven many to mortgage their lands, and this may be poverty caused by excessive taxation and/or drought. Nehemiah 5:1ff. We also have the great desire of the northern satraps to stop the rebuilding work and keep the Jewish people poor and vulnerable. All these things point to the likelihood that the people of Judea have been deliberately kept in the place where the keeping of the feasts as a nation has not been possible.

Ezra may have been present for a number of years before Nehemiah's arrival, but he has not had the political power and connections back at the Empire's centre to shift the obstacles to full national worship. He has used the time to prepare the priesthood and Levites, but it is Nehemiah who completes the national preparation and clears the rubble away, and opens the door for true celebration again. Once again we are reminded of the way the Lord works, weaving the labours of different people together, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to achieve His Plan. Ezra has been stopped from fully celebrating the great feasts, and while he was able to deal with mixed marriages, he couldn't eliminate all of them, nor could he eliminate the control exercised by the northern satraps. He has done what he could and prayed and waited for the Lord to bring Nehemiah to complete the political initiatives so that the spiritual momentum could re-start. Both men work together to achieve the plan of the Lord, and they work without any conflict or rivalry. Unity between brethren is the sign of the Spirit at work within them. Psalms 133:1, Ephesians 4:3-13.

The temple will still have kept the feasts, and sacrifices have certainly been offered, but the vast majority of the people have not been able to take an active part in the celebrations. Before Nehemiah and Ezra's arrival there has been little to celebrate for many decades, and little opportunity for the general population to even learn the Law of Moses. Ezra has begun the work and has been able to train up the priests and Levites so that when the revival does occur they are all well schooled in the Mosaic Law, and so can be tutors to the people.

The people through these tough years have been in a battle for physical survival which Nehemiah has turned around to victory and pride through the rebuilding of the walls. He has built more than walls; he has removed their fear of the northern satraps, removed financial debt load from them, and given them pride in their identity again as a people. They now have something to celebrate and the first great celebration will be the Feast of Tabernacles, just as it was the first feast celebrated by the returning exiles in 535 BC, ninety years before. Refer to the BTB study, FEASTS OF ISRAEL.

In the days following the rebuilding of the walls there is a real move of the Holy Spirit upon the people and they get a real desire to hear the words of God from the Law of Moses that they have not been able to hear for many years. Many of the people of the land gather at the city in the seventh month in response to this call of the Holy Spirit to know what God is doing in the nation and what God requires of them. They have finished the rebuild, all headed to their homes and been refreshed, but they have all reflected upon what this great task means to them as individuals and as a nation.

There is a ground swell of passion for the Lord's will to again rule over the nation, and for the ancient ways to be re-instituted. There is a great desire amongst the people to rejoice in their God who has enabled them to do such a task as to rebuild the walls and gates of Jerusalem. The people spontaneously gather in the Kidron Valley opposite to the Water Gate. From this high gate tower Ezra will be able to stand on a wooden platform built even higher than the battlements, and speak out into the natural amphitheatre of the valley across to the Mount of Olives.

Over a hundred thousand people could gather easily in this place and hear the words of a well positioned man reading carefully through the Law of Moses. The people stand from the roadway that went up the bottom of the valley, and then back up the slope of the Mount of Olives. The wall of the ancient city is much lower than the Mount of Olives, and so where the people are gathered is a natural amphitheatre. Ezra could project his voice across the valley and be heard distinctly by the vast crowd. He will also place the men he has been teaching through the previous years amongst the crowd in their distinctive priestly and Levitical garments as the tutors to explain further the words he has spoken. Ezra has had time to prepare and so each of these men will also likely have copies of the Law to read from to the smaller groups on the hills. Ezra reads for at least three hours and the crowd stands stock still and concentrates on every word they hear.

Verses 4 – 6. Ezra stands upon the platform built on top of the gate tower, but he does not stand alone. Thirteen (or possibly fourteen) key men stand with him as visible support for his ministry and as their testimony to the centrality of the Word of God in the revived nation. These men may be priests or elders, we are not told; I suspect there may be seven of each. In a parallel passage in a non-canonical book fourteen are mentioned; seven on each side. 1 Esdras. It may be that a later scribal omission has dropped the name of one man; we cannot be sure. What we can be sure of is the significance of having men standing with him as he speaks.

Ezra is not drawing attention to himself, nor is he making himself the central figure that all concentrate upon; the Word is the central item here, not any man, and so by standing with 13-14 others he makes that point strongly. We are all called to play our part in any great work of the Lord. Some are called to preach, others to stand firmly behind the preacher and by their silent strength they testify to the importance of what is being said. Few need to speak, but all need to stand with the speaker of truth. This is a very good ratio of prayer warriors to each speaker in any outreach work in a dangerous place, and I know that the African Church uses this as a basic ratio for all its difficult work. At least fourteen prayer warriors need to accompany any speaker to back that speaker of the truth with prayers of power.

He looks down upon the first rows of the gathered people in the valley below and he speaks to the first rows. For acoustical reasons this is the right thing, as his voice will then carry up the slope on the other side and all behind the first rows will hear as well. If he speaks up to the people higher on the slope his voice will go over the heads of the first rows altogether. As he opens the scroll of the law to read from it he blesses the Lord who has given them the Word, and given His Holy Spirit to lead all the people to hear the Word. As he begins to speak all the people stand to their feet, and after they have prostrated themselves in worship, they will remain standing for three hours at least while he reads the words of Moses to them.

We are way too casual with the reading of the Holy Word of God today. Let us be more reverent as we read the words of the Lord and let the people know as they read that they are hearing the words of God to their hearts. Let us prepare for the reading of the Word by solemn prayer and silence so that all might prepare their hearts to receive what God has for them. The people cry aloud "Amen, Amen". This Hebrew word "amen" means "so be it", and it is a prayer, not the end of a prayer. These people want the Word to bless and challenge them, and they prostrate themselves to the earth facing the temple mount in worship of the Lord, and in anticipation for what the Word has for them.

Verses 7 – 10. It is of interest to note that Nehemiah is not on the podium with Ezra as he speaks. I suspect, like all great leaders he is standing below the great scribe in humility as he hears the Word of God himself. It would not surprise me if he was at Ezra's feet, possibly on the tower (for he will speak to the people), but in the place where as the temporal ruler he submits to the spiritual authority of the man reading the Word of God. It is also a visual testimony that there is no "divide and rule" possible by the northern satraps, for these two men are united.

As Ezra speaks he has key Bible teachers circulating through the vast crowd asking if there are any questions, and then explaining things that people have not fully understood. The many Levites are also involved in this, which is a testimony to the thoroughness of Ezra's Bible College teaching in the previous years. The men mentioned by name are the leaders and co-ordinators of the Levitical teachers. Several hundred teachers under these named men may be involved in this process.

The sole focus of all teaching must be the understanding of the teaching by the people hearing the teaching. It doesn't matter how eloquent and learned the teaching is, if it doesn't communicate, then it has failed in its purpose. A teacher is not there to impress and amaze, but to communicate! Notice the role of the Levitical tutors; they make the meaning of things precise, and explain fully all principles that have created any questions for the people. Absolute clarity is the goal. The Word of God is like the war trumpet of an army, and it must give clear instruction, and the people must know exactly

what each sound means. There is to be no confusion in the communication of God's servants. Confusion is the fruit of the enemy; clarity and understanding is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Ezekiel 33:1-11, 1 Corinthians 14:6-11.

Nehemiah appears to take the platform around verse nine and adds to the voice of Ezra and calls the people to rejoice at the Word of the Lord, for many are weeping as they listen. From the description here the book read aloud is likely Deuteronomy, and the people will be weeping by the time they hear the words of chapters 27-30, for they will look around them and remember the destruction of the city due to their parent's ignoring those very chapters. It is around that time I suspect that Nehemiah jumps up and urges them not to weep, but hear and obey the Lord, and so have no occasion to ever see those warnings fulfilled as their disobedient ancestors had.

The day is then declared by the satrap (Tirshatha) Nehemiah a formal holy day; it becomes an official Persian Provincial holiday at this time, and this makes it impossible for it to be halted by any other satrap now. Nehemiah calls the people to rejoice not weep on this day, for they are obedient, and those who obey the Lord are to rejoice in the Lord. Weeping at the provisions of the Law is for those who have been, or are determined to be, disobedient. Nehemiah calls for all to head home and eat and celebrate the things they have heard, for their determination is to be living under God's blessing, not God's cursing. **Deuteronomy 28:1-14**. He ends his exhortation with the great words that must burn into our own hearts in joy; "The Joy of the Lord is your Strength!"

Verses 11 – 15. The Levites amongst the crowd as the tutors of the Law now join in the words of Nehemiah and Ezra and urge their own respective sections of the crowd to be calm and rejoice. Clearly there is weeping fairly generally through the crowd. Refer to the BTB study on WEEPING. It is a good thing to allow tears to flow when they are appropriate, but stop them before they become self indulgent. It is a good thing to "sit with" the consequences of sin, weep for the losses of the past, but then to dry the eyes and focus forward, that there might be no further losses.

Emotion is for enjoyment, but never to be our slave driver. Uncontrolled emotions are always destructive of opportunities, because they are a waste of time beyond a certain point. Mistakes can be grieved over, but need to be confessed and put aside, and then moved on from. Let us focus forward, never be trapped in the emotional weeping for past sins that now cannot be changed. What always can be changed is the future, and so let us grasp that reality and move forward to change our lives for the better. While we live there is hope that the Holy Spirit can transform our lives and make us a blessing to others. That is why we are here, and so let us commit to fulfilling that destiny in the Lord.

The people headed for their homes to eat, drink and be merry with their families and rejoice in the grace and mercy of the Lord that they are all back in their ancestral land and the city wall is rebuilt. They are to rejoice that the promises of God are fulfilled in their own eyes, for the people have been returned to their land and are rebuilding their nation within the Persian Empire. The Age of the Gentiles has begun, but they are blessed in their relationship with their God, and the countdown to the coming of Messiah has begun this very year. They have experienced the joy of the Lord in understanding the words of Ezra. John 10:10. The second day the ordinary people have a day off to reflect upon the momentous things they have heard, but the elders gather for an intensive Bible teaching session aimed at the leadership. The first thing they all discuss is the command to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles to remind them of the grace and mercy of God in delivering their ancestors in the wilderness in their tents.

They are all convicted that this is the year that they need to restart this celebration and lift it to a level that it hadn't been for many years, possibly ever. From the comment in verse 17 it would appear that the feast was kept but the sleeping out in booths had not occurred since Joshua's day nearly a thousand years before! This generation is determined to restart the feasts with a really powerful Tabernacles celebration, and so they all head away back to their various towns, to ensure that everyone in the nation is told to cut branches and make a booth and live within it for the feast days and talk with their family of the Exodus and God's grace through it to the people of Israel.

The feast of Tabernacles looks back to the Exodus, but also forward to the return of the King, and the people begin this new phase of Jewish history by celebrating Tabernacles as it will be celebrated from this year onwards. Even today Jewish people celebrate this feast in their temporary and festive booths. The prophetic time clock begins this year; the very year that starts the count down to the coming of Messiah. Daniel 9:24ff.

Verses 16 – 18. All around the nation people then build little shelters on their roofs and each family moves into these tent like structures, through which they can see the stars, and they tell stories of the Exodus and the grace and mercy of God towards them as a people. There is a general mood of enthusiasm amongst the people, and most families throw themselves into this activity, and the result is that each family is in a strange situation on their roof, but the parents have heard the Law and so, as the sun sets each night they can eat together and talk to their children about what they heard from Ezra.

The family unit becomes the Bible College now, and the children hear from their own parents the truths of God, and the cycle of disobedience is broken, and the next generation sees that the Word of God is exciting and powerful and gets grown ups to step outside their boring ways of doing things! Children love sleeping on roofs and to do this when the discussion centres in the Word of God would have had great impact on the children. I believe that church camping begins in this feast, and it underlines the value of doing different things to get the children and young people interested in the Word. Everything centres in the Word of God and anything we can do to get children excited about their Bible is worth doing.

Follow up the theme of this chapter by downloading, reading, and discussing as a church the EBCWA Book on REVIVAL AND RENEWAL, which is book 113, on the EBCWA CD or pen-drive. Also read the book number 112, CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP, and the others in that series, 114, and 115, as well as the "Post-Graduate" texts in the Diploma File.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. We are called to rejoice in the Lord always, but often believers do not know enough of the wonderful Word of the Lord to see what they have to rejoice in. This is our task as pastors; to preach the Word of God so that all see and understand the wonders of the Word and will of the Lord. The Lord came to give us joy in His presence and provision. **John 10:10.** Let us ensure that the people know the basis of their joy and have many opportunities to rejoice in the Lord. **Philippians 3:1-3, 4:4, 1 Thessalonians 5:16.**
2. Like Ezra and Nehemiah, let us work together with others who are called of the Lord to serve. Let us seek to discover our part in the Plan of God, and play that part, and seek no other's person's role. Let us rejoice in the work of others and encourage them; let us value them, but not interfere with them. As we allow the Holy Spirit to weave us all together into the Plan we will have many things to rejoice in as we see God's working through many people to achieve His glory. Let us walk in the Spirit and so rejoice in the power of God working through us, and rejoice in the teamwork that this always produces. Where there is unity and team work there is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, and where there is glory grabbing and discord there is the work of the Old Sin Nature. Let us be encouragers of the true fruit of the Spirit and expositors of the false works of sin. There is no room for anything other than unity between brethren.
3. Let us lift up the Word of God in our churches today. Let us take time to pray before we read the Word of God, and let us allow the time for the people to prepare their hearts and change their lives. Let us not be afraid of the prostrate posture in prayer, for more of us need to lie in the dust as we pray, rather than stand in the self satisfied mental attitudes that we often enter the sanctuary. Let us call the prayer warriors of the churches to pray that the people might have a godly excitement as the Word is opened, and an expectation of a mighty move of the Holy Spirit upon the people.
4. The Joy of the Lord is our Strength! Let us walk in the power of the Spirit, and so reap the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and the fruit of the Spirit always includes joy. A believer who is not joyful is a contradiction in terms. The Holy Spirit created "joy of the Lord" is with us even in the midst of suffering and great persecution. **1 Corinthians 1:7, Philippians 3:10, James 5:10-12, 1 Peter 4:3.** Let us be challenged by the events of this first great Feast of Tabernacles, and the year that starts the countdown to Jesus arrival in Jerusalem. The very place that Ezra stood and preached is looked up to every time the disciples and Jesus will walk up that valley having come across the Mount of Olives. This feast begins a tradition that Jewish people still keep and yet it speaks directly of Messiah coming. Let us see in this feast the key to Jewish Evangelism, but let us also see in the booths the way to excite children and young people and make our own families into bible colleges! Let us make the Bible an exciting thing to study and know, just as the Jewish people did in this turning point year of world history in 445 BC.

DOCTRINES

CHRISTIAN LIFE – CONFIDENCE See page 31

CHRISTIAN LIFE – CONSECRATION

1. Consecration means full surrender of self to God. (Romans 6:13)
2. This is the attitude of "denying self" and "not my will, but yours be done" (Matthew 16:24, 26:39, Galatians 2:20).
3. This is the only acceptable gift to God. (Romans 12:1,2)
4. The consecration of the Temple is a picture of the believer's life: the Outer Court (the body), the Holy Place (the soul) and the Holy of Holies (spirit)
5. You are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and therefore must be set apart as a holy vessel (Romans 12:1-2 cf. 1 Kings 8:1-11)

CHRISTIAN LIFE – THINKING BIBLICALLY

1. We must think with Holy Spirit filled discernment. Refer SPIRITUALITY.
2. Our discernment is determined by the amount of God's Word we have read, understood and applied into our lives. Colossians 1:9-11. Refer EBCWA CD or website for detailed study Colossians 1.
3. Our human IQ is of no significance in thinking biblically, for the Holy Spirit will teach us as we seek to learn and are obedient to what we learn. 1 Corinthians 1:19- 2:16. Refer EBCWA CD or website for detailed study of 1 Corinthians 1.

4. To think biblically we must apply what we know. James 1:21-25. Refer EBCWA CD or website for detailed study of James 1. There is no such thing as knowledge that remains unapplied, for such "knowledge" is simply self deception.

CHRISTIAN LIFE – REWARDS AND CROWNS

1. Rewards and Salvation are carefully separated in the scriptures. Salvation is a free gift from God, rewards are for meritorious service in the power of the Spirit.

2. Salvation – a free gift to the lost (Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 6:23, John 4:10), an everlasting possession (John 3:36, John 5:24, John 6:47).

3. Rewards – to the saved who faithfully work for the Lord (1 Corinthians 9:24, 25, Revelation 22:12), distributed at the Judgement Seat of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11-15, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Romans 14:10), which takes place after the Rapture of the Church (Revelation 19:7,8).

4. Rewards are often pictured in the form of crowns:-

- a) The incorruptible crown – for faithfulness in exercising self control (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).
- b) The crown of glory – for faithfulness in suffering (1 Peter 5:4).
- c) The crown of life – for faithfulness under trial (James 1:12, Revelation 2:10).
- d) The crown of righteousness – for faithful testimony (2 Timothy 4:8).
- e) The crown of rejoicing – for faithful service (1 Thessalonians 2:19, 20, Philippians 4:1).

5. Rewards come after you have entered into the Plan of God through regeneration

6. Rewards are based on the use of divine operating assets including the filling of the Holy Spirit

7. You can lose rewards but never salvation (1 Corinthians 3:14-15, 2 Timothy 2:12,13)

GOD – ELECTION AND PREDESTINATION

1. The Biblical concept of predestination does not conflict with human freewill.

2. Christ was predestined for a specific purpose from eternity past – to go to the cross and be raised to glory (Isaiah 42:1, 1 Peter 2:4-6, Acts 2:23)

3. All members of the human race are potentially elect by the Father under the concept of unlimited atonement. (2 Peter 3:9, 1 John 2:2)

4. When a person trusts in Christ for salvation, he is united with Christ and therefore shares His election and destiny (1 Corinthians 1:2, 30, Romans 8:28, 32, Ephesians 1-4)

5. Election is closely linked with foreknowledge. In eternity past, God knew who would believe, He therefore predestined them, called them, and they were saved (Romans 8:29-30, 2 Timothy 1:9)

6. Therefore, election and predestination applies to the believer only. No person is predestined for hell – it is a choice of freewill (John 3:18, John 3:36).

7. Election is a present and future possession of every believer. (John 15:16, Colossians 3:12)

8. Election is also the foundation of the universal church. (1 Thessalonians 1:4)

9. There are five Greek words used in conjunction with predestination.

- a) Pro Orizo – to predesign (Romans 8:28, 29, Ephesians 1:5, 11)
- b) Protithemi – to predetermine (Romans 3:25, Ephesians 1:9)
- c) Prothesis – a predetermined plan (Romans 8:28, 9:11, Ephesians 1:11, 3:11, 2 Timothy 1:9)
- d) Proginosko – to foreordain, to preordain. (Romans 8:29, 11:2, 1 Peter 1:20)
- e) Prognosis – foreknowledge or predetermined purpose (Acts 2:23, 1 Peter 1:2)

10. The life of Judas is a good illustration of predestination and freewill.

- a) God's call is to all people; His desire is that all will be saved. (Matthew 28:18-20, John 3:16 1 John 2:2, 3:23)
- b) God is long suffering towards the lost, not willing that any should perish. (2 Peter 3:9)
- c) God's call is to all, but people must respond. (John 3:36, 16:8-11)
- d) God's call is of love. (Jeremiah 31:3, John 3:16)
- e) Those who resist become hardened in their souls and open to Satanic influence or possession. (Romans 1:20-32, 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12)
- f) Judas was chosen in love by the Lord (Matthew 10:1-4, John 13:18) and received the sop of the honoured guest and sat at the Lord's right hand at supper.
- g) However Judas was a thief and a traitor. (John 12:6, 13:18)

- h) As an unsaved man he was involved in evangelism. Others were probably saved through his reading of the word but he was not. (Matthew 10:1-8)
- i) He became the Son of Perdition by his decision, he could not blame anyone else (John 17:12)
11. Drawing (Gk. Elkuo) means to draw, lead or impel. In this case the drawing or calling is in love. All the elect will freely respond to the work of the Holy Spirit. The drawing provides the motive to respond.
12. All people are called to repent, but only the elect are drawn. (John 3:16, 36, 12:32 16:8-11, 1 John 2:2)
13. Believers, Called Ones, Elect, are all names for the same person. God calls, the Holy Spirit works, we simply respond to the call of Love. (Jeremiah 31:3, John 3:16)
14. The calling provides the motivation for the expression of love in the unbeliever who is positive towards salvation. (Philippians 2:13)
15. God can thereby give His gift of salvation to the elect. (John 1:13, Romans 9:16 Ephesians 2:8-9, Titus 3:5-6)
16. God therefore gets the glory for His work, we get the benefits (Jude 24-25)
- (a) God planned it in eternity past.
- (b) God provides it at the cross.
- ! God prepares for it in the life by conviction.
- (d) God provides the motivation to accept the offer.
- (e) God gives the gift of salvation to the elect.
- (f) God gives the Holy Spirit to the new believer.
- (g) God has prepared a new body for the believer.
17. Christ was elected from eternity past (Isaiah 42:1, 1 Peter 2:4-6). Election of the believer means we share the election of Christ and share the destiny of Christ.
18. This election of Jesus Christ occurred under the concept of Divine Plans (John 15:15, Ephesians 1:4, 2 Timothy 2:13, 1 Peter 1:2)
19. Each believer shares the election of Christ through positional sanctification. (1 Corinthians 1:2, 30, Romans 8:28, 32, Ephesians 1-4)
20. This election occurs at the moment of salvation. (1 Thessalonians 1:4, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 2 Timothy 1:9)
21. Election therefore depends on the positive application of the free will of man to God's plan. (John 3:16)

FEASTS OF ISRAEL

1. In the Jewish calendar seven feasts were ordained by God for the Jews to follow and to be a sign to all believers.
2. In order the feasts were:-
- a) Passover
- b) Unleavened Bread
- c) First Fruits
- d) Pentecost
- e) Trumpets
- f) Atonement
- g) Tabernacles
3. THE PASSOVER (Deuteronomy 16:1-8, Leviticus 23:5)

Historically

- a) This feast originated on the night when the angel of the Lord passed over the land of Egypt immediately prior to the children of Israel leaving their bondage under Moses.
- b) A male lamb without blemish was killed on the 14th Nisan having been brought into the house 4 days before, great care being taken that not a bone in its body was broken. (Exodus 12:1-6)
- c) The lamb was roasted, eaten with bitter herbs and any portion left was burnt. (Exodus 12:7-10)
- d) In the original Passover the blood of the Lamb was daubed on the doorposts and lintels, any such house being spared from the last plague against Egypt. (Exodus 12:21-28) All plagues were against the gods of Egypt.
- e) The Passover was on the anniversary of the promise to Abraham. (Exodus 12:41)

Fulfilment

- a) The sacrificial lamb represents the Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 5:7)
- b) Christ died on the 14th Nisan on the cross having entered Jerusalem, the Holy city 4 days before on the 10th Nisan.

- c) When the Roman soldiers broke the legs of the thieves they found Jesus dead so no bone in His body was broken. (John 19:32, 33)
- d) The roasting of the lamb represents judgement, the bitter herbs representing sins or failures.
- e) The eating of the lamb represents faith in the work of Christ i.e. eating and drinking at the communion table.)
- f) By faith in Christ we are protected from the final judgement of God. (Romans 8:1)

Currently

- a) Each time we celebrate the Lord's Supper we are looking back to the cross and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)
- b) This could also represent salvation to the believer.

4. UNLEAVENED BREAD (Leviticus 23:6-8)

- a) This feast lasted for seven days starting on the 15th Nisan and portrays the provision and fellowship with God.
- b) The bread was unleavened due to the need to leave Egypt with utmost haste. In addition the wine was without leaven or alcohol – the wine being boiled during this feast. This has been found in Chaldean army instructions when it was feared that the Jews could revolt during the time of unleavened bread if they were served with alcoholic Chaldean beer.
- c) As God can have nothing to do with sin God's provision is without leaven as leaven represents evil in the scriptures.
- d) There are various forms of leaven in the Bible:-
 - i) Leaven of the Sadducees – human viewpoint (Matthew 16:6)
 - ii) Leaven of the Pharisees – ritualism (Mark 8:15)
 - iii) Leaven of Herod – worldliness (Mark 8:15)
 - iv) Leaven of the Corinthians – wantonness (1 Corinthians 5:6, 7)
 - v) Leaven of the Galatians – legalism (Galatians 5:9).
- e) Bread made without leaven shows the perfection of Christ (Leviticus 2:11).
- f) This could represent the Christian walk for the believer.
- g) The unleavened bread was cooked on a griddle which caused the bread to have stripes. It also had holes. By his stripes we are healed (Isaiah 53:5) They will look upon him whom they have pierced (Zechariah 12:10).

5. FIRST FRUITS (Leviticus 23:9-14)

- a) This feast always occurred on a Sunday and was celebrated on the 17th Nisan.
- b) This feast portrayed the resurrection of Christ and occurred half-way through the feast of Unleavened Bread.
- c) Christ is said to be the first fruits of them that sleep. (1 Corinthians 15:20)
- d) Christ rose 3 days after his death on the Passover.
- e) The Jews crossed the Red Sea 3 days after leaving bondage.
- f) The ark rested on Ararat on this very day after the flood. (Genesis 8:4)
- g) This could represent the resurrection body for the believer.

6. PENTECOST (Leviticus 23:15-21)

- a) Pente – fifty – this occurred always on a Sunday 50 days or a week of weeks after the first fruits, generally in May or June. (Leviticus 23:15)
- b) It represents the dispersion of the Jews which occurred historically in AD 70 and there followed a long gap to the next feast representing the long time the Jews would be out of the land.
- c) Pentecost in the year of the crucifixion was the day on which the Church age started with the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem. (Acts 2:1-4).
- d) At Pentecost, 3,000 were born again; at the giving of the law, 3,000 were killed.

7. TRUMPETS (Leviticus 23:23, 24)

- a) This occurred in September, the blowing of the trumpets representing the coming of the king. It is the Jewish New Year Day.
- b) This represents the return of the Lord Jesus Christ for his Church at the Rapture. The Jews recognise this as the day on which God would again have a relationship with the Jews.

8. ATONEMENT (Leviticus 23:26-32)

- a) This occurred ten days after the feast of trumpets. It represents the fact that believing Jews only enter into the Millennium.
- b) From evaluation of (Daniel 12:11 & 12) and parallel passages it is apparent that there is a period of judgement at the second advent of some 45 days. This is a period of the wheat and tares, the sheep and the goats. The unbelievers are baptised with fire. (Matthew 3:11,12.) The believers enter the Millennium.
- c) This was the only day of the year that the high priest was able to enter the Holy of Holies bringing a bowl of blood, once for himself and once for the nation. (Hebrews 9:6-7). His entry represents the sacrifice of Christ.
- d) Christ's sacrifice is the fulfilment of this ritual. Christ only had to make one offering, as he was sinless, for the sins of the world. (Hebrews 9:11-14) On the feast of Atonement red wool, the Atonement Lot, was tied to the temple pillar. After the blood was spilt the lot turned white until the time of the cross. Afterwards it stayed red. This sign showed Christ's once and for all sacrifice.

9. TABERNACLES (Leviticus 23:33-36)

This occurred five days after the feast of Atonement and lasted a week. It represents the Millennial Reign of Christ and the perfect provision and environment provided. (Deuteronomy 16:13-15, Romans 8:19-22)

10. It is of interest that the two feasts that speak of God's perfect provision – Unleavened Bread and Tabernacles – were a week duration whilst the others were for a day, speaking of a point in time occurrence such as the crucifixion, resurrection or rapture of the Church.

11. SUMMARY

- a) PASSOVER fulfilled at The Crucifixion on Passover AD 32
- b) UNLEAVENED BREAD fulfilled at Burial of Christ on Unleavened Bread AD 32
- c) FIRST-FRUITS fulfilled at Resurrection of Christ on First-Fruits AD 32
- d) PENTECOST fulfilled at End of Jewish Age on Pentecost AD 32
- e) TRUMPETS to be fulfilled at Rapture of Church
- f) ATONEMENT to be fulfilled at Second Advent of Christ
- g) TABERNACLES to be fulfilled at Millennial reign of Christ

12. As Paul had seen the literal fulfilment of the first four feasts in some 8 weeks in AD 32 it is hardly surprising that he would expect to be in the "rapture generation" (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 2 Thessalonians 2:1)

WEEPING

- 1. Weeping is an expression of unbelief, e.g. the weeping of Numbers 14:1 and Hebrews 3:19.
- 2. Sinful type weeping
 - a) David's tears of failure. (2 Samuel 18:33, 19:1-4)
 - b) Breakdown of the mentality in catastrophe. (1 Samuel 30:4, Psalm 42:3)
 - c) Weeping of the frustration and bitterness of old timers at the dedication of the second temple. (Ezra 3:12, 13)
 - d) The crying of the drunkards in national disaster. (Joel 1:5)
 - e) The weeping of fear because of the giants in the land. (Numbers 14:1)
 - f) The weeping of unbelievers at judgement. (Matthew 8:12, 25:30, Luke 13:28)
- 3. Bona-fide areas of weeping.
 - a) Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus (John 11:35). Weeping is therefore bona-fide at bereavement.
 - b) Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem (Luke 19:41) Weeping of patriotism.
 - c) Jesus wept on the cross (Hebrews 5:7).
 - d) As a mourner (1 Thessalonians 4:13).
 - e) An expression of happiness and faith.
 - f) A reaction to pain.
- 4. There comes a time when all weeping is going to cease (Isaiah 30:19, Revelation 21:4), after death.

NOTES

CHAPTER 9**INTRODUCTION**

The beginning of revival in the hearts of man is found in their full awareness of their sinfulness and their need for thorough confession and deep and real repentance. Daniel 9:3-19 records Daniel's very similar confessional prayer and worship, and it leads directly to this very year, for it was after this confessional prayer of Daniel that the Lord reveals the prophecy of the 70 weeks to Daniel. Repentance is a two way action; it involves the deep confrontation with personal sin and dealing with it, and it involves the forsaking of that sinful life pattern, and then the commitment to walking along new paths. The fruit of confession and repentance is life change, and without life change there is little evidence of reality in the facing of the sin. Matthew 7:16. The Lord's words here indicate that without life change there is a question mark over the reality of the repentance.

Having thoroughly dealt with their past sin through repentance and confession, the believer is then ready to focus their life forward. To be strong in mind and body as they do that, they need to "faith-rest" their hearts upon the truths of God's character, plan and past dealings with them. Security and assurance into the future, rest upon our knowledge of the Lord's past dealings, and the logical assurance drawn from them, that as the Lord has been in the past, so He will continue to be. He has been our protector and deliverer, and so He will remain our strength and our salvation. Read the following passages now, as they form the doctrinal foundation to the worship we will see expressed in this chapter. **Psalms 90:1-12, 102:23-28, 103:10-17, Isaiah 41:1-4, 44:1-8, Malachi 3:6-7, John 8:56-58, Hebrews 13:8.** The reality of God's unchanging character, which is always focused upon our blessing, is the point of stability for the committed believer in facing any testing situations.

NEHEMIAH 9:1-38

1 Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them. **2** And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers. **3** And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the LORD their God one fourth part of the day; and another fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the LORD their God. **4** Then stood up upon the stairs, of the Levites, Jeshua, and Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Chenani, and cried with a loud voice unto the LORD their God. **5** Then the Levites, Jeshua, and Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabniah, Sherebiah, Hodijah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah, said, Stand up and bless the LORD your God for ever and ever: and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise. **6** Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee. **7** Thou art the LORD the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham; **8** And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say, to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou art righteous: **9** And didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heardest their cry by the Red sea; **10** And shewedst signs and wonders upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land: for thou knewest that they dealt proudly against them. So didst thou get thee a name, as it is this day. **11** And thou didst divide the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land; and their persecutors thou threwest into the deeps, as a stone into the mighty waters. **12** Moreover thou leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar; and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way wherein they should go. **13** Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments: **14** And madest known unto them thy holy abhath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant: **15** And gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger, and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and promisedst them that they should go in to possess the land which thou hadst sworn to give them. **16** But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments, **17** And refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not. **18** Yea, when they had made them a molten calf, and said, This is thy God that brought thee up out of Egypt, and had wrought great provocations; **19** Yet thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to shew them light, and the way wherein they should go. **20** Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst. **21** Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing; their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not. **22** Moreover thou gavest them kingdoms and nations, and didst divide them into corners: so they possessed the land of Sihon, and the land of the king of Heshbon, and the land of Og king of Bashan. **23** Their children also multipliedst thou as the stars of heaven, and broughtest them into the land, concerning which thou hadst promised to their fathers, that they should go in to possess it. **24** So the children went in and possessed the land, and thou subduedst before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gavest them into their hands, with their kings, and the people of the land, that they might do with them as they would. **25** And they took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards, and oliveyards,

and fruit trees in abundance: so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness. 26 Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to thee, and they wrought great provocations. 27 Therefore thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven; and according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies. 28 But after they had rest, they did evil again before thee: therefore abhast thou them in the land of their enemies, so that they had the dominion over them: yet when they returned, and cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven; and many times didst thou deliver them according to thy mercies; 29 And testifiedst against them, that thou mightest bring them again unto thy law: yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto thy commandments, but sinned against thy judgments, (which if a man do, he shall live in them;) and withdrew the shoulder, and hardened their neck, and would not hear. 30 Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy spirit in thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the people of the lands. 31 Nevertheless for thy great mercies' sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou art a gracious and merciful God. 32 Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble seem little before thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day. 33 Howbeit thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly: 34 Neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments and thy testimonies, wherewith thou didst testify against them. 35 For they have not served thee in their kingdom, and in thy great goodness that thou gavest them, and in the large and fat land which thou gavest before them, neither turned they from their wicked works. 36 Behold, we are servants this day, and for the land that thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold, we are servants in it: 37 And it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins: also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we are in great distress. 38 And because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it.

REFLECTION

Verses 1 – 3. The Feast of Tabernacles begins on the fifteenth day of the month Tizri. Leviticus 23:33-36, Numbers 29:12-40, Deuteronomy 16:13-15. It is a feast that runs in the homes of the Jewish people for seven days and on the eighth there is a "solemn convocation" of the entire assembly. This is the twenty second of Tizri when this solemn end to the Feast occurs. Two days after the Feast ended the people re-gather at the Temple. It is as if they all went home on the final day of the feast, or the day after, and could not stay home, but on the 24th re-gathered at the Temple.

These people are so hungry for a touch from the Lord that they cannot stay away and get back to their ordinary life. They must worship, and they must get their lives fully right before their God. They do not want to stop half way in the revival that has started; they want the full blessing of the Lord, and they want the assurance that they are 100% on the right track now.

The people assemble in a spirit of great mourning, with sackcloth upon their bodies and ashes upon their heads. They fully feel the awfulness of their state of slackness and sin as a people. They see that the mixed marriages of the past, and the failure to stand for truth, and be hungry for the Living Word of God has led to great distress for them. They fully accept their sin and do not make excuses for themselves.

They had been under persecution and great financial and other pressure from the satraps of the north, but they don't claim any justification for their slackness from the stresses they faced. They make no excuses, but stand in grief before their God and pray for His forgiveness and deliverance. Let us confess our sins and stand before our Lord in thankfulness and full awareness of our sins; let us make no excuses to our Commanding Officer, but cast ourselves before Him. 1 Peter 5:5-9.

The congregation of Israel separated themselves from the foreigners who were amongst them. Refer to the BTB study again on SEPARATION. These foreigners were believers clearly also, but were relegated to the back, to what would become the Court of the Gentiles. Israelites alone went forward and dealt with their national sin, for they had failed as God's chosen people and they needed to express this fully. The nation must keep its distinctiveness and its holiness. Foreigners can join in the worship, but they are not Israel, and never can be. They are accepted as "God fearers", but not as Israelites, for Israel is to keep its unique distinctiveness before the Lord as a holy and separate nation. Refer to the BTB study ISRAEL.

Notice the specific division of the day that Nehemiah notes here. For a quarter of the day they stood in silence and contemplation, then for a quarter of the day they read the Law of Moses, then for a quarter of the day they confessed their national and personal sins, and then for the last quarter of the day they worshipped. This forms a good division of time for worship, where we see the importance of thorough heart preparation for drawing near the Lord.

Verses 4 – 6. The greatest joy for any pastor-teacher is to see and hear his/her people rise up and praise the Lord's name by genuine worship and Bible teaching. What joy Ezra must have felt when the men he had trained over the previous years rise up and preach this strongly, and worship this wonderfully. These verses also tell us that copies of the Torah have been made in the years previously and these men each apparently have their own teaching copies to

work from in the crowd. Revival begins with prayer and the conviction of the Holy Spirit, and it continues with the lifting up of God's Word and the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. Refer to the BTB study HOLY SPIRIT – MINISTRY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

These Levites must all stand in separate locations and speak to sections of the crowd, as they did on the first days of Tizri, as noted in the previous chapter. It appears that Ezra, or thee men together with Ezra, have developed a scripted message to deliver to the people, so all hear the right things. This may have been developed on the day, as the spontaneous nature of the return of the people would have created a crisis that needed immediate response. Their earlier Bible study has prepared them for this and they are ready with the message and the follow up readings that are relevant.

The path of repentance is the path of worship, and worship begins with confession and continues with praise to the Lord for who He is; for He is the God that never leaves us desolate. **2 Timothy 2:11-13**. Though we fail the Lord, He never fails us. Prayers of praise should always start as these men's words urge the Israelites to start; "Stand up and bless the Lord your God, forever and ever!" "Blessed by the glorious name of the Lord, a name exulted above all names; blessing and praise to His wonderful name!" Refer back to the BTB study on GOD – THE CHARACTER OF GOD, NAMES OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, and ETERNAL LIFE.

When we face the storms of life we need to put our anchors down securely into the only ground in this universe that isn't created ground; that ground is the holy and unchangeable character of the creator God, who is beyond space and beyond time.

The Levites begin their praise with the glorious names of God which tell of His grace, mercy and love, but they then move to the very start of all things. It is always best to return to the foundational considerations when you consider the truth of God's dealings with you now, and the foundation of all things is the formation of the universe itself. God is the creator of space and time and all that lives within it. All we see are creations, and they are all part of the space-time universe. All that is this Space-Time Universe will be swept away by the Lord and replaced by something far more wonderful. 2 Peter 3:10-13, Revelation 21:1ff.

Begin your contemplation of your present situation by looking back to the beginning of time, and then look to the end of time and space, and see yourself as the speck you are in the middle. If the creator could make the universe, and has a plan for the new creation "after time" is over and eternity reigns, then He will be able to handle any issues you have here and now.

Verses 7 – 12. To orient yourself to the present it is also good to trace the dealings of God through time and see how you fit into the plan. For the Jewish people this meant understanding their nature as a called out people with a destiny that is different to that of the rest of mankind. This begins with Abraham and it begins well away from Jerusalem. The Jewish people of Nehemiah's and Ezra's day need to orient themselves to the flexibility of thinking that is demanded by God's Plan for them.

Abraham was called and has to move thousands of miles, and he experiences cultural, religious, social and family changes that most would not have contemplated in the ancient world. He was called out to be very different to his contemporaries, and to live in quite a different way to them all. This is God's call upon these people, as it is still upon us all in today's world. We are called to be ready to live in quite a different way to those around us.

Abram lived in the greatest metropolis in the ancient world of his day. He is called to walk away from his culture, his comforts, his family religion, his financial stability, and his material prosperity and go to a place that others would have considered "god-forsaken", and yet was the place of God for him and his descendents. He was a Chaldean, and he became a "Hebrew" by crossing the river Euphrates and establishing a new life, family and faith system.

These people hearing these words from the Levites have been under the rule of the Chaldeans and then the Persians. The people of Babylon, where the Jews were in exile 90 years before, were their relatives, and yet they were totally different to them by the time they lived again amongst them during the Exile. They all now speak the same language again, Aramaic, but these Jews know they are very different indeed in belief and culture now. The Levites are reminding them that God has called them out to be different, just as he called Abram out and changed every detail of his life, even to changing his name to Abraham!

They are reminded that Abraham was given the land that they now live within by a covenant with God, and that at this time they are only inhabiting a fraction of the land given to Abraham. Refer to the BTB study COVENANTS – ABRAHAMIC. God indeed gave his descendents the land, but firstly they had to suffer slavery in Egypt. The Lord delivered them into the land of promise and they seized and took the entire land by the days of David and Solomon, but disobedience ended their tenure. The covenant with Abraham was a solid one from God's perspective, but there were conditions for their on-going tenure, and the FIVE CYCLES OF NATIONAL DISCIPLINE were the Lord's formal warning to the people that they needed to keep the Mosaic Law. Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 27-30.

The Exodus involved mighty miracles on God's behalf for the Israelites to be able to escape from Egypt, but also to reach the land itself. The Lord's grace, mercy and power opened the door to the possession of the land, not the abilities and deserving nature of the Israelites! It was GRACE all the way!

In that day they had the SHEKINAH GLORY to guide them by day and night; the visible presence of God was with them through that time in the Exodus. Once they were in the land the visible glory of the Lord was centred in the Ark alone, and later in the Holy of Holies of the Temple of Solomon. All this was lost by the disobedience of their ancestors, and the presence of the Lord is now experienced only within the hearts of the obedient as they feel the move of the Spirit upon them. They are asked to have more faith than their ancestors had to have, who could look and see things, but their ancestors failed with these mighty signs, and yet they have succeeded in doing a miraculous building job because they have heeded the Holy Spirit within them.

The Levites are challenging them in this story to go beyond the details, and see the things that they have seen achieved by means of simple obedience, and keep going on forward to bring further glory to the Lord's name by their obedience in all things in the Mosaic Law. Without the miraculous that their ancestors had they have achieved more than their ancestors did! Refer to the BTB study on MIRACLES.

Verses 13 – 15. The events at Mt Sinai were as dramatic as at the crossing of the Sea, for the Lord came down upon the mountain and the things the people witnessed were terrifying indeed, yet they still went on to rebel later! From this recounting of the miracles and the drama of the early revelations I suspect that the people are presently asking for miracles of some sort, or wondering why the Lord isn't doing such things in their day. They are seeking the miraculous, and yet the Lord now wants them to achieve the miraculous in the Holy Spirit's power, and they have already seen what can be done with the rebuilding of the walls.

The Exodus Generation saw bread made from supernaturally provided manna, and they saw water from the rock twice, and they received the institution of the Sabbath as their day of worship. Refer to the BTB study SABBATH AND THE LORD'S DAY. They experienced dramatic deliverances through their forty years wandering, but then they experienced the wonder of the entry into the land itself, and saw that what the Lord promised, He delivered to them.

Verses 16 – 25. It is good at this point to turn to the speech that Stephen gives the Sanhedrin covering this same time period of God's dealings with His people. Turn to **Acts 7:1-50**, and read the entire chapter through. Stephen's speech is quoted in full, whereas we probably have an edited version of the content of the scripted speech that the many Levites spoke. Notice that their content is very close, and yet Stephen is stoned to death, while the Levites will be applauded. The difference is in the FREE WILL of the people in both cases. The people hearing the Levites have been drawn to worship by their openness to the Holy Spirit's conviction, whereas the Sanhedrin are negative to the message of Stephen, and having killed his master, they seek to silence him.

The Exodus generation is spiritually closer in nature to the generation of Jesus day than that of Nehemiah and Ezra. Nehemiah and Ezra are faced by rebellious people initially, but they have repented and changed in response to the preaching of the truth, and are now a transformed people standing humbly before the leadership. The blessed nature of the Exodus generation in seeing the works of God can only be matched by the generation that saw the ministry of the Lord, and yet both rejected the truth.

Only two (Caleb and Joshua) of the Exodus Generation really succeed in grasping the truths of faith and so enter the land, and only a handful of the Jewish nation accept the Lord as their Messiah and enter the new Age before the nation and temple are destroyed for the second and final time. The challenge to the people on this day as the Levites speak to the crowd is a clear one; will they be like the Exodus Generation and fall short of the glory of the Lord, or will they continue to walk by faith and so inherit the blessings their fathers failed to receive? The writer to the Hebrews asks this question also of his own generation and hopes that they will follow the people of Ezra's day rather than those of Moses day. **Hebrews 3:12 – 4:12.**

The track record of the Exodus Generation is sad indeed; firstly they became proud and self centred, then they hardened their necks against God's commands, then they refused to obey the Word of God, and then they forgot all that they had seen by way of the wonders God had shown them. They persisted in negative volition towards the Lord through the thirteen rebellions that are listed in Exodus-Numbers.

The great message of the Levites to the people of their day is the incredible faithfulness of God; his mercy, love, grace and patience was at an unbelievable level. The Lord forgave them and was patient with them, and instead of judging them, gave them the chance to train their children to enter the land. Even then they made a golden calf idol and provoked the Lord to the greatest of anger, but the Lord did not destroy them all even then. Can you see the Levites main message? These people before them are still weeping at their sins, and they long for righteousness, and so they can be assured of the mercy and love of the Lord towards them, and that they are not in danger of judgement.

These people are so frightened by the reality of the judging nature of God when they look at what happened to the generation of the Babylonian Captivity that they cannot stop shaking in their boots! They fear that they will be judged for their own previous slackness towards the things of God. They have repented and their consistent and powerful sorrow at their past sin is the evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit in their life, and the assurance that they are not now under judgement. They are so emotionally overwrought by all that has happened however that they need real assurance from the preachers that they are safe.

The "fear of the Lord" needs to be modified by a fuller understanding of the love and patient mercy of the Lord their God. They are now safe in His arms; they are not in danger of being squashed like bad melons! They have genuinely repented and they are forgiven. They can be assured of this, because their forgiveness doesn't rest upon their character, but upon

God's Character. The doctrines of the CHARACTER OF GOD, and CONFESSION, that we have studied previously, help us here, but they need to be constantly remembered. We need a holy fear of the Lord, but not a paralysing fear, for the Lord always wants good for us, not bad.

The Exodus Generation's deliverance in the desert is the real evidence of the Lord's care, even over those who had committed the SIN UNTO DEATH. **Numbers 14:18-37**. Even under maximum divine discipline these people were still cared for daily by the Lord; the manna never stopped, nor did the cloud stop its comforting presence until the day they entered the land. God does not deal with us according to our desserts, but according to His Holy Character.

They were led into the land, and the enemy which outnumbered them greatly was not able to gather its forces against them in victory, but were all defeated one by one in the power the Lord gave the Israelites. Just as they defeated these enemies in the past, just so will their present enemies be dealt with by the Lord. They walked into a land where they enjoyed vineyards, orchards, and olive groves that they had not planted, and they lived in cities that they had not built. It was GRACE all the way, and it still is for the believer in every generation.

Verses 26 – 31. The sheer number of rebellions staggered me when I actually counted them through our study of Exodus-Numbers. At least thirteen separate events were clearly major rebellions against Moses and the Lord. The disobedience of the people sadly didn't stop even then. All through their history they rebelled against the prophets that the Lord sent. They murdered the prophets of God. Isaiah was murdered, Jeremiah exiled, Zechariah slain, and many, many others paid with their lives for their forth-telling of the truth. **Matthew 23:34-38, Acts 7:52, Hebrews 11:32-40**.

The nation was placed under the greatest divine discipline, and they suffered greatly for their sins. Even then we are reminded that judgement is God's "strange work", for He seeks to bless His people, not judge them. Isaiah 28:21. Even then, in the midst of discipline, when they prayed the prayers of confession, the Lord heard their prayers and they were forgiven and restored.

The story of the nations of Israel and Judah is a story of grace and mercy on the part of God being constantly met by rebellion and disobedience on the part of the people. Ezra is believed to be the author of at least one of the historical books that finds its way into our canon. It is this material that the Levites are now referring to, and is available to the people for a follow up study of the history of their people. The books of Chronicles and Kings were the follow up study for the people to this preaching of the Levites, and as they read these books of history aloud the people must have groaned aloud even more, but also praised the Lord for His deliverance in spite of the sins of their fathers. These books of history are the encouragement to the people, for they can know as they read these things that their God is faithful and does not leave nor forsake them, and neither will He now. **Deuteronomy 4:31, 31:6-8, Joshua 1:5-13, 1 Chronicles 28:20, Isaiah 41:17, Hebrews 13:5**.

Verses 32 – 38. The Lord our God is the God who "keeps covenant" with His people. God can be trusted to keep His promises, and all His promises can be claimed from the place of obedience and submission to His Will and Word. The Levites then pray a formal prayer for the forgiveness of the sins of their fathers. It is a final summing up of the days and days of confession by all the people. This is one of the roles of the preacher. They publicly affirm that the Lord has done well and they have done wickedly. They openly acknowledge the sins of their fathers and their own slackness towards the Lord. They accept that their ancestors received the bounty of the Lord and repaid Him with disobedience and spiritual adultery with other gods.

The past is however transformed by the experiences of the Exile and the recent experiences of their return and the rebuilding of the walls. All has been transformed in their hearts through the Holy Spirit, by means of the faithful work of Ezra and Nehemiah. It is appropriate that these Levites, who have been led to the place of passion for the Lord their God by Ezra should state this confession and testimony. These men now bow before the Lord and acknowledge their status as "the servants of the Lord" in the land He has given them; they acknowledge their need for SUBMISSION, SERVICE, and THANKFULNESS.

They accept their status as servants of the Persian Empire, and they accept that the troubles they have experienced are earned by their ancestors and their own previous sins, but they now see that by submission and acceptance of their place in the plan of God that they can move forward into a place of blessing. They now see that their status as servants of a foreign empire doesn't stop the blessing of God upon them. Nothing stops the blessing of God upon His saints except their disobedient lives before Him. The challenge for all saints through the ages is to humble themselves before the Lord, and serve Him without worrying about the foolishness of others around them.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. Our God changes not! The certainty of the stability of the character and plan of God is the foundation for our safety and mental stability in this constantly challenging world. Our security is in the one who never changes and whose plan will work out in time. Let us preach the stability of the Lord in our humanly unstable times. We have no stable foundation but in the Lord alone. Let the people of the Lord know this. Do we praise the Lord's wonderful name enough? Do we lift up our voice and praise His name as we should? Let us spend far more time at a prayer meeting praising the Lord's name and far less asking for what we want. If we praise the Lord more, the Holy Spirit will purify our desires and we will ask for less, but for the more important things.

2. These people were not satisfied with half measures; they didn't want the revival to end with a good feeling and then drop away into their memories. Their desire was that the revival continued in power in their lives, and that the entire nation remained there-after on a new track. Let us be stirrers of the fire of the Lord in the hearts of believers, that they do not relax and spend their time in testimony meetings. Let us put aside testimonies because we are too busy moving forward and achieving more for the Lord. Let us build the church of God, not spend time reminiscing on what we once did, or once felt. Let us ensure our focus is always forward, only ever backwards to draw encouragement from what the Lord has done and will do.

3. How flexible are you in your thinking and your readiness to change life style, life goals, and every other detail of your daily life? Abraham was asked to give up all he knew and travel to the far corners of the world of his day and start again and build a new identity. How comfortable have we become in our life style? Are we ready to do different things that the Lord may call us to? Let us open ourselves to what the Lord wants of us and let us be ready to do new things whatever our age and stage in life.

4. What God promises God delivers. How well do you know the promises of God? What we are promised by the Lord He will always perform. We need to know and claim the Word of God a lot more than we do. We live and move and have our being in the grace, love and mercy of God. Let us praise the Lord for who He is and what He has planned for us. Let us rejoice in the provision of the Lord. Let us move into His bounty and praise His Holy Name for His goodness. Let us commit our uncertain future to Him, for in Him the future is not uncertain. The Lord our God will never forsake us, but will bring us through with rejoicing as we cling closely to Him.

DOCTRINES

ISRAEL

1. Israel has a future which was promised to Abraham. (Genesis 12:1-3)
2. Israel's future is based on regeneration. (Romans 9:6-14)
3. Israel's future is related to the land of Palestine. (Genesis 15:18, Numbers 34:1-12, Deuteronomy 30:1-9)
4. Israel has a King forever – the Son of David, the Lord Jesus Christ in the Millennium. (2 Samuel 7:8-16, Psalm 89:20-37)
5. The promises were confirmed to Jeremiah in the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31ff, Hebrews 8:8-13)
6. Israel's future begins as a nation at the Second Advent of Christ. (Zechariah 14:1-9)
7. Israel's future is guaranteed, even though the nation is now in dispersion under the discipline of God. (Isaiah 5:26-30, 14-1-3, 10:20-23, 11:11-16, Zechariah 10:6-12)
8. Israel had a purpose
 - a) To witness to the holiness of the one true God. (Deuteronomy 6:4, Isaiah 43:10,12)
 - b) To illustrate to the nations the blessings derived from serving the one true God. (Deuteronomy 33:26-29, 1 Chronicles 17:20-21, Psalm 144:15)
 - c) To receive, record and broadcast the Scriptures. (Deuteronomy 4:5-8, Romans 3:1-2)
 - d) To receive and proclaim the promised Messiah. (Genesis 3:15, 12:3, 2 Samuel 7:12-16, Isaiah 7:14, 9:6)
9. The nation Israel is now in dispersion under the discipline of God. The Church has replaced the mission of Israel during the Church Age. (Romans 11) When the Church is removed in the Rapture, Israel will again take up its purpose during the Tribulation (Revelation 7:4-8)

CHRISTIAN LIFE – SEPARATION

1. Believers are instructed to be separated from habitually carnal believers. (1 Corinthians 5:10, 11)
2. Separation is ordered from apostate religious organisations. (2 Corinthians 6:17)
3. Separation is commanded from unbelievers where scripture is compromised by the relationship or marriage, business partners. (2 Corinthians 6:14 ff)
4. Separation is commanded from the human viewpoint. (Romans 12:2, Romans 16:17, 18)
5. Separation is commanded from pseudo spirituality. (Romans 16:17, 18)

6. Separation is commanded from those who seek pleasure in fast living – pursuit of parties, immoral situations. (1 Peter 4:4)
7. Separation is commanded from other believers who reject Bible doctrine. (2 Thessalonians 3:14, 15)

HOLY SPIRIT – MINISTRY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

1. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit did not indwell all believers, since Christ was not yet glorified (John 7:39). Instead, He only came upon some Old Testament saints to perform special functions.
 - a) JOSEPH, a believer who was a prime minister. (Genesis 41:38)
 - b) Believers who were artisans occupied in the construction of the Tabernacle. (Exodus 28:3, 31:3)
 - c) Believers involved in administration. (Numbers 11:17, 25)
 - d) A believer who was both a political and military leader – JOSHUA (Numbers 27:18)
 - e) Certain Judges: OTHNIEL (Judges 3:9, 10) GIDEON (Judges 6:34) JEPHTHAH (Judges 11:29) SAMSON (Judges 13:24, 25, 14:5-6, 15:14)
 - f) Kings of Israel (1 Samuel 10:9, 10, 16:13)
 - g) DANIEL (Daniel 4:8, 5:11, 6:3)
 - h) Post exilic rulers (Zechariah 4:3, 12-14)
2. Believers in Israel could be disciplined by the removal of the Spirit:
 - a) SAUL (1 Samuel 16:14)
 - b) DAVID (Psalm 51:11)
3. A believer could obtain the Holy Spirit by request, but not as an indwelling presence. (2 Kings 2:9, 10, Luke 11:13)
4. Jesus gave the Holy Spirit without request to the disciples just before the ascension. Purpose: To sustain them for the ten day interim before the Church Age would begin. (John 20:22)

GOD – THE CHARACTER OF GOD See page 12

GOD – NAMES OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

God reveals Himself and His character by His names.

1. EL – The strong one (singular) – 2 Samuel 22:33
2. EL ELYON – The most high God – Genesis 14:18-22
3. EL OLAM – The everlasting God – Genesis 21:33
4. EL SHADDAI –The almighty one – Genesis 17:1
5. ELOHIM – The all powerful one (plural) – Genesis 1:1
6. JEHOVAH – The self-existent one – I AM Exodus 3:14
7. JEHOVAH-ELOHIM – Lord God, Creator – Genesis 2:4
8. JEHOVAH-JIREH – Jehovah will provide – Genesis 22:13, 14
9. JEHOVAH –NISSI – Jehovah is my banner – Exodus 17:15
10. JEHOVAH-RAAH – Jehovah is my Shepherd – Psalm 23:1
11. JEHOVAH-RAPHA – Jehovah that Heals – Exodus 15:25, 26
12. JEHOVAH-SABOATH – Lord of hosts – Psalm 46:7, 11
13. JEHOVAH-SHALOM – Jehovah is peace – Judges 6:24
14. JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH – Jehovah is there – Ezekiel 48:35
15. JEHOVAH TSID KENU- Jehovah our righteousness – Jeremiah 33:16

CHRISTIAN LIFE – ETERNAL LIFE

1. DEFINITION: Life belonging to the ages (Greek word aionios). This is the life of the believer who had a beginning in time but whose life will continue through the other side of death into the infinite future.
2. Mankind were created for eternity. God's purpose was to create a being to enjoy fellowship with forever. 2 Peter 3: 9.
3. The issue for entry into eternal life is faith in Christ. The choice for man is clearly stated in John 3:36, 5:24, Acts 13:46, Galatians 6:8, Matthew 25:6.
4. Those who are serious about life and concerned about death ask about it. Matthew 13:40-43, 19:16, Mark 10:17, Luke 10:25, 18:18.
5. The Lord's words provide the answer to the questions about eternal life. John 6:68, Romans 5:20, 21, Romans 6:22, 23.

It is the Lord who gives eternal life, John 5:39, 40, 12:50.

6. The Lord gives eternal life to those who believe on him, John 10:28, 17:2,

The door to fellowship and all that goes with it is opened by faith in him as Saviour. John 3:15,16, Acts 13:48, John 6:40, 47.

“To Eat His Flesh and Drink His Blood” is graphic language to picture his work and our need to appropriate it for ourselves. John 6:54, 4:14.

7. While it may only be fully known in heaven the believer may grasp a glimpse of eternal life here and now by way of anticipation and relationship. Knowing God is a glimpse of eternal life now, John 17:3, and fellowship with him is the joy of every believer now and forever. 1 John 1:1-4, 5:10-12, 20, 1 Timothy 6:12, 19.

8. Eternal life is received in full at the resurrection/rapture when we all receive our new bodies from the Lord. Rewards are received then to enjoy with the Lord forever. We are all urged to live each day with the eternal life perspective in mind, thinking of our place with the Lord forever. Matthew 19:29, 30, Mark 10:29-31, John 12:25, John 4:36, Romans 2:6,7.

9. Eternal Life is the believers hope, associated with the Rapture and Resurrection, and should be on our mind through each day, as it sets us apart from the unbelievers who have no such hope. Philippians 3:20, 21, Titus 1:2, 2:13, 3:7, 1 Thessalonians 2:19, 4:13, 1 Peter 1:3,

10. The assurance of eternal life is grounded in the promise of God given through Christ. 1 John 2:24,25, 1 John 5:13-15.

COVENANTS – ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

1. Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3) founds the nation of Israel

2. It is confirmed with Abraham with emphasis on the land (Genesis 13:14-18), the spiritual seed (Genesis 15:1-6) and its everlasting quality (Genesis 17:6-8).

3. It is an unconditional covenant – God will fulfil it. (God caused Abraham to fall asleep as He ratified the covenant alone Genesis 15:12-18)

4. The seven-fold covenant (Genesis 12:1-3) is fulfilled as follows:-

a) PROMISE “And I will make of thee a great nation.

FULFILLMENT Jews (Genesis. 13:16; John 8:37), Arabs (Genesis. 17:20), In Christ (Romans 4:16-17, 9:7-8; Galatians 3:7,29).

b) PROMISE “I will bless thee”.

FULFILLMENT To Abraham (Genesis 13:14-17, 15:18-21. 24:35), To believers in Christ (Genesis 15:6; John 8:56)

c) PROMISE “And make thy name great.

FULFILLMENT Abraham is renowned, not only in Christianity but also in Judaism and with the Moslems.

d) PROMISE “And thou shalt be a blessing.

FULFILLMENT With the work of fulfilment of Abraham’s seed, Jesus Christ, he was a blessing. (Galatians 3:13,14).

e) PROMISE “And I will bless them that bless thee.

FULFILLMENT This is seen in the rise of many nations e.g. Britain in the 19th century, the rise of the USA.

f) PROMISE “And curse him that curseth thee.

FULFILLMENT The decline of nations such as the Spanish Empire after the Armada, the fall of Nazi Germany, the fall of the Czars of Russia, the decline of Egypt at the Exodus. Scriptural examples Deuteronomy 30:7; Isaiah 14:1-2; Joel 3:1-8; Micah 5:7-9; Haggai 2:22; Zechariah 14. 1-3; Matthew 25:40-46).

g) PROMISE “In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

FULFILLMENT The whole world can be blessed through Jesus, the son of Abraham. (John 8:56-58; Galatians 3:16).

5. It is clear that we should support the Jew as it is a sure means of enjoying divine blessing.

FIVE CYCLES OF NATIONAL DIVINE DISCIPLINE See page 14

GRACE

1. Grace is all that God is free to do for man on the basis of the cross. Therefore Grace is unmerited favour from God.
2. Grace depends on the character of God therefore Grace depends on who and what God is. Grace is what God can do for man and still be true to his own character.
3. The believer must recognise the difference between legalism and grace. Legalism is man's work intruding upon the plan of God.
4. The greatest thing God can do for the saved person is to make him exactly like His Son Jesus Christ. This is accomplished in three stages of sanctification.
5. Positional Sanctification: At Salvation every believer enters into union with Christ. (Hebrews 1:2) Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father and is therefore superior to all angels in his humanity. At the point of salvation we are entered into union with Christ thus we are positionally higher than angels. We are positionally seated with Christ at God's right hand.
6. Experiential Sanctification: During the Christian's life on the earth the time spent under the power of the Holy Spirit. During this time we produce the character of God in our lives – gold, silver, precious stones. (1 Corinthians 3:12-15)
7. Ultimate Sanctification: When the believer receives a resurrection body he loses the sin nature and all human good. At this point the believer is physically superior to all angels. He remains in this perfect state eternally.
8. All believers have tasted of Grace at least once (1 Peter 2:3). This refers to the point of Salvation at which the believer receives at least 34 things which he did not earn or deserve. (Ephesians 2:8, 9) Disorientation to grace is the believer's greatest occupational hazard in his Christian life. (Galatians 5:4, Hebrews 12:15)
9. The divine attitude to grace is expressed in (Isaiah 30:18, 19) God is constantly waiting to pour out his blessing on all believers in the Christian life.
10. Grace in salvation is expressed in many ways. It is always the same – believing in Jesus Christ (Psalm 103:8-12, Romans 3:23-4, Romans 4:4, 5:20, Ephesians 2:8, 9)
11. There are many ways in which the Christian life expresses GRACE:
 - a) Prayer (Hebrews 4:16)
 - b) Suffering (2 Corinthians 12:9, 10)
 - c) Growth (2 Peter 3:18)
 - d) Stability (1 Peter 5:12)
 - e) Lifestyle (Hebrews 12:28, 2 Corinthians 1:12)
 - f) Production of Divine Good (1 Corinthians 15:10, 2 Corinthians 6:1)
12. Grace is the correct attitude in relation to giving. (2 Corinthians 8 & 9)
13. Grace is the only means of coping with suffering in the Christian life. (2 Corinthians 12:7-10) Through Grace God is able to bless the believer in the midst of the pressures and adversities of life. (1 Peter 1:6,7)
14. Implications of grace:
 - a) God is perfect, his plan is perfect.
 - b) A perfect plan can only originate from a perfect God.
 - c) If man could do anything in the plan of God the plan would no longer be perfect.
 - d) A plan is no stronger than its weakest link. Grace therefore excludes all human merit, all human ability.
 - e) Legalism, human works is the enemy of Grace.
 - f) The works of human righteousness have therefore no place in the plan of God. (Isaiah 64:6)

GOD – SHEKINAH GLORY

1. The Shekinah glory is the visible manifestation of the presence of God. The usual title used is the glory of God
2. It is from the Hebrew word "shachan" meaning dwelling.
3. It took the form of light, fire, cloud or a combination of these.
4. At times it is associated with the following, the Angel of Jehovah, the Holy Spirit, The Cherubim and the motif of thick darkness.
5. Appearances of the Shekinah Glory in the Old Testament:
 - a) The Garden of Eden [Genesis 3:8]

- b) The time of the Abrahamic Covenant [Genesis 15:12-18]
- c) The burning bush [Exodus 3:1-5]
- d) At the Exodus [Exodus 13:21,22]
- e) At Mount Sinai [Exodus 19:16-20]
- f) The special manifestation to Moses [Exodus 33:17-23]
- g) The Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant [Exodus 29:42-46]
- h) The book of Leviticus [Leviticus 9:6-7, 22-24]
- i) The Book of Numbers [Numbers 13:30-14:45, 16:1-50, 20:6-13]
- j) The period of Joshua and the Judges [1 Samuel 4:21-22]
- k) Solomon's Temple [1 Kings 8:1-13, 2 Chronicles 5:2-7:3]
- l) The departure of the Shekinah Glory [Ezekiel 1:28, 3:12,23, 8:3-4, 9:3a, 10:4, 18-19, 11:22-23]
- m) The Shekinah Glory was not in the second Temple [Haggai 2:3,9]

6. Appearance of the Shekinah Glory in the New Testament:

- a) To the Shepherds [Luke 2:8-9]
- b) The Christmas star [Matthew 2:1-12]
- c) It comes in a new form [John 1:1-14]
- d) The transfiguration [Matthew 17:1-8, Mark 9:2-8, Luke 9:288-36, 2 Peter 1:16-18]
- e) The reflection of that glory [2 Corinthians 3:12-18]
- f) The Book of the Acts [Acts 2:1-3, 9:3-8, 22:6-11, 26:13-18]
- g) The Revelation [Revelation 1:12-16]
- h) In the Tribulation [Revelation 15:8]
- i) The Second Coming of Christ [Matthew 16:27, 24:30, Mark 13:26, Luke 21:27]
- j) The Millennium [Ezekiel 43:1-7a, 44:1-2, Zechariah 2:4-5, Isaiah 36:1-2, 58:8-9a, 60:1-3]
- k) The Eternal State [Revelation 21:1-3, 21:23-24]

MIRACLES – PURPOSE

1. Miracles occurred mainly in three periods of history. Of all the miracles recorded in the Scriptures all but twelve fall into the following three periods.

- a) The Law and Prophets Group:- prepares for the coming of the Lord
 - i) At the Exodus through to the giving of the Law, miracles were performed by Moses, Aaron and later by Joshua.
 - ii) At the period when the great prophets Elijah and Elisha were teaching many miracles were performed.
- b) The Lord and Church Group:- bears witness to His first coming
 - i) The miracles of the Lord.
 - ii) The miracles performed by the apostles.
- c) The Future Miracle Group:- attest to His second coming
 - i) Beginning with the activities of the two witnesses of the Great Tribulation.
 - ii) The universal outburst of miracle activity at the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom, when the Lord rules over a restored earth.

2. Their purpose includes the following:-

- a) To glorify the nature of God (John 2:11, 11:40)
- b) To accredit certain men as spokesmen for God (Hebrews 2:3-4, Luke 7:18-23)
- c) To provide evidence for belief in Jesus as Messiah (John 6:2,14, 10:37-38, 20:30-31, 1 Corinthians 15:13-20)
- d) To demonstrate the Lord's superiority over the forces of evil (Matthew 9:27-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 4:31-37)
- e) To demonstrate the uniqueness of the Lord Jesus Christ, God with us (John 1:14).

3. Miracles demonstrate the attributes of God.

- a) The Sovereignty of God was illustrated in:-
 - i) The Lord's creative work of turning water into wine at Cana. (John 2:1-11)
 - ii) His power when stilling the storm on Galilee. (Mark 4:35-41; Matthew 8:18)
 - iii) The feeding of the 5000 and the 4000. (Mark 6:33-44; 8:1-9)
 - iv) Walking on the water at Galilee. (Mark 6:47-52)
 - v) His arrest in Gethsemane. (John 18:6)
- b) The Righteousness of God was illustrated in:-
The Lord's transfiguration before the disciples on the mountain, when they saw the Holiness of God in the Lord displayed. (Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36)
- c) The Justice of God was illustrated in:-
The cursing of the fig tree during the last week before the cross as a sign of His coming judgement upon unresponsive Israel. (Matthew 21:18-22; Mark 11:12-14, 20-26)

d) The Love of God was illustrated in:-

All the healing ministries as the Lord's compassion flowed into action, even to the exhaustion of His humanity. While thirty-six specific miracles of the Lord are recorded, many thousands of healing miracles are passed over in a few isolated verses. (E.g. Matthew 9:35-36, 14:14, 15:30-31, 8:16-17 etc.)

e) The Eternal Life of God was illustrated in:-

The great miracle of the resurrection of Christ.

f) The Omniscience of God was illustrated in:-

i) His knowledge of where unseen shoals of fish were. (Matthew 4:18-22, Mark 1:16-20, John 21:1-14)

ii) Where the fish was with just enough money in its mouth to pay the required tax. (Matthew 17:24-27)

iii) The knowledge about Nathaniel and the woman at the well at Sychar also shows his omniscience (John 1:45-51; 4:5-43).

g) The Omnipresence of God was illustrated in:-

His ability to appear in various places many kilometres apart demonstrating the truth of His promise to be with believers always. (Matthew 28:20)

h) The Omnipotence of God was illustrated in:-

The raising of people such as Lazarus from the dead.

i) The Immutability of God was illustrated in:-

The repetition of the miracle of the draught of fishes both before and after the resurrection showing that His character and power were unchanged.

j) The Veracity of God was illustrated in:-

The healing of the Centurion's servant and the Nobleman's son. The Lord said they were healed, and at that moment, many kilometres away, they were. (Matthew 8:5-13, Luke 7:1-10, John 4:46-54)

k) The Grace of God was illustrated in:-

The healing of Malchus' ear in the garden on the night of the Lord's arrest (Luke 22:50). It was a testimony to His Grace that as he faced the horror of the cross, our Lord could still stoop and heal one of His captors. It is significant that the last recorded miracle performed by the Lord before the cross benefited an enemy, one who had come to arrest him.

SABBATH AND THE LORD'S DAY

1. Sabbath means Rest.

2. Salvation is the eternal Sabbath. (Matthew 11:28) – we must trust in God to save us, apart from our own works.

3. Trusting in the promises is the daily Sabbath. (Hebrews 3:11) – we must trust in God to provide all our needs.

4. The original Sabbath (Genesis 2:2, 3) God finished His work of creation on the sixth day and rested on the seventh.

5. The Sabbath of Israel. (Exodus 20:8-11, Deuteronomy 5:12-15)

a) In the Old Testament, the Jews were commanded not to work on the seventh day. They were to trust in the finished work of God to supply their needs.

b) The Sabbath (Saturday) was the remembrance day of the old creation, of the old covenant. (Exodus 20:10-11, 31:12-17, Hebrews 4:4)

c) Legalists burdened the Sabbath with many hundreds of extra-biblical commandments and regulations.

d) Under the Mosaic Law the Jews had a sabbatical year; they were supposed to rest every seventh year. (Exodus 23:10, 11)

e) Because they did not take their sabbaticals they endured the 70 years of Babylonian captivity. (Leviticus 26:33-35, 2 Chronicles 36:20, 21, Daniel 9:2, Jeremiah 25:11, 12, Jeremiah 29:10)

6. The Sabbath spoke of the Old Creation Exodus 20, 31 and Hebrews 4 – the Lord's day speaks of the New Creation Saturday belongs to Israel, the family of God, Sunday belongs to the Church the royal family of God. Matthew 28:9, Galatians 6:15, Hebrews 9:15, 10:20

7. The Lord's Day

a) The Lord's Day (Sunday) is the remembrance of the new creation, the resurrection life of the Church in Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 6:15, Hebrews 9:15, 10:20)

- b) In the New Testament, all days are as unto the Lord. (Romans 12:1-2, Ephesians 4:1-3)
- c) There is a moment by moment Sabbath for the believer in the Church Age. (Hebrews 4:1-3)

8. Why is Sunday so important?

- a) Sunday is resurrection day Matthew 28:1
- b) It was also the day of the first meeting of the disciples John 20:19
- c) It was the first day they received instructions from the Lord Luke 24:36-39
- d) It was the day the church began as the day of Pentecost was always on a Sunday Acts 2
- e) It was the day the early church met Acts 20:6-7
- f) It was the day to give offerings 1 Corinthians 16:2.

9. This day has been blessed by God. If the church was wrong on meeting on a Sunday the Lord would have pointed it out before the Seventh Day Adventists came on the scene.

10. There is no such thing as a Christian Sabbath Ephesians 4:1-3, Romans 12:1,2 – every day should be lived as unto the Lord, lived in the filling of the Holy Spirit. We meet on the Lord's Day when we celebrate our new birth, the Lord's victory, the birth of the Church. There are no particular rules, a day of joy, rejoicing and celebration.

11. The concept of the moment by moment Sabbath is illustrated in four passages in the Old Testament

- a) Moses at the Red Sea (Exodus 14:10-14)
- b) Abraham (Romans 4:17-21, Genesis 22, Hebrews 11:17-19)
- c) The bones of Joseph (Hebrews 11:22)
- d) Caleb and the Giants (Numbers 13,14, Joshua 14:6-14, 15:14, Judges 1:20)

GOD – DIVINE INSTITUTIONS – FREE WILL

1. Definition:- Volition or free will is the responsibility before God to choose different ends and means in life.
2. The above definition does not say that one has the power to do what you choose but it does give the opportunity to choose.
3. God gave Adam a choice in the garden in Genesis 2:16,17 where God told the man "thou shalt not eat" in the imperative mood which is a command.
4. Free will gives you the opportunity to want to accomplish things in conformity with God's will without having the natural ability to do so. (1 Kings 3:5-10) Solomon in this case wanted to judge but could not because of his own limitations.
5. In Psalm 13 David's free will continued to be positive even though he had not been successful.
6. One of the reasons for the delay in the answering of prayer requests is to allow the strengthening of free will to desire to do God's will.
7. Free will in both believer and unbeliever. (John 7:17)
8. Free will in giving. (2 Corinthians 8:12)
9. Free will cannot be coerced or compromised thus Christianity is a matter of obedience. (2 Corinthians 5:10)
10. As God is to judge all men it means that man is responsible for his actions and that all normal members of the human race have free will. (Revelation 20:11-15)
11. Relationship of free will is vertical, between man and God not man and man. (Ephesians 6:5-9)
12. Because man is subject to judgement there is an age of accountability as portrayed by the "rich young ruler".
13. Animals and plants are not judged.
14. Free will also puts the responsibility on both ends and means. An example of the right end but wrong means is the sin unto death of Moses. (Numbers 20)
15. By application just because God is blessing a ministry, in the case of Moses by providing water it does not mean that the person is necessarily in God's will. God blesses through his grace and not necessarily because they are doing things by God's way.
16. Human viewpoint attack on free will – Determinism.
 - (a) The concept is that if one starts out with any physical item and I know everything there is regarding it and the laws that control it then I can dogmatically predict the future state of that item.
 - (b) This concept is incorrect as shown by the power of prayer (James 5:17)

It is possible for God to manipulate His universe. (Acts 16:26)

17. Types of miracles in the bible

- (a) natural – a variation of a natural law
 - (i) Elijah and the drought
 - (ii) Paul and the earthquake
 - (iii) Moses at the Red Sea with the east wind
- (b) supernatural – a direct violation of a natural law
 - (i) The resurrection of Christ
 - (ii) Being born again

18. In physics this concept is called “Heisenburg’s Uncertainty Principle” after the German Nobel prize winner who postulated it. Modern science now views a lot of the formulae of physics as occurring the vast majority of times but on odd occasions not complying with observed laws. Such non compliance would include miracles or manipulation by God.

19. Evolution is an attack on free will as it states that man is evolved from animals and is a higher form of animal. This is often reinforced in text books which state “men and the other animals” indicating that man differs in degree only and not in “kind”.

- (a) “Difference in degree” – hot and cold is a matter of relative heat; ice, water and steam are all water and of the same kind.
- (b) “Difference in kind – a square and a triangle.
Solomon in Ecclesiastes 3:21, a believer out of fellowship assesses man as different only in degree from animals.
- (d) Based on evolutionary principles abortion can be justified and atrocities condoned against other races such as the Nazi reaction to Jews, gipsies and the Slavs. From this comes the concept that if we knew everything about animal behaviour we could then describe man.
- (e) The Biblical view however is that we do vary in kind, not in degree (Genesis 2:16) with the thing that sets man apart from the animals being volition.
- (f) By implication man is never totally determined by his environment.
- (g) Hell is a monument to the fact of free will because if you do not have a choice you cannot be judged.

20. Three problems which the Bible solves regarding free will –

- (a) What about babies who die before they hear the gospel or those who are mentally not able to decide?
Solution – 2 Samuel 12:18 where a child born to David and Bathsheba dies on the 7th day, the day before circumcision which would have brought the child into a covenant relationship.
David says that he will go to be with the child indicating the child has been automatically saved without a covenant requirement.
This is the principle of “unlimited atonement”. (1 John 2:2)

- (b) What about the physical damage which hinders the person causing a restriction of free will?
Solution – John 9:1-7 where a man blind from birth is healed. Jesus did not bypass the free will but made up for the blindness. He breaks down the barriers for a person to do God’s will but the free will of the person is not manipulated.

What about spiritual damage to free will?

Solution – Genesis 3:8 where after the fall God sought out Adam and Eve in the garden where they had hidden from him. God who is all knowing asked the question “Where are you?”
The principle of the “total depravity of man” is seen here in the fact that man will not of his own free will seek God.
In Deuteronomy 5 Moses and all the Israelites heard a public address by God which the Israelites shrank back from.

God speaks to man in three areas:-

- (a) He speaks to all men. (Matthew 5:45, Acts 14:17)
- (b) He has a more intense form of calling. (Genesis 6:3, Romans 13:1)
- (c) He calls through the gospel of Jesus Christ. (John 16:8-11)

It is however possible to so damage the free will regarding spiritual matters that it becomes impossible to believe or repent.

Examples

- (a) The Amorites and Canaanites of Joshua’s day. (Genesis 15:16)
- (b) The Pharaoh of the Exodus. (Exodus 7- 11)
- (c) Those who accept the mark of the beast. (Revelation 13:8)
- (d) The reaction of unbelievers at the Second Advent. (Revelation 6:16)

21. However there are many areas over which even those who have had limited free will have control and the person who searches will find. (John 7:17)

22. If God is truly sovereign how can man have genuine free choice? God has absolute sovereignty as shown by a study of His character. It is also clear that man has free will.

God uses his free will as creator whilst man uses his as a part of creation.

23. One way of looking at this is fatalism which is the basis of most eastern religions which state that man's destiny is set and certain.

24. Another way is autonomy which says that all things are uncertain and therefore history goes on chaotically.

25. True biblical sovereignty is based on the creator/creation concept with the creator outside the universe and the created beings within.

Three non salvation examples:-

(a) Paul as a prisoner on a ship bound for Rome predicts, having received advice from the angel of God, that there will be no loss of life but the ship will become a wreck. The guarantee is a sovereign guarantee and therefore absolute. Paul however tells the soldiers that they must stay on the boat to be saved. They do and they are saved. Sovereign decrees by God therefore contain free will decisions by man. (Acts 27)

(b) The sovereign decree is that all things work together for good towards the goal of predestination and eventual glorification. We have a guarantee that we will be in heaven. We need to be actively involved in the chain of events. (Romans 8:28)

(c) Daniel understood the time of "desolations" as seventy years as prophesied by Jeremiah and knew that it would end on time. He now seeks by supplication with sackcloth and ashes forgiveness for Israel's sin on the basis that no discipline is going to be removed without the sin having been forgiven. (Daniel 9:2)
God promises certain things but they are contingent on our prayer Using the principle of the sovereignty of God we can be confident in prayer if we are controlled by the Holy Spirit. (James 4:2)

26. Can free will be neutral? The answer is no, one is either positive or negative towards God. For instance if a young man is keen on a girl and is asked if he is going to marry her and he answers he does not know. As long as he debates the question he will not marry her and is therefore negative to marriage.

27. Every attack in the Christian life has one common feature, the denial of the Word of God as shown in the temptation of our Lord. Each of them therefore is an attack on the character of God.

28. The act of negative free will to the plan of God is given in Romans 1:18-32.

In this passage:-

- (a) The unbeliever holds the truth in unrighteousness. (v18)
- (b) The power of God is clearly seen by all men. (v19-20)
- (c) They became vain in their imaginations and worshipped part of the creation rather than the creator. (v21-23)
- (d) The result is sexual and other perversions. (v24-31)
- (e) They end up encouraging others to defy God. (v32)

29. Are the majority always right? A scriptural example of this was Elijah and the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18 where on a public opinion basis Elijah would have been considered wrong.
The concept that public opinion is always correct comes from the French philosopher Rousseau who stated "the most general will is always the most just also, the voice of the people is in fact the voice of God".
Another good example of this would be the public opinion that happened at the crucifixion of Christ.

30. There are therefore two classes in the Christian life, positive or negative to God's will.

31. In Old Testament times physical idols were common. The idols nowadays are commonly abstract in the form of ideas and concepts. It is up to the Christian to challenge these concepts where they occur.

CHRISTIAN LIFE – CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS See page 13

SIN – SIN UNTO DEATH

1. There is a sin unto death (1 John 5:16, 17, 1 Corinthians 11:31,32)

2. The sin unto death is the physical death of a believer, where ultimate discipline is administered to the Christian due to unconfessed sin of a serious nature.

3. Confession of sin under the concept of 1 John 1:9 is the way to forgiveness.

4. Examples of sin unto death:-

- (a) The Corinthian pervert – (1 Corinthians 5)

- (b) The Corinthians who habitually came to the Lord's Table in an unworthy manner. (1 Corinthians 11:27-32)
- (c) Moses (Deuteronomy 32:48-52)
- (d) Achan (Joshua 7:16-26)
- (e) Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11)

5. Whilst there is a sin unto death there is no condemnation to them in Christ Jesus – all believers (Romans 8:1).
6. The effect of the sin unto death is to reduce the time which a believer can spend on earth accumulating good of eternal worth. The gold, silver and precious stones of 1 Corinthians 3:11-15.

CHRISTIAN LIFE – SUBMISSION

1. This means to humble oneself in willing service to another, with the connotation that it is for your good. Genesis 16:9, 1 Peter 5:6, Hebrews 13:17.
2. We must fully surrender ourselves to God. James 4:7, Romans 12:1-2 As the Lord made himself obedient unto death so must we. Philippians 2:18.
3. We are, in Christ to submit ourselves each to the other within the church. This involves putting the spiritual needs of others ahead of any personal interests. Ephesians 5:21.
4. Within the church, believers are to submit to the teaching authority of the pastor as he preaches from the Word. Hebrews 13:17, 1 Corinthians 16:6, 1 Peter 5:5.
5. A wife is to submit herself to her own husband within their marriage. This involves respect for him as her spiritual leader and protector. Ephesians 5:22, Colossians 3:18, Titus 2:4 -5.
6. Children also are to submit in love to their parents' authority under God. Colossians 3:20.
7. All believers are to be in submission to the laws of their land, unless those laws violate the clear command of God. Romans 13:1, 2, Matthew 22:21, 1 Peter 2:13-17, exception example, Acts 4:15-20, 5:40-42.
8. Workers are to be under authority of their employers and their managers. Colossians 3:22-25, Ephesians 6:5-8, Titus 2:9, 10, 1 Peter 2:18-24.
9. Those in authority have a special responsibility to treat those under them with care and respect. Colossians 4:1

CHRISTIAN LIFE – SERVICE

1. Our duty is to surrender our entire lives to God. (Romans 12:1)
2. Willingness is essential. (Judges 5:2, 8:25, Isaiah 1:19, 2 Corinthians 8:3)
3. Service in the big things requires by faithfulness in the small things.
4. Monotony and difficulties are transformed into the opportunities with the correct attitude (Matthew 6:33)
5. Everything we do should be "as unto the Lord" (Colossians 3:17)
6. Service to Christ is acceptable to God and approved of men (Romans 14:18)
7. Our work should be completed. (John 4:34, 17:4, Acts 20:24, 2 Timothy 4:7)
8. The example of Christ. (Matthew 20:28, Luke 22:27, Philippians 2:7)
9. Qualities of our service:-
 - a) It is demanded. (Hebrews 12:28)
 - b) It should be immediate. (Matthew 21:28)
 - c) It is abundant. (1 Corinthians 15:58)
 - d) It is according to ability. (Matthew 25:22, Luke 12:48)
 - e) It is in co-operation with God. (2 Corinthians 6:1)
 - f) Must be exclusive (Luke 16:13)
 - g) In the power of the spirit (Romans 1:9)
 - h) Undertaken in Godly fear (Hebrews 12:28)
 - i) Motivated by love (Galatians 5:13)
10. It is:-
 - a) Following Christ (John 12:26)
 - b) For him whom all Christians serve (Colossians 3:24)
 - c) Service to God (Acts 27:23).
11. It requires:-
 - a) Turning from idols (1 Thessalonians 1:9)
 - b) Fasting and prayer (Luke 2:37)
 - c) Ministry of the Word (Acts 6:1-4).
12. Benefits of Service:-
 - a) It glorifies God. (Matthew 5:16, John 15:8)

- b) It enriches life. (1 Timothy 6:18-19)
- c) It gives a pattern for imitation. (Titus 2:7)
- d) It encourages others in their tasks. (Hebrews 10:24)
- e) It shows neighbourliness. (Luke 10:36-37)
- f) It lightens life's burdens. (Galatians 6:2,16)
- g) It demonstrates love. (John 21:15-17)
- h) It demonstrates faith. (James 2:17-18, 1 Peter 2:12)
- i) It is Christlike. (John 13:12-15)

CHRISTIAN LIFE – THANKFULNESS

1. In everything we are told to give thanks. In 1 Corinthians 1 Paul gives thanks for a number of items concerning God's provision.
2. Thanksgiving for grace (v 4).
3. Thanksgiving for spiritual wealth (v 5).
4. Thanksgiving for witnessing (v 6).
5. Thanksgiving for spiritual gifts (v 7).
6. Thanksgiving for ultimate sanctification (v 8)
7. Thanksgiving for divine faithfulness (v 9):
 - a) Faithful to forgive us our sins (1 John 1:9)
 - b) Faithful in not allowing too great a temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13)
 - c) Faithful is He who calls you (1 Thessalonians 5:24)
 - d) Faithful in keeping us from evil (2 Thessalonians 3:3)
 - e) Faithful even when we are unfaithful (2 Timothy 2:13).

CHAPTER 10

INTRODUCTION

Nehemiah realises that he will not be in the role forever, and that the king has made it clear that he is wanted back with the court as soon as possible. This is the right moment to call for a formal covenant to be made, whereby the people commit to moving the revival forward as a part of their daily lives from this day forward. The Second Law of Thermodynamics plagues mankind's behaviours, as well as describes nature's processes. The Second Law is stated as follows; "All things tend to atrophy over time". Unless real forces are applied all things will run down hill and run out of momentum, and all behaviours will be extinguished and forgotten.

Unless we use information in our mind we forget it quickly, and unless a real and powerful revival is reinforced by daily actions, even its power will be forgotten over time. We must keep the fire of the Lord burning in our souls, and applied in our bodies. We must walk in the Spirit daily, and it is helpful to have a formal covenant, or written commitment to act as our "Motto" or "battle cry" to focus our mind on keeping the revival alive every new day. There were more than just the spiritual objectives involved here also. The Mosaic Law required vast numbers of animals for sacrifices, wood for the fires, oil and fine flour, and rosters for the men who kept the temple always fully staffed. This required annual commitments from all the people to ensure the system worked over time.

To resolve long standing issues of supply of the sacrificial animals and the wood for the daily sacrifices, let alone the feasts, a formal covenant is now signed to secure supply to the temple in a timely and reliable manner. The priests, Levites and governing power families all sign an agreement first. As leaders they must set the example and mentor the right choices and set the example of focused commitment to continuing the work of the revival.

This formal commitment document is much more than just a document that ensures that animals and wood piles are provided, but that the people, through their family heads agree to serve the Lord in obedience to the Mosaic Law in all its details. The people identify that problems in supply have grown up simply because the people have not been obedient and provided the first born of their flocks and herds as the Law demanded. They now follow their leadership and take personal responsibility to all fulfil their duty and so all that is needed will always be provided. They further promise to keep the Law and serve the Lord alone. They covenant to do better than their ancestors have done.

NEHEMIAH 10:1-39

1 Now those that sealed were, Nehemiah, the Tirshatha, the son of Hachaliah, and Zidkijah,
 2 Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah,
 3 Pashur, Amariah, Malchijah,
 4 Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch,
 5 Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah,
 6 Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch,
 7 Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin,
 8 Maaziah, Bilgai, Shemaiah: these were the priests.
 9 And the Levites: both Jeshua the son of Azaniah, Binnui of the sons of Henadad, Kadmiel;
 10 And their brethren, Shebaniah, Hodijah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan,
 11 Micha, Rehob, Hashabiah,
 12 Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah,
 13 Hodijah, Bani, Beninu.
 14 The chief of the people; Parosh, Pahathmoab, Elam, Zatthu, Bani,
 15 Bunni, Azgad, Bebai,
 16 Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin,
 17 Ater, Hizkijah, Azzur,
 18 Hodijah, Hashum, Bezai,
 19 Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai,
 20 Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir,
 21 Meshezabeel, Zadok, Jaddua,
 22 Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah,
 23 Hoshea, Hananiah, Hashub,
 24 Hallohesh, Pileha, Shobek,
 25 Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah,
 26 And Ahijah, Hanan, Anan,
 27 Malluch, Harim, Baanah.

28 And the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the porters, the singers, the Nethinims, and all they that had separated themselves from the people of the lands unto the law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, every one having knowledge, and having understanding; 29 They clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord, and his judgments and his statutes; 30 And that we would not give our daughters unto the people of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons: 31 And if the people of the land bring ware or any victuals on the sabbath day to sell, that we would not buy it of them on the sabbath, or on the holy day: and that we would leave the seventh year, and the exaction of every debt. 32 Also we made ordinances for us, to charge ourselves yearly with the third part of a shekel for the service of the house of our God; 33 For the shewbread, and for the continual meat offering, and for the continual burnt offering, of the sabbaths, of the new moons, for the set feasts, and for the holy things, and for the sin offerings to make an atonement for Israel, and for all the work of the house of our God. 34 And we cast the lots among the priests, the Levites, and the people, for the wood offering, to bring it into the house of our God, after the houses of our fathers, at times appointed year by year, to burn upon the altar of the LORD our God, as it is written in the law: 35 And to bring the firstfruits of our ground, and the firstfruits of all fruit of all trees, year by year, unto the house of the LORD: 36 Also the firstborn of our sons, and of our cattle, as it is written in the law, and the firstlings of our herds and of our flocks, to bring to the house of our God, unto the priests that minister in the house of our God: 37 And that we should bring the firstfruits of our dough, and our offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine and of oil, unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and the tithes of our ground unto the Levites, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of our tillage. 38 And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes: and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure house. 39 For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the offering of the corn, of the new wine, and the oil, unto the chambers, where are the vessels of the sanctuary, and the priests that minister, and the porters, and the singers: and we will not forsake the house of our God.

REFLECTION

Verses 1 – 27. The list of names of those who had mixed marriages in Ezra 10 was a list of shame, but this list is a list of honour and forms the evidence of the fruit of the repentance amongst the leaders of the people. The leadership of all the key families records their personal commitment to keeping the Mosaic Law and to placing their own family's wealth at the disposal of the temple, so that the first born of all their flocks and herds would be delivered to the temple for sacrificial purposes. Clearly many of the priesthood and even Levites have been holding back from whole hearted commitment of heart and wallet, but now they are openly affirming their determination to serve the Lord in spirit and in truth. John 4:24.

Verses 28 – 31. All the people then joined with their leadership and affirmed the truth of their declaration on their behalf, for all wanted the Lord's blessing, not the chaos of their ancestors. There has been a genuine revival in this

nation, with a hunger for what God wants for them and a desire to serve the Lord in holiness and in truth. Having worked on the walls for 52 long days they have had the sins of the ancestors graphically portrayed to them.

Shifting the rubble and the great stones from the walls would have been one aspect of their breakthrough, but the bodies/bones uncovered under the rubble may have also focused their minds as they worked. Face to face with the carnage of the last great siege and destruction of the city would have burned the truth of the cost of rebellion against God deeply into the hearts of every man and woman that laboured on that difficult project.

The rebuilding of the walls and the clearing away of the rubble of the previous 130+ years was both a physical and a spiritually challenging task. I note "woman" here because I skipped over the verse in chapter 3 that recorded that many women were also raising the blocks of stone and cementing them into place on the wall also. While the rulers of Tekoa were too grand to bend their backs to the work, Nehemiah 3:5, the daughters of Halohesh worked with their father on the wall below the tower of the furnaces, to the shame of the elders of Tekoa. Nehemiah 3:12.

These girls are recorded as the daughters of the ruler of half the city, and this was possibly the western hill section of the new city area, rather than the old city of David on the eastern ridge and hills. They work with their father and possibly also other men of the household and they get their hands dirty handling stone work. Don't let anyone tell you that only modern Israeli women are ready to work hard; their ancestors stood alongside their men and worked as stone masons to rebuild their walls. There were no "wilting violets" amongst these people. They also would have come across the bones of their ancestors under the rubble, and been forced to bury them; so they also faced the consequences of the sin of their fathers, and were daily challenged to not repeat them.

Having an academic understanding of the consequences of sin, and even a spiritual understanding is one thing, but actually seeing and feeling the human carnage of the fall of the city lifted their understanding to an entirely different level. These people now felt the pain and anguish of their ancestors, and realised at first hand, as they moved rubble, just what their stupidity cost them. The very human tragedy would have personally touched every man who worked on this project, just as the clean up teams for the Oklahoma Bombing and Twin Towers collapse found that these terrible tragedies affected closely every man and woman who worked on those sites also.

It may be too strong an observation to say that these people are all traumatised by their experience on the rebuilding of the walls, but it may not be far from the truth. The traumatising however has been beneficial, for each man and woman has drawn close to God and dealt with any remnant of sin that could draw his life into the disaster that his ancestors provoked. Let us transform our own traumatic memories of the cost of man's sins and evils, and so use the power of those events to drive us spiritually forward in daily commitment to renewed energy in the Lord's work.

The men have not just kept their insights to themselves, but shared them with their wives, their sons and their daughters. In a time when women were not valued as equals in all cultures the emphasis upon the women and girls here is interesting. The men really shared what had happened to them as they built and discovered awful reminders of the destruction of their city, and they shared the insights they had received through the work, and they led their entire families to a fuller understanding of the Lord and His work upon them as a people.

They pushed their understanding to the place where they were wise in what they had seen. This means that their knowledge had deepened to real life changing experience and insight that made their values and decision making different than it had previously been. Wisdom is knowledge that has gone deep and born fruit in life change and understanding that can encourage others. We are called to make all knowledge into wisdom by its Holy Spirit empowered application into the fabric of our daily life. Refer to the BTB studies, BACKSLIDING AND RECOVERY, SANCTIFICATION, MATURITY, and WISDOM.

They are serious about their commitment and enter into a solemn curse upon themselves if they break the words in their commitment. They commit to walking in the entire Law of Moses, in all its breadth and demands upon them. They recognise that this means absolute separation from the pagan peoples amongst them, and that they will not give their daughters to them as wives, even though this is financially lucrative, nor will they take the girls from these pagan families for their sons.

They also recognise that the Sabbath Laws need to be enforced and the pagans need to know that Jewish people will not buy from them on the Sabbath. They also commit to the Sabbatical year and to the releasing of debtors in the seventh year. This is a major financial commitment, and marks their desire to do what God desires of them, and to walk down a different path to their parents. Their spiritual commitment has reached their wallet! This is the evidence of genuine change of heart!

Verses 32 – 35. They also specifically set a tax upon their households to pay for the work of the temple and cover costs in administering the feasts. The feasts and offerings that are to be paid for are specifically laid out so that there is no possibility of anything being missed, or any payment purloined by the priests. There has been corruption in the past, and the public commitment of all the people is designed to ensure that all know the truth that is to be kept, and all keep it. There are lots cast to establish which families of priests are required to bring in the wood for the offerings and when they are required to do this. This way there is no complaint, as it is a fair and impartial assignment. All commit to bringing in the Firstfruits for the sacrifices.

Verses 36 – 39. They also identify that there had been slackness with paying the firstborn tax to the temple, and offering the sacrifices that were required to ransom the first born. The Firstfruits offerings, or the cash equivalent is now to be brought regularly, and accounted for by the priests and Levites. They can see that unless these things become habitual they will fall into the “too hard basket” again. The annual tithes are also committed to by all the people, and the priests and Levites are delegated to receive them. The priests and the Levites are both to receive the tithes. One group is not to be in charge, but representatives of both groups are to receive, count, and account for the monies and goods received. There is great speculation about what is behind this rule, but previous corruption is my suspicion.

We cannot know for sure, but whatever has gone on before, both groups are now to work together and cross check each other so that there is no opportunity for corruption, nor for anyone to be able to allege corruption. Everyone who handles the money is to be seen to above suspicion. This remains a major issue for all modern churches; we must be seen at all times to be above suspicion in our handling of monies. Every protocol that guarantees absolute fidelity with the collected money for the Lord’s work must be applied in the local church or para-church organisations. If the hint of any suspicion of corruption is allowed to enter a believing organisation, then that group will lose its witness in a second. Refer to the BTB studies, GIVING, and PASTORAL RENUMERATION.

There are required full time workers in the temple, just as any major complex used by the church today requires some full time employees to maintain cleanliness, security, and the administration of the provision of all required items, and the coordination of personnel for services. Some work can be done on a voluntary basis, but at a certain point full time servants of the church are required and unless there is a commitment to regular giving you cannot budget to maintain required staff and upkeep buildings. With the commitment of the people, the leadership now knows that they have the required annual budget to ensure that they can maintain the building and all the services there, and pay the maintenance staff.

The servants of the sanctuary then are required to promise to stay in their jobs, for if all the Firstfruits offerings and the other tithes are paid there will be enough for them to be kept paid in service. Note that these lowly staff members are not required to make any commitment until the budget is there to pay them, and their family’s security is assured. The lowly workers are to be looked after, not forgotten.

These porters and other staff are vital for the security and cleanliness of the entire complex, and the Lord cares about their welfare, and the provision of wages for them and their families is assured, and then they are asked to also make formal commitment to their life long task. Stability and certainty in the services at the temple are assured by the national commitment to provide what is required so that the workers of the temple know that all that is required to feed them and their families will always be there.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. As each person heeds the voice of the Holy Spirit and is obedient, so all that the Lord requires will be provided into each local church. The Lord will never see any gift missing that is required in the church, and so if there is a shortage of any gifting in a local situation it is due to the disobedience of the people in that place. Let us urge all our people to pray earnestly to be aware of what it is that the Lord wants them to do, so that they might do all things that are needed in the local church.

2. Are we ready to follow up the waves of the Holy Spirit with the required formal covenants that we see here applied by Ezra and Nehemiah? We have tended in the modern churches to ignore this more formal process, and yet it completes the Holy Spirit’s work in the revival, and ensures that the move of the Holy Spirit is formally recognized by all the people, by the public acknowledgement of the fruit God requires each and every day afterwards. A covenant like this recognizes that the revival isn’t over, but the Lord expects the power of it to flow every day in the fruit of the Spirit into the church, so that everything required to run the local church is always there. It is always there because every believer who was a part of the revival arises every morning and formally commits themselves again to walking in the Spirit and doing what the Lord requires of them.

3. Let us examine our own church budget in light of the commitments we see being made in this chapter. Let us ensure that we are treating our administrative, cleaning, and security staff well, and are providing them with security of tenure as they commit to faithful service. In days when the world offers insecurity in each work role the church needs to continue to be a place where security of tenure is assured through the stable commitment of God’s people to do what is required to keep the beacon fire of the Lord burning in their local community. Let us covenant to provide what is required, and let us ensure all make that commitment. God’s work demands serious, Holy Spirit led commitments; let us not be afraid to demand them of God’s people.

DOCTRINES

CHRISTIAN LIFE – BACKSLIDING AND RECOVERY

1. Definition - falling from the standard of living that the Lord calls us to and living at a lower level of belief, behaviour, and emotion. Living in a state of embarrassment at the gospel, thinking as an unbeliever would.

2. The Lord knows who are his, we don't. 2 Timothy 2:19. A backslider is out of fellowship, and may resemble an unbeliever in every way yet still be saved. They are like the prodigal son. Luke 15:3ff. These people are different (although they appear to be the same) to religious unbelievers. 2 Peter 2:1-22, Jude 4-13, 18, 19, 22.
3. The Lord desires these people to be restored. Matthew 18:12-14, Luke 15:3-32. In the Old Testament this message is also clear. Hosea 4:14-19, 11:7, 8, 14:1-4, Jeremiah 2:19, 3:6, 8, 11, 12, 14, 22, 5:6, 8:5, 14:7, Jeremiah 31:22, 49:4.
4. Believers who are "offended" at the Word have failed to grow spiritually John 6:61-63, Matthew 11:6, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Matthew 13:21, Mark 4:17, John 16:1, Matthew 24:9, 10.
5. The disciples all were offended at the Lord at his death. Matthew 26:31, 33-35, cf. 67-75.
6. Falling from grace is another way of expressing backsliding. Colossians 1:23, Galatians 5:4, 2 Peter 3:17. It means to fall from a place where you stand for grace and adopt an inferior way of living the Christian way of life, like legalism.
7. God disciplines the backslider, but their eternal security is secure. Hebrews 12:5-13, 16, 17, 1 Corinthians 3:12-15, 1 Peter 1:4, 5, 2 Timothy 2:11-13, John 1:12, Ephesians 1:13.
8. The Lord is able to keep us from falling, although we can walk away from his provision by following our pride rather than his truth. Jude 24. 1 Corinthians 10:11-14, 1 Timothy 3:6, 7.
9. At the end of the church age the Lord prophesied that there would be a time of almost total backsliding on the part of the organised church. 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 1 Timothy 4:1-6, 2 Timothy 4:3, 4.
10. The Lord warns all backsliders very directly in Revelation 2:5. No fruit for too long = sin unto death! John 15:1-5.

11. Backsliding and Recovery

Seven Steps Downwards

- a) Trifling with Sin Romans 13:14
- b) Yielding to Sin Romans 6:13
- c) Habitually Serving Sin 2 Peter 2:8
- d) Abandoning Ourselves to Sin Ephesians 4:19
- e) Being Abandoned by God to Sin Romans 1:24,26,28
- f) Encouraging Others to Sin Romans 1:32
- g) Experiencing Hell on Earth James 3:6, 1 Timothy 5:6

Seven Steps Upwards

- a) Resisting Sin in our Attitudes James 4:7
- b) Overcoming Sin by Faith in Christ Galatians 5:16
- c) Habitually being Victorious over Sin Romans 6:14, 1 John 5:4-5
- d) Entering into the Secret of a Victorious Life Hid with Christ in God Romans 8:37, 2 Corinthians 2:14, Colossians 3:1-3
- e) Being Taken by God into Deeper Fellowship 1 Timothy 1:12, 1 Corinthians 4:2
- f) Delivering Others from Sin. Jude 22-23
- g) Experiencing Heaven on Earth Jude 24-25, Philippians 4:6-7

SALVATION – SANCTIFICATION

1. Sanctification means to be made holy - to be set apart unto God. One who is sanctified is called a saint.
2. We are sanctified (made holy) in Christ Jesus (1Corinthians 1:2).
3. Sanctification is in three stages:
 - a) Stage 1: At salvation - union with Christ - positional sanctification (1Corinthians 12:13, Romans 1:1-7).
 - b) Stage 2: Christian way of life - filling of the Holy Spirit - spirituality (Romans 16:2; 1Corinthians 1-2).
 - c) Stage 3: Resurrection body - In heaven - Ultimate sanctification (1John 3:2).
4. Our position in Christ entitles us to share Christ's righteousness. It therefore:
 - a) protects us from divine judgement (Romans 8:1)
 - b) qualifies us to live with God forever
 - c) makes us a new creature in Christ (2Corinthians 5:17)
 - d) guarantees eternal security for every believer (Romans 8:38, 39).
5. However, because we still have the old sin nature, we will still sin during this life (Romans 7:21). When controlled by his carnal nature however, the believer is positionally sanctified but experientially carnal.
6. When we receive the resurrection body, we no longer sin - our sanctification will be complete (1Corinthians 15:56, Philippians 3:21, 1Thessalonians 5:23).

CHRISTIAN LIFE – MATURITY

Categories of Believers

1. Standpoint of Spirituality:

- a) Spiritual believer - the Holy Spirit controls the inside of the believer (Romans 8:6b).
- b) Carnal believer - the sinful nature controls the inside of the believer (Romans 8:6a).

2. Standpoint of Growth:

- a) Baby - one who has just received Christ as Saviour.
- b) Adolescent - one who has learned some doctrine but is not yet in the application state.
- c) Mature - one who knows and applies doctrine and spends a maximum amount of time in the filling of the Holy Spirit.

3. Relationship of Maturity and Spirituality:

- a) Spirituality is an absolute. The Holy Spirit either controls or He does not. One cannot be a little bit carnal. If he is carnal he is NOT spiritual.
- b) Maturity is speeded up by spirituality, but a baby believer can be either carnal or spiritual, and a mature believer can be carnal or spiritual.

WISDOM

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” Psalm 111:10

- 1. Wisdom is identified as understanding (Proverbs 8:1, 5).
- 2. Wisdom will speak of things that are right, i.e. just and unbiased (Proverbs 8:6).
- 3. Wisdom will speak truth and will abstain from wicked or malicious words (Proverbs 8:7).
- 4. Wisdom results in righteous (just, honest) words and will refrain from perverse or slanderous speech (Proverbs 8:8).
- 5. Words of wisdom will be heard and understood by those who have understanding and knowledge (Proverbs 8:9).
- 6. Wisdom will seek after instruction rather than wealth (Proverbs 8:10).
- 7. Wisdom is better than material gain (Proverbs 8:11).
- 8. Wisdom is identified with prudence (discretion), it is discerning regarding ‘witty inventions’ (evil plots) (Proverbs 8:12).
- 9. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Psalm 111:10); therefore, to hate evil, pride and arrogance is a sign of wisdom (Proverbs 8:13).
- 10. There is strength (mastery) in wisdom (Proverbs 8:14).
- 11. Wisdom is necessary to leadership (Proverbs 8:15-16).
- 12. Wisdom will come to those who seek her early in life (Proverbs 8:17).
- 13. Those things that God considers true riches, i.e. a good name, humility and fear of the LORD are the rewards of wisdom (Proverbs 8:18-19 cf. Proverbs 22:1, 4).
- 14. Wisdom is eternal (Proverbs 8:22-23).
- 15. Wisdom was before the creation; was instrumental in creation and for creations benefit (Proverbs 8:24-35).
- 16. He that falls short of wisdom does wrong (does violence) to his eternal soul (Proverbs 8:36).

CHRISTIAN LIFE – GIVING

1. Giving is an important part of spiritual life. It includes your attitude, the giving of yourself, your capacity as well as your possessions. Giving is as much a part of worship as praying, singing, listening to teaching, observing the Lord's Table, reading the Word. It is a function of priesthood for team work and often to sustain the work of leadership.

2. Basic Principles of Giving

- (a) Old Testament Giving - this giving was grace giving just as it is in our age. (Proverbs 11:24,25)
- (b) New Testament Giving - (2 Corinthians 9:7) also grace giving.
- (c) Tithing - this means ten per cent. It was a form of income tax in Israel. Offerings or giving were above this. Tithing was for all Jews, offerings for believers only. It should be remembered that Israel was a theocracy.
 - [i] In Israel two tithes were required annually
 - [ii] Tithe 1 - for the maintenance of the Levites (Numbers 18:21, 24) Civil servants in a theocracy.
 - [iii] Tithe 2 - for national feasts and sacrifices (Deuteronomy 14:22-26)
 - [iv] Every third year a third tithe was required:-
 - [v] Tithe 3 - for the poor of the land. (Deuteronomy 14:28, 29) Social security. In (Malachi 3:8-10) it mentions tithes and offerings, the tithes to be brought to the storehouse or treasury.
- (d) The time to give - the first day of the week. (1 Corinthians 16:2)
- (e) How much - as God has prospered (1 Corinthians 16:2)

3. General Scripture on Giving. (2 Corinthians chapters 8 & 9)

- (a) 2 Corinthians 8:1-8. Contrasts the Macedonian givers to the Corinthian givers, the former having been made poor by Roman oppression gave liberally. The Corinthians, the richest Church in Greece, gave sparingly.
- (b) Giving is an attitude of grace and inner happiness rather than compulsion or the amount donated (2 Corinthians 8:2)
- (c) Before money is given you must give yourself. (2 Corinthians 8:5)
- (d) Giving is as important an act as any other act in the fellowship. (2 Corinthians 8:7)
- (e) Giving is love giving not law giving (2 Corinthians 8:8)
- (f) Giving depends on being oriented to grace, the prime example being the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 8:9)
- (g) Money given in the Lord's service must be properly administered. (2 Corinthians 8:19-21)
- (h) If you give in grace you reap bountifully. If you give in legalism or with strings you reap sparingly. (2 Corinthians 9:6)
- (i) How to give. Giving is a reflection of your character, by grace not habit. (2 Corinthians 9:7)
- (j) God has given unto us his unspeakable Gift. (2 Corinthians 9:15, 1 Peter 2:24)
- (k) Giving should be regular. 1Corinthians 16:2.
- (m) As we are prospered so we give: God provides the capital with which to give. 2 Corinthians 9:7-10.
- (n) Mature believers are most effective givers. 2 Corinthians 9:10. Generosity of mind leads to generous giving. 2 Corinthians 9:11. Philippians 4:14-18.
- (o) The pastor's logistical support comes from giving: He makes an issue out of the word never money, if he does his job God will provide the money. Pastor provides spiritual food and receives money for physical needs. Mutual blessing is thus assured, as the people show their appreciation for the ministry of the word. 2 Corinthians 11:7-9, Philippians 1:3-5, 4:10, 4:14.

CHURCH – PASTORAL REMUNERATION

1. Paul addresses this subject in 1 Corinthians 9:6ff, and in 1 Timothy 5:17.
2. He draws on principles from the Old Testament to illustrate God's viewpoint on the matter of supporting the pastoral worker who is unable to support themselves due to pressures of the work. Deuteronomy 24:10-15, 25:4. Paul was prepared to work day and night to support himself but the church had an obligation to support those who laboured to feed them the Word of God. 1 Thessalonians 2:9-12, 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12.
3. Even though payment is a right that God makes clear the teacher is entitled to expect, they may adopt a servant heart and not take up that right in order to better serve the Lord's people. Matthew 20:26-28, 23:11-12.

NOTES

CHAPTER 11**INTRODUCTION**

The biggest challenge that Nehemiah faced, in light of the great revival after the wall building, was to ensure that there were enough people in Jerusalem to keep it functioning as a city, and ensure that its security was able to be maintained into the future. This was a vast city, mostly still made up of streets of ruined houses. The pressing need was for enthusiastic settlers, and they had to be supported by their families back in the agricultural areas, for there was limited agricultural land around Jerusalem, and most of that was farmed by the people of the local towns like Bethany.

The new settlers would need to be supported by others for their livelihoods, or be craftsmen who didn't need to till the land, but could trade their manufactured goods for food. The jewellery workers, metal workers, chemists, and goldsmiths were already apparently concentrated in Jerusalem's western section around the old area of the throne of the Northern satraps; probably where later Herod would build his fortress-palace. These trades were clearly established, but the other trades of wood working, shoe and sandal making, pottery, leather working, candle making, and clothing manufacture would also be candidates for city dwelling and may have been amongst the volunteers.

The challenge was to get enough volunteers to move in and rebuild the houses of the once great city and make it great again. Once all the willing volunteers had been applauded, then the lots were to be cast to fill the remaining places, so that the people in the city were to be 1/10th of the total population. Nehemiah worked to that ratio to get the right number of people in the city to ensure that the gates could be held against any reasonably expected force of desert raiders. He sets the number at just over 3000 adult men, with their families. This is helpful as it indicates that the total population of the land is around 30,000 adult men at this time, so we have the figure of around 150,000 as the likely total population. It is also another helpful indication that the size of the rebuilt walled city of Jerusalem is that of the great city under the later kings, not the smaller city under David.

It was a big sacrifice for some to move to Jerusalem, for they would be moving away from family, and possibly away from their farmlets. National good rather than personal pleasure and preference was to be followed by most, and the governor had to try to get the people to like their choice. This is a challenge for his leadership, but Nehemiah achieves his goal and the new settlers quickly make the city their home and feel the joy of the place. Three thousand families are now settled in the city, each led by an adult male who is armed and ready to defend the gates and walls. There are enough men to guard the gates on a rostered basis, and man the walls if there is an attack by any minor raiding force. He has also, by means of this, ensured that every extended family in the wider land has a relative in the city, and that will draw them there for national festivals and feasts, and give all the people of the land a sense of belonging in the city.

NEHEMIAH 11:1-36

1 And the rulers of the people dwelt at Jerusalem: the rest of the people also cast lots, to bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem the holy city, and nine parts to dwell in other cities. **2** And the people blessed all the men, that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem. **3** Now these are the chief of the province that dwelt in Jerusalem: but in the cities of Judah dwelt every one in his possession in their cities, to wit, Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon's servants. **4** And at Jerusalem dwelt certain of the children of Judah, and of the children of Benjamin. Of the children of Judah; Athaiah the son of Uziah, the son of Zechariah, the son of Amariah, the son of Shephatiah, the son of Mahalaleel, of the children of Perez; **5** And Maaseiah the son of Baruch, the son of Colhozeh, the son of Hazaiah, the son of Adaiah, the son of Joiarib, the son of Zechariah, the son of Shiloni. **6** All the sons of Perez that dwelt at Jerusalem were four hundred threescore and eight valiant men. **7** And these are the sons of Benjamin; Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Joed, the son of Pedaiah, the son of Kolaiah, the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ithiel, the son of Jesaiah. **8** And after him Gabbai, Sallai, nine hundred twenty and eight. **9** And Joel the son of Zichri was their overseer: and Judah the son of Senuah was second over the city. **10** Of the priests: Jedaiah the son of Joiarib, Jachin. **11** Seraiah the son of Hilkiyah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, was the ruler of the house of God. **12** And their brethren that did the work of the house were eight hundred twenty and two: and Adaiah the son of Jeroham, the son of Pelaliah, the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah, the son of Pashur, the son of Malchiah. **13** And his brethren, chief of the fathers, two hundred forty and two: and Amashai the son of Azareel, the son of Ahasai, the son of Meshillemoth, the son of Immer, **14** And their brethren, mighty men of valour, an hundred twenty and eight: and their overseer was Zabdiel, the son of one of the great men. **15** Also of the Levites: Shemaiah the son of Hashub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni; **16** And Shabbethai and Jozabad, of the chief of the Levites, had the oversight of the outward business of the house of God. **17** And Mattaniah the son of Micha, the son of Zabdi, the son of Asaph, was the principal to begin the thanksgiving in prayer: and Bakbukiah the second among his brethren, and Abda the son of Shammua, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun. **18** All the Levites in the holy city were two hundred fourscore and four. **19** Moreover the porters, Akkub, Talmon, and their brethren that kept the gates, were an hundred seventy and two. **20** And the residue of Israel, of the priests, and the Levites, were in all the cities of Judah, every one in his inheritance. **21** But the Nethinims dwelt in Ophel: and Ziha and Gispa were over the Nethinims. **22** The overseer also of the Levites at Jerusalem was Uzzi the son of Bani, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micha. Of the sons of Asaph, the singers were over the business of the house of God. **23** For it was the king's commandment concerning them, that a certain portion should be for the singers, due for every day. **24** And

Pethahiah the son of Meshezabeel, of the children of Zerah the son of Judah, was at the king's hand in all matters concerning the people. 25 And for the villages, with their fields, some of the children of Judah dwelt at Kirjatharba, and in the villages thereof, and at Dibon, and in the villages thereof, and at Jekabzeel, and in the villages thereof, 26 And at Jeshua, and at Moladah, and at Bethphelet, 27 And at Hazarshual, and at Beersheba, and in the villages thereof, 28 And at Ziklag, and at Mekonah, and in the villages thereof, 29 And at Enrimmon, and at Zareah, and at Jarmuth, 30 Zanoah, Adullam, and in their villages, at Lachish, and the fields thereof, at Azekah, and in the villages thereof. And they dwelt from Beersheba unto the valley of Hinnom. 31 The children also of Benjamin from Geba dwelt at Michmash, and Aija, and Bethel, and in their villages. 32 And at Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah, 33 Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim, 34 Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat, 35 Lod, and Ono, the valley of craftsmen. 36 And of the Levites were divisions in Judah, and in Benjamin.

REFLECTION

Verses 1 – 2. The lots are cast amongst all the populations for one in ten of every family group to move to Jerusalem, as that will mean that every family has some family member in the city, which in turn means that when a feast occurs all family members can stay with their Jerusalem members. The large palaces of the old city become the private motels for the families of the entire nation. The city is now able to be rebuilt, because everyone has a relative there, and all can then stay with that relative, and so all will help in the rebuilding of the homes.

I suspect that within a decade all the old shells of houses were rebuilt and families were living again in the places where ancestors had been murdered by the Babylonians. Every house is blessed by the people who rebuild it and the city blossoms again. Under David the choice of this city as the capital was due to its position between Benjamin and Judah, and the fact that it wasn't a tribal place, it was a neutral place.

Under Solomon and later kings it had become the centre of government, a centre of the armed forces and priesthood, a diplomatic city, not a "homeland city" where people felt at home, but a distant "official" place, not a place where all could sense they belonged. All is now transformed by Nehemiah's genius; by his heeding the Holy Spirit and ensuring that Jerusalem has a representative of every extended family within its walls.

From this moment onwards Nehemiah has given every family a stake in the city, and this will be a vital thing in later years. In the ministry of the early Church it meant, for example, that the Apostle John, whose family worked on the Sea of Galilee, also had a home in Jerusalem which was large enough for many to meet in its great entertaining hall, or upper room. Acts 2:1, 12:12.

Verses 3 – 6. These verses have been variously interpreted, but given the total numbers of armed men selected for living in Jerusalem with their families, and then the total population, the men named here can only be the leaders of extended family households. Of the sons of Judah by Perez, under their named family heads, there were 468 men capable of fulfilling military duties.

I will not enter into speculation about these names, for outside the few Jewish families that can still actually trace their genealogies back to this time there is no certainty about these men's identity. We must keep in mind that the total fighting male population of the land is around 30,000 men and many names are going to be shared by several hundred men, so for each name here there are numerous candidates.

Verses 7 – 9. Of the sons of Benjamin, under their family heads there were 928 armed men of military age and fitness. We must keep recalling the importance of this number, for Benjamin was reduced to near extinction due to their great sin in the days of the Judges. Judges 20-21. Only 600 men survived that great massacre of the tribe of Benjamin, and they took their new wives from the women of the other tribes. After a thousand years they are only one third above that ancient figure. It is an indication of just how severe the destruction and deportation of Israel and Judah was.

We must also keep remembering that the majority of the Jewish people remained outside the land after the Exile, and so an equal number of men may still be in Babylon, but even then, we still have a much reduced population to that of the later kings at this point. The Jewish population only reaches the level of the days of the kings in the years before the Lord's advent. It takes 300 years to recover from the decimation of the Assyrian and Babylonian assaults. Two of the men of Benjamin are rulers under Nehemiah's sons of portions of the city, and will possibly take over when Nehemiah and his family return to Persia.

Verses 10 – 14. Of the family of Aaron, the priests have a good number of men of fighting age, ready to serve in the temple, but also carry a sword to defend the citadel. There was no pacifism in Judea at this time, and all were expected to stand with their brethren and defend their homes and families. There are 822 men of the direct family of Aaron, sons of Zadok and Ahitub, who are living in the city and serving in the temple. Two other groups are also mentioned from the families of the priesthood. These are the sons of other family members; the sons of Malchiah, 242 men, and of the sons of Immer, 128.

Verses 15 – 19. The Levites had oversight of the "outward" business of the Temple, whereas the priests had oversight of the "inward" business of the Temple. These men were the ones who led the prayer and Bible study groups, and would become the scribes, as well as being the physical workers to support the priests in the sacrificial system. Refer to the BTB study on LEVITICAL OFFERINGS.

There were 284 men of military age amongst the Levites, a significant difference in survival rate between them and the priesthood, which should have been on normal odds a smaller group. It may be that a lot more of the Levites remained behind in Babylon and other places than the priesthood. Many of the Levites may have felt that they were playing a secondary role in the temple to the priests and so were less honourable, and the desire to return may have been that much lower as a result.

Many of the Levites did stay in Babylon and became, as the scribes, the heart of the Babylonian theology school, and the later writers of the Babylonian Talmud. These men may have thought that they would receive more honour as great scribes in Babylon, rather than “support workers” for the temple in Jerusalem. Many paid for that decision with their lives later, for Babylon became a centre of rebellion against the Persian Empire and a scene of numerous massacres. The “right place” for these men was indeed Jerusalem!

There are a good number of families of the porters, who in humility and a deep desire to be in the right place to serve, have returned and are ready to work for every day of their lives. There are 172 of these honourable men who seek nothing other than the Lord’s place for them. The words of David are true for them. “For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door keeper in the house of my God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness.” Psalms 84:10. The need to walk in the path that the Lord has called us to walk is illustrated by these men. David’s next words are also true of them and all who serve where they should. “For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory. No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. The Lord of Hosts; blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.” Psalms 84:11-12.

Verses 20 – 23. The singers and the Nethinim were also there as a part of the Levitical group, and the sons of Asaph, the singers, were the leading Levites. These men and their families lived on the Ophel hill that is outside the modern Moslem walls to the south. The support function of the singers was seen as a key role, for their songs were songs of doctrine; they sang the Psalms and other spiritual songs. The words of the Psalms are prayers and all believers through the centuries have found in them strength and power for every day they recite them aloud to the Lord. The words of the Psalms rang out through the temple Courts at all times, so that everyone who entered heard the words of the Lord every step they took.

The Persian king himself had decreed that the singers were to be paid for from the funds as a first call on those funds. It is not clear whether this meant from the royal treasury, or from the taxation of the province, or simply that the first allocation of temple funds were to be to support the singers. Why did the king of Persia make this specific rule? Nehemiah does not tell us. Possibly he had heard them sing in the Persian Court, for all in the Middle East knew of the wonder of the singers of Israel, and even the Babylonians had requested songs from them during the captivity. Psalms 137:1-8.

Verses 24 – 35. We now have a list of at least some of the towns that were fully inhabited at this time, with their surrounding villages. The list can be checked on the maps, and if you look for these towns and then compare this list with Joshua’s list when the people entered the land you can see how little of the land has been resettled in Nehemiah’s day. Joshua 15 – Judges 2. There are seventeen walled cities mentioned as being resettled by the tribe of Judah, with their unwallled surrounding villages, and fifteen walled cities being resettled by the tribe of Benjamin, and their unwallled villages. The priesthood took allocated lands to raise crops upon in both areas.

The non-mention of the other ten tribes reminds us that the survivors of those tribes from the fall of Samaria in 720 BC had to flee to the south and join in with the two southerly tribes, and so their separate identity is lost, even though they are not “lost” to God. Some in Israel today still recall that they are of these ten tribes, just as they did in Jesus Day, but they had joined with Judah or Benjamin. James 1:1. Note that the tribe of Benjamin has sent settlers as far north as a line drawn from Gilgal, across to Beth-El, and then to the valley of Ono on the coast inland from Joppa. It is not a very large area at all, but with their numbers it can be controlled and protected.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. Every man was expected to bear arms and stand up to defend their families and their neighbours. There was to be no pacifism in Judea, but all were expected to place their lives on the line to defend their nation and their families. Refer to the BTB study below on MILITARY, and WAR. The often quoted verse, “Be sure your sin will find you out”, Numbers 32:23, actually refers to cowardice in the face of the enemy. Let us be ready to stand against those who would slay the innocent, be they within the state, or external to it. Let believers in the Lord be seen to be men of valour, not wimpy boys who will not stand and die for truth and righteousness. Let us stand for the innocent and the vulnerable, and protect them with our lives.

2. The great disparity between the numbers of priests and Levites who returned is a challenge to the Church. We also can have difficulties securing enough people to fill “support roles”, for many feel they are secondary, and will not be noticed by the Lord! This nonsense must be challenged and eliminated from the thinking of the Church. All roles are honourable and Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 12:11-30, are to be well taught in the Church. It is the Lord who decides who gets what gift, and where it is to operate, and our task is to accept the Lord’s will and run with it, to the glory of God. Remember pastor to preach the doctrine of REWARDS AND CROWNS often, for the Lord rewards on the basis of our performance of what HE HAS GIVEN US TO DO not what others are doing!

3. The returned exiles have seized and rebuilt enough cities and villages to dwell securely within and with the population growing as the Lord blessed them after Nehemiah's day they will spread out into the lands once held by the combined kingdoms several hundred years before. It will be several centuries until they hold all the land from Dan to Beersheba again, and this is a reminder to them of the judgement, as well as the mercy and forgiveness of the Lord. They have not deserved to be back there at all! The modern return of the Jewish people to their land has been even more miraculous than this first return. Within a hundred years of the first Kibbutzim the land of Israel is nearly all resettled, except for the old Philistine Gaza Strip and the east bank of Jordan. These areas will be Israel's again only in the Millennial Kingdom. Ezekiel 47-48.

4. Let us proclaim the miracle we see in our own day and be aware that this is the portent of the Lord's Second Advent soon. Every Communion Service let us remember Paul's words, and remind ourselves that we celebrate this, "until he comes". 1 Corinthians 11:26, John 14:3. Let us preach the coming of our Lord in these days as often as we are able to, for the return of Israel in unbelief, is the warning that His return is not far away!

DOCTRINES

OFFERINGS – LEVITICAL OFFERINGS REPRESENTING CHRIST

1. The Levitical offerings and sacrifices were a picture of the work of Jesus Christ. (Hebrews 10:1)

2. There are five offerings in Leviticus 1-6

- a) Burnt animal offerings Chapter 1 The work of Christ.
- b) Cereal offerings Chapter 2 The person of Christ.
- c) Peace offering Chapter 3 Reconciliation.
- d) Sin offering Chapter 4 Unknown sins.
- e) Trespass offering Chapter 5-6v7 Known sins.

3. Burnt animal offerings (Leviticus 1)

An innocent perfect animal was killed for the sins of the offerer. A representation of Jesus dying for our sins on the cross.

a) Bullock v2-9 Offered by the rich person.

Bullock is a male without blemish = Jesus Christ as a perfect person.

Offering is on the brazen altar = The death on the cross.

Offered voluntarily = Faith in Christ is on the basis of free will.

Sinner, (offerer) puts his hand on animal's head for an atonement. = Sins laid on Christ on the cross. Christ died for the sins of humanity. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Killing of the bullock = The death of Christ

Blood covering the altar = Total cleansing from sin.

Flaying of animal to check that there were no inner blemishes = Jesus was perfect and free from sin both outwardly and inwardly.

Wood burnt = Human good removed. (1 Corinthians 3:12, 15)

The head is burnt = The perfect mentality of Christ

The fat is burnt = The outward perfection of Christ.

The gut washed with water from the brazen laver. = Cleansing from sin. (1 John 1:9)

The legs washed. = Cleansing from sin allows for service.

Bullock is burnt. = The solution to the sin problem at salvation and during the Christian life has been accomplished at the cross.

b) Sheep v10-13 Offered by the middle class.

c) Birds v14-17 Offered by the poor.

4. The Cereal Offerings (Leviticus 2)

a) The Gift Offering = the gift of Jesus Christ.

Fine flour = Perfection of Christ

Oil = Holy Spirit

Frankincense = Satisfaction to God the Father

Salt = Preservation

Leaven (not included) = Sin

Honey (not included) = Human Good.

Take a handful of the mixture = Appropriating salvation personally by faith.

Burnt on the altar = Judgement of Christ on the cross.

Oil = Jesus filled with the Holy Spirit.

The priest eats the remainder. = the priest is sustained by the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit.

b) The Oven Offering

Unleavened bread = Christ had no sin.

Baked offering hidden from man's view = Godward side of the Cross. Golgotha shrouded in darkness during the period of judgement of the sins.

Fire = Justice of God

- Offering = Perfect humanity of Christ
- Oven = Cross
- Oil = empowerment of Christ.
- Frankincense = God is propitiated or satisfied.
- c) The Flat plate Offering
 - Fine flour with oil = Perfection of Christ
 - Unleavened = No sin or sin nature
 - No frankincense = No propitiation until God judged the sins of the world.
 - Part into pieces = Crumbled - something completely destroyed - Christ's body broken for us. Crushed with our sin. (Isaiah 53)
 - Oil poured onto crumbs = Oil of appointment - Messiah or given one. God the Father appointed God the Son to go to the cross cf. dove at baptism.
- d) The Frying Pan Offering
 - Partly closed, partly open - Unseen = Godward, propitiation. Seen = manward, reconciliation.
 - The offerer gives offering to priest who takes it to the altar, takes part as a remembrance (memorial) for (judgement) = compare with Lord's Table remembrance
 - rest eaten by the priests - how we appropriate Christ - faith.
- e) Rules of Cereal Offerings
 - Prohibited leaven = sin or evil
 - Honey = Human good or human sweetness
 - Garnished with salt = a contract between God and man.
- f) Cereal offerings were made at the
 - Passover (with burning = judgement = cross)
 - First fruits (without burning = resurrection)
 - Day of Atonement (with burning = judgement = cross)
- g) The Memorial Offering
 - Green corn = Christ in resurrection
 - Dried = Roasted by fire, Judgement

 - Beaten = Bruised or crushed
 - Full ears = Perfection of Christ
 - Put oil on = Messiahship appointment.
 - Frankincense = Propitiation, satisfaction.
 - Burnt = = Reference to the cross
 - Memorial = Lord's Table of the Old Testament.
- 5. Peace offering Chapter 3 Reconciliation.
 - Similar to the burnt offering, with both male and female animals sacrificed.
- 6. Sin offering Chapter 4 Unknown sins.
 - Confession and repentance from sin, equivalent to 1 John 1:9 (and cleanse us from all -unknown sins - unrighteousness)
- 7. Trespass offering Chapter 5-6v7 Known sins.
 - Confession and repentance from sin, equivalent to 1 John 1:9 (forgive our - known/confessed - sins)

PRIESTS

1. A priest is a man who represents himself or other men before God.
2. There are three categories of priesthood in human history:
 - a) Family priest - from Adam until Levi
 - b) Levitical priesthood. - appointed under the Law of Moses
 - c) Royal priesthood
 - i) Melchizedek - king of Jerusalem, but also priest of the Most High (Genesis 14:18)
 - ii) Jesus Christ - King of kings and the Great High Priest (Hebrews 10:17)
 - iii) Church Age believer - we share Christ's priesthood, since we are united with Him (1 Peter 2:9)
3. Until the Law was given the head of each family was the priest for that family. (Genesis 8:20, 26:25, 31:54)
4. When the Law was proposed the whole nation of Israel was to be "a kingdom of priests unto God". The nation of Israel however failed in unbelief.
5. God appointed Aaron and his family in the tribe of Levi as a specialised priesthood (Exodus 28:1)
6. All believers in the Church Age have become a kingdom of priests in Christ (1 Peter 2:9, Revelation 1:6)

7. The chief privilege of being a priest is to be able to approach God directly. (Hebrews 4:14-16, 10:19-22)
8. In their role as a priest the believer offers:-
- a) Their own body. (Romans 12:1, Philippians 2:17)
 - b) Praise to God. (Hebrews 13:15-16)
 - c) Their possessions. (Romans 12:13, Galatians 6:6)
 - d) Intercession on behalf of others. (Colossians 4:12,1 Timothy 2:1)
9. The priest must be a partaker of the nature of the people he represents. Jesus Christ had to be a human too. (Hebrews 5:1, 7:4, 5, 7:14-28, 10:5, 10:10-14)
10. Comparison of the priesthoods
- a) The Melchizedek priesthood was a picture of the priesthood of Christ (Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 5:6,10, 6:20, 7:1-28)
 - b) The Levitical Priesthood
 - i) Was based on the Law, which could not save
 - ii) Was based on physical birth into the family of Aaron
 - iii) Was available only to the family of Aaron
 - iv) The priests came from the tribe of Levi. The kings came from the tribe of Judah. No person could be a priest and a king.
 - v) Was based on mere men, with their own weaknesses and sin
 - vi) Ended when the priest died
 - c) The Royal Priesthood of Christ
 - i) Is based on Christ's sacrifice, which took away all sin for all time
 - ii) Is based on spiritual birth, being born again into the family of God
 - iii) Is universal to all believers in the Church Age
 - iv) It is a royal priesthood - because of the Kingship and Priestly office of Jesus Christ
 - v) Is based on the perfect person of Christ
 - vi) Is eternal, since Christ lives forever

PRIESTS – LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD

1. Aaron was the first appointed High Priest in the Levitical priesthood. (Exodus 28:1, Numbers 18:7, 8).
2. In the Levitical priesthood sons followed their father by physical birth into the priesthood.
3. Any descendants of Aaron who had physical defects were eliminated (Leviticus 21:21-23)
4. The function of the Levitical priesthood
 - a) To teach the law (Leviticus 10:11)
 - b) To offer the sacrifices (Leviticus 9)
 - c) Maintain the tabernacle. (Numbers 18:3) (Levites)
 - d) To function in the Holy Place where they changed the shewbread and trimmed the candlestick. (Exodus 30:7-8, Leviticus 24:5-8)
 - e) They inspected diseased persons in order to declare them unclean. (Leviticus 13, 14)
 - f) They acted as the supreme court of the land and judged major controversies. (Deuteronomy 17:8, 19:17, 21:5)
 - g) Priestly blessings. (Numbers 6:22)
5. Some priests also received the office of prophet. E.g. - Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah.
6. The tribe of Levi
 - a) The Levites descended from Levi who was chosen by God for the care and protection of holy things. (Numbers 3:5 ff, 8:14-19)
 - b) The first-born of all tribes of Israel were consecrated to the Lord. They were ransomed back by five shekels of silver, this money paying for the tribe of Levi who were their representatives.
 - c) The period of service for the Levites was from 25 to 50 years of age because of the tremendous pressures of being involved in spiritual activity.
 - d) The function of the Levites:-
 - i) To preserve the law, transmit it for posterity, constantly writing out the scripture. (Leviticus 10:11, Nehemiah 8:9, Ezekiel 44:23)
 - ii) They were to assist the priests in the service of the tabernacle and later the temple. (Numbers 18:4)
 - iii) There were two tasks that were not done by the Levites. The hewing of wood and fetching of the water by the Gibeonites. (Joshua 9:21) The gatekeepers. (1 Chronicles 26:1, 19)
 - iv) Classification of the Levites:-
Kohath responsible for the ark, table of shewbread, the two altars, the lamp stand, the sacred vessel and the veil. Gershom, for the coverings, hangings from the tabernacle, the doors. Merari, for the planks, the bars, the pillars, the sockets, the pins and the cords.
 - v) The Levites were responsible for the transportation of the tabernacle.
 - vi) The Levites were also responsible for all the music.

7. Dress of the High Priest (Exodus 28)

Except on ceremonial occasions, the dress of the priests and the high priest was no different from that of the common people. On ceremonial occasions the High Priest's uniform consisted of the following: white linen shorts, a white linen coat approximately hip length, a belt in the same colour as the curtains - white, blue, scarlet and purple, a turban-like cap with a golden crown inscribed 'Holy to Jehovah' (his badge of rank), an ephod of blue lavishly embroidered with colours, a breastplate of gold and cloth with the twelve stones representing the tribes engraved with their names and fastened with gold clasp. (See Priestly Garments).

8. The consecration of the priests and High Priests described in (Exodus 29)

9. The Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16) On that high holy day, the high priest donned his ceremonial robes and entered the Tabernacle where he sprinkled the blood of the bullock of the sin offering for himself over the top of the mercy seat. (v6, 14).

If he emerged from the Holy of Holies his priesthood was assured for another year. He re-entered a second time with the blood of the goat of the sin offering for the people to do likewise for them. His return to the Israelites signified that he had obtained national pardon. The people of Israel were spared. (v30).

10. The descendants of the High Priest

a) Succession occurred upon the officiating high priest's death with the eldest surviving son's installation. (Numbers 20:28)

b) The line was promised to pass down through Phinehas eldest son of Eleazer, the son of Aaron. (Numbers 25:10-13). Eli was a legitimate priest and descendant of Ithmar, but not an high priest; the switch in the time took place during Saul's reign. It was rightfully restored to the line of Eleazer during Solomon's reign. (1 Kings 2:26, 27, 35). When Israel was about to go under dispersion in Jeremiah's day, Seraiah was high priest. He was captured by Nebuzar-adam and executed at Riblah. (2 Kings 25:18-21). His son Josedech, who should have inherited the office, never served as high priest but lived and died in captivity at Babylon. (Haggai 1:1-14). His son Joshua assumed the office when the High Priesthood was restored in the days of Zechariah and Zerubbabel. (Zechariah 3.)

c) His successors were Jothum, Eliashia, Joiada, Johanan and Jaddua, who served in time of Alexander the Great. He met Alexander's conquering army with a scroll of Daniel in his hand. By reading him those passages dealing with him Jaddua won Alexander's friendship for the Jews.

d) Jaddua's successors were Onias I and Simon the Just. Onias II, too young to become the high priest, was set aside in favour of Simon's brother Eleazer.

e) The high priesthood was passed down to the Asmonaeon family of the course (class or order) of Jojarits. (1 Chronicles 9:10, 24:7, Nehemiah 11:10) and continued in that line until Herod the Great destroyed that family, the last high priest, Aristobol being murdered by order of Herod (Herod the Great's brother in law) in 35 BC

f) There were twenty-eight high priests until the year 70 AD Two high priests related to the death of Christ were Caiaphas and Annas.

PRIESTHOOD – OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT

I. Similarities of New Testament and Old Testament Priesthood

1. Based on Birth

OT - family of Levi

NT - family of Christ

2. Priesthood based on cleansing - permanent

OT - once for all ceremonial bath on induction to the priesthood Exodus. 29:4

NT - based on salvation, the washing of the Word Ephesians 5:25 -26; John 13:10

3. Function based on temporal cleansing

OT - the brazen laver

NT - confession of sin, 1 John 1:9

4. The Priestly Sphere of Life

OT - In the tabernacle (shadows of Christ). The priest not in the tabernacle wasn't functioning.

NT - In the Word (reality of doctrine). The Believer-Priest not living in the Word is not functioning in his priesthood.

5. Prohibitions

OT - Priest forbidden to offer strange incense. Leviticus 30:9-or strange fire - Leviticus 10:1

NT - All things equivalent to the old false rituals, ceremony without meaning, substitution of emotion for the doctrines of the Word of God. Hebrews 2:1; 4:1-2; 3:12

6. As the O.T. priest, though of the tribe of Levi, was disqualified if blemished (Leviticus 21:16-24); so the NT believer must be perfect (without sin in their life) to function. Spiritual maturity and spirit filled; see Hebrews 5:11-6:1).

7. Every believer is born a priest, but function is based on growth/maturity. Function is spiritual worship – Romans 12:1

8. Contrasts of New Testament and Old Testament Priesthood

OT priesthood is an Aaronic or Levitical order; NT is order of Melchizedek. Hebrews 7:17

In OT there was a royal family (Judah) and priestly family (Levi); in NT, we are a Royal Priesthood. 1 Peter 2:9

MILITARY

1. Protection of the national entity is two-fold:

a) INTERIOR - the policeman and the judge

b) EXTERIOR - the military establishment (Nehemiah 4:14,15).

2. In spite of man's effort for peace, warfare will continue until the Millennium (Matthew 24:6; Mark 13:7; Luke 21:9). Therefore warfare is not only a normal part of history (Ecclesiastes 3:8; Numbers 21:14) but very necessary for the maintenance of national sovereignty and freedom.

3. In both the struggle for the perpetuation of Jewish freedom after the Exodus, Jesus Christ Himself was the Lord of the armies under the title "Lord of Hosts" (Joshua 5:13 - 6:2; Isaiah 1:24).

4. Armies both defend freedom and destroy freedom. In (Jeremiah 34:7) the Jewish Army fought to defend Jewish freedom, while the Chaldean Army fought to destroy Jewish freedom.

5. The issue of national sovereignty, integrity and freedom depends upon which army wins. The Chaldean Army won and the Jews lost their freedom (Jeremiah 40:1).

6. God uses the military in action, to demonstrate the degeneracy of a nation. Failure of the military on the battlefield indicates the lack of self-discipline, spiritual incentive, motivation for courage and respect for authority which are so basic in perpetuating freedom. Failure of the military indicates lack of character and stability among the citizens of a national entity.

7. National military training is important in a nation's life (Numbers 31:3-5; Luke 14:31).

WAR

1. Wars and rumours of war will occur until the Second Advent (Matthew 24:6).

2. Christ is the Prince of Peace - peace will only exist in the Millennium (Isaiah 2:2,4).

3. The role of a government is to judge evil (Genesis 9, Romans 13). This includes war (Numbers 35:33, Jeremiah 34:7).

4. All wars are not in the will of God, e.g. the Crusaders attempted to restore Jerusalem before God's appointed time.

5. Eight basic principles of war:-

a) The concept of fighting for your country is Biblical.

b) In Israel, those 20 years old and above were to train for war (Numbers 1:3).

c) You need trained people and good weapons (Numbers 31:3-5, Luke 14:31-32, 11:21).

d) Only those with a courageous, positive attitude should fight (Deuteronomy 20:1-8).

e) If war is to eliminate evil, then eliminate it fully (Joshua 11:23).

f) War is to be based on selective destruction - those responsible for evil (Deuteronomy 20:10-15). It is not wholesale destruction (Deuteronomy 20:19-20).

g) Peace is a viable option if there is repentance/change.

h) You need good military leadership (Proverbs 24:6).

i) If the Christian finds a particular war unjust in relation to the Word/will of God, he has two alternatives:

i) he leaves the country if he can

ii) he may have grounds to disobey the authorities (Acts 5:29).

6. A walk of faith is not contradictory to warfare (Nehemiah 2:9, 4:9-20).

7. God's face is set against the war monger and against the pacifist (Psalms 68:30, 55:20, 21, 120:6, 7, Jeremiah 6:14, 8:11, 15, 14:19, Ezekiel 13:10, 16, Micah 3:5 -7).

8. Mankind will never totally destroy himself, either by war or pollution. God has a purpose for Christ to reign (Revelation 20:1-6)

CHRISTIAN LIFE – REWARDS AND CROWNS See page 55

CHAPTER 12**INTRODUCTION**

As a part of the repopulation plan for Jerusalem Nehemiah has taken a census of sorts to ensure he has 10% of the total population in the city. These lists here are a part of that, with the key personnel of the priesthood and Levites mentioned in this roll of honour, for these are the men who had the great privilege of leading in the dedicating of the gates and walls in worship. They were the ones, who through their obedience, had been there, and worked upon the walls, and so were able to worship at this first year of the prophetic timetable that would lead to Messiah's arrival in the city through the rebuilt Eastern Gate. A new day has dawned this day as they celebrate the dedication of the walls. Daniel 9:22-26, Matthew 21:9-11, Mark 11:9-10, Luke 19:37-44, 21:8-31, John 12:14-18.

NEHEMIAH 12:1-47

1 Now these are the priests and the Levites that went up with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, 2 Amariah, Malluch, Hattush, 3 Shechaniah, Rehum, Meremoth, 4 Iddo, Ginnetho, Abijah, 5 Miamin, Maadiah, Bilgah, 6 Shemaiah, and Joiarib, Jedaiah, 7 Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah, Jedaiah. These were the chief of the priests and of their brethren in the days of Jeshua. 8 Moreover the Levites: Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah, which was over the thanksgiving, he and his brethren. 9 Also Bakbukiah and Unni, their brethren, were over against them in the watches. 10 And Jeshua begat Joiakim, Joiakim also begat Eliashib, and Eliashib begat Joiada, 11 And Joiada begat Jonathan, and Jonathan begat Jaddua. 12 And in the days of Joiakim were priests, the chief of the fathers: of Seraiah, Meraiah; of Jeremiah, Hananiah; 13 Of Ezra, Meshullam; of Amariah, Jehohanan; 14 Of Melicu, Jonathan; of Shebaniah, Joseph; 15 Of Harim, Adna; of Meraioth, Helkai; 16 Of Iddo, Zechariah; of Ginnethon, Meshullam; 17 Of Abijah, Zichri; of Miniamin, of Moadiah, Piltai; 18 Of Bilgah, Shammua; of Shemaiah, Jehonathan; 19 And of Joiarib, Mattenai; of Jedaiah, Uzzi; 20 Of Sallai, Kallai; of Amok, Eber; 21 Of Hilkiah, Hashabiah; of Jedaiah, Nethaneel. 22 The Levites in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, and Johanan, and Jaddua, were recorded chief of the fathers: also the priests, to the reign of Darius the Persian. 23 The sons of Levi, the chief of the fathers, were written in the book of the chronicles, even until the days of Johanan the son of Eliashib. 24 And the chief of the Levites: Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brethren over against them, to praise and to give thanks, according to the commandment of David the man of God, ward over against ward. 25 Mattaniah, and Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, Akkub, were porters keeping the ward at the thresholds of the gates. 26 These were in the days of Joiakim the son of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor, and of Ezra the priest, the scribe. 27 And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings, and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps. 28 And the sons of the singers gathered themselves together, both out of the plain country round about Jerusalem, and from the villages of Netophathi; 29 Also from the house of Gilgal, and out of the fields of Geba and Azmaveth: for the singers had builded them villages round about Jerusalem. 30 And the priests and the Levites purified themselves, and purified the people, and the gates, and the wall. 31 Then I brought up the princes of Judah upon the wall, and appointed two great companies of them that gave thanks, whereof one went on the right hand upon the wall toward the dung gate: 32 And after them went Hoshaiah, and half of the princes of Judah, 33 And Azariah, Ezra, and Meshullam, 34 Judah, and Benjamin, and Shemaiah, and Jeremiah, 35 And certain of the priests' sons with trumpets; namely, Zechariah the son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Michaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of Asaph: 36 And his brethren, Shemaiah, and Azarael, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethaneel, and Judah, Hanani, with the musical instruments of David the man of God, and Ezra the scribe before them. 37 And at the fountain gate, which was over against them, they went up by the stairs of the city of David, at the going up of the wall, above the house of David, even unto the water gate eastward. 38 And the other company of them that gave thanks went over against them, and I after them, and the half of the people upon the wall, from beyond the tower of the furnaces even unto the broad wall; 39 And from above the gate of Ephraim, and above the old gate, and above the fish gate, and the tower of Hananeel, and the tower of Meah, even unto the sheep gate: and they stood still in the prison gate. 40 So stood the two companies of them that gave thanks in the house of God, and I, and the half of the rulers with me: 41 And the priests; Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Michaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah, with trumpets; 42 And Maaseiah, and Shemaiah, and Eleazar, and Uzzi, and Jehohanan, and Malchijah, and Elam, and Ezer. And the singers sang loud, with Jezrahiah their overseer. 43 Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced: for God had made them rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off. 44 And at that time were some appointed over the chambers for the treasures, for the offerings, for the firstfruits, and for the tithes, to gather into them out of the fields of the cities the portions of the law for the priests and Levites: for Judah rejoiced for the priests and for the Levites that waited. 45 And both the singers and the porters kept the ward of their God, and the ward of the purification, according to the commandment of David, and of Solomon his son. 46 For in the days of David and Asaph of old there were chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God. 47 And all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel, and in the days of Nehemiah, gave the portions of the singers and the porters, every day his portion: and they sanctified holy things unto the Levites; and the Levites sanctified them unto the children of Aaron.

REFLECTION

Verses 1 – 7. The list of the priesthood at the time of the first return of the Exiles in 535 BC begins the description of the celebration for the completion of the rebuilding of the walls. The men who lead these celebrations are the grand-sons, and some the great grand-sons of those who returned under Zerubbabel and Joshua, and Nehemiah wants to honour these ancestors as well as their obedient descendents who lead the celebration in 446/445 BC. When we stand in a godly tradition it is vital that we celebrate that, and give thanks for those who went before us every time we celebrate a great spiritual victory. We stand upon the shoulders of those who went before us. The family leaders of the priesthood who led their families back in 335 BC are honoured in these verses.

Verses 8 – 9. The Levite family heads of Zerubbabel's day are also honoured. These are the men who put aside all thought of playing a "secondary role" and left the secure and possibly wealthy life of Babylon, to return to the ruined city as servants of the yet to be rebuilt temple. These men risked everything, and had to shoulder the majority of the heavy work, and their grand-sons have had the great privilege to lead the worship, having themselves shouldered the heavy burden of rebuilding the broken gates and walls. Their reward is to serve in the leadership of the thanksgiving of the people. Often this is the way the Lord blesses us most abundantly; we are given the opportunity to be more actively involved in public worship. Let us be people who embrace every opportunity to be involved in any public aspect of worshipping the Lord our God. Let us be people who see and live out the truth that the, "Joy of the Lord is our strength!" Exodus 15:2, Nehemiah 8:10.

Verses 10 – 21. The lineage here goes a lot further than the days of Nehemiah and may be an insertion by a later scribe to bring the line of the High Priests up to his own day over a hundred years later. From Joshua, who came with Zerubbabel we go to generation two, Joiakim, generation three, Eliashib, generation four, Joiada, generation five, Jonathan, generation six, Jaddua. The list then follows of the current heads of the priestly houses in Nehemiah's day.

A great deal of printers ink is spent trying to identify these men and tie the various lists together (Nehemiah 10:3-9, 12:1-7, 12:12-21), but I will not enter into this activity here, as the benefit is minimal. Let us pause and remember the words of the last prophet Malachi, from about fifty years after this great celebration. He writes, "They that feared the Lord spoke often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." Malachi 3:15-16.

Verses 22 – 26. This is an important passage as it records that the book of Chronicles gets its final shape in these days and that the lists of priests and Levites there are noted at this time. It also hints that the days of Ezra and Nehemiah saw Joiakim and later Eliashib as High Priests. The Priests and Levites were organised back into their courses following the plan of King David. 1 Chronicles 23-26. The reorganisation begins with Joiakim, possibly just after Ezra's arrival, and continues under his son after Nehemiah has taken charge. The High Priests served until death, and so if Joiakim had been a child in 535 BC, he may still have been serving in the 450s as a very old man when Ezra arrived, but his son has clearly taken over by 446 BC.

Verses 27 – 30. The Levites and priests lived in Jerusalem for some of the year, but had farms to keep their families in other villages around the land. The old Levitical Cities were apparently used again when the land was resettled, and from all these places the Levites are brought back for the dedication of the walls. Every priest and Levite is to be part of this celebration, just as every other member of the nation is invited to walk the wall in worship on the day of dedication. The celebration was to be a time of gladness for all the people. The Levites will set the tone with their singing of the Psalms, and all the people will praise God with joy.

All the ancient instruments of joy and worship are to be used. The entire area around Jerusalem is to ring with the sounds of worship and joy to the Lord. Refer to the BTB studies on MUSIC and WORSHIP. All the singers and the other Levites gathered from their dispersed villages and purified themselves first with sacrifices and fasting, and then they purified all the people, the gates and the wall sections with prayers and worship. It may also be that blood was sprinkled upon all the people and every section of wall also, or that "holy" or blessed water was used. Nehemiah is not clear on that in his description, possibly because it was so obvious to him. Exodus 29:19-21, Numbers 8:5-14.

Verses 31 – 36. The princes of the tribes are then divided into two groups to lead their people in a joyful procession right around the walls of the city. The first group heads off from the Valley Gate towards the Dung Gate, and they march anti-clockwise around the city walls, with a great company of priests and people and the trumpets of the priests played aloud all the way. The second group will not follow the first group, but have another route to follow to the west. They will also have trumpets to lead them, and with all the musicians there also. Ezra leads the first group and Nehemiah follows the second group.

Verses 37 – 40. The wall at the Fountain gate ascended by a stairway up to the Temple Mount area and the wall then went out into the valley on that eastern side, past the great tower, and then up to the Water gate and the Eastern (Golden) Gate. The first group procession still played and sang as they walked up that section, even though it was steadily up hill all the way. The second group head west around the wall in a clockwise direction and will join together with the first on the northern broad wall, facing the land of Ephraim, now Samaria. By the time the first and second groups met up on the northern section of the wall, the entire wall was filled with marching and celebrating people, some of which have marched half the wall, and some who have simply got into place and then would be halted.

Verses 41 – 43. The singing did not stop, nor did the musicians stop playing their instruments. They were coordinated by their song leaders and the sound over the hills must have been amazing. The singers and musicians played and sang aloud facing outwards all the time, so that the music wafted out over the surrounding countryside. The places where the enemy had threatened are bathed in the song of rejoicing and dedication. It is worship to the Lord, and it is a triumphant rejoicing over their enemies also.

It would appear from the reference in verse 43 to the women and children separately that they followed their menfolk on the streets of the city, and the armed men alone walked the walls. That may not be the case, but it would appear to be so. The women and the children however all join with their menfolk in rejoicing over the completed wall. The size of the walls and their length would be filled to four to two deep by around 30,000 men, and so the rest of the population would need to be walking around inside the perimeter. There would not be enough room on the walls for 150,000 people.

Verses 44 – 47. With all the Levites together for this celebration the opportunity is taken by the leadership to appoint specific men to specific tasks within the temple and the treasury of the nation. The involvement of all the Levites really encouraged the people, and their following the traditions of David excited and fired up the people with more joy. They saw that the restoration of the Davidic worship and the Solomonian order for worship was the Lord's great blessing upon them. The days of their fathers had been returned to them in blessing through worship and obedient service. The people could see the great benefits of corporate worship and they gave themselves over to the worship of the Lord, and willingly took up offerings to ensure that the porters and singers were supported, both then and in the years to come. As people saw the joy of corporate worship they embraced its power and opened their hearts and their wallets to ensure it continued.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. Being in the geographical will of God opens the doors to blessing for those who have positioned themselves where the Lord is moving. Then daily obedience in the work that is to be done will keep the momentum of blessing advancing in the nation, the church, and the individual life. Spiritual blessing is received individually, but always comes through the community of faith, for the work done within that community.

2. Let us be aware of the need to open opportunities for many people to be involved in public worship, doing readings, prayers, and being able to lead in singing as the Lord has gifted them. Let us ensure that no rosters are ever enforced, but that we preach the joy of the Lord, so that willing hearts rise up to worship. When we do not have willing hearts to fill every role, we need to preach the principles of revival and worship and let the Holy Spirit loose upon the people. Let us have the motto, that unless the Lord raises up people to do a work, then it will not be done. Without willing hearts there is no spiritual value in any service! Let us be ready to allow all work to grind to a halt, if there are not people willingly ready to do the tasks. If tasks are done unwillingly, then God's people need to be convicted and get upon their knees in repentance for the great sin of disobedience and lukewarm carnality. Let us be ready to warn the Lord's people of the dangers of the Laodicean spirit, for to allow a church to go cold without confronting this truth is to ensure it will die. Unless real revival occurs a lukewarm church is a dying church. Let us worship with joy, or let us preach for revival, for where joy in the Lord is lacking, the Holy Spirit is grieved and quenched! Refer to the BTB studies SINS AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT, DON'T GO COLD

3. Let us be thorough in our worship. Let us leave no aspect of worship unfulfilled and let us make sure that every worship service is a joy filled time, where the people draw near and are touched by the power of the living God. Even when we warn the people of the Lord about disobedience, the service ought to be filled with joy, for by means of this Holy Spirit filled joy, the people will be the more convicted for any lukewarmness. Let us worship with full and grateful hearts.

DOCTRINES

MUSIC

1. Music has been with creation since the start (Job 38:7).
2. The Jews sang their thanks to God for their delivery from Egypt (Exodus 15:1).
3. Sacred music provides:-
 - a) Refreshment and drives away evil spirits (1 Samuel 16:23).
 - b) Assists with the ministry of the Word (2 Kings 3:15,16).
 - c) Helps to bring man to God (Psalm 40:1-3).
 - d) Helps defeat the enemy (2 Chronicles 20:21-22).
 - e) Fills the House of God with glory (2 Chronicles 5:13,14).
4. The Jews lost their song in captivity (Psalm 137:1-6) but recovered it when they returned (Ezra 3:2,11).
5. We have the lyrics of many songs in the Bible such as the Psalms, Miriam's song but no musical notes. The lyrics which accompany the music are important as music by its effect on the emotional pattern can cause the believer to sing words which are inaccurate or heretical, yet feel good.

6. There is a song for the redeemed (Colossians 3:16) which is one of the results of the filling of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18,19).
7. There will be a new song in heaven (Revelation 5:9).

CHURCH – WORSHIP AND PRAISE

1. The Hebrew word used in worship is "Shoko" - to bow down.
2. The Greek words are as follows:-
 - a) proskueo - prostrate yourself. (1 Corinthians 14:5)
 - b) sebomai - lack of arrogance. (Matthew 15:9)
 - c) sebazomai - stand in awe. (Romans 1:25)
 - d) eusebeo - act with devotion. (Acts 17:23)
3. Worship is the attitude of the believer when he approaches God in awe, fear and respect. (1 Chronicles 29:20, Matthew 22:21, Romans 13:17)
4. We should never be casual or flippant with God. (John 13:13, Hebrew 10:19-21)
5. Worship is an expression of bible doctrine that a believer has in him and is applying. All expression of doctrine is worship. (Nehemiah 8:6-10, 9:3)
6. We must worship the Lord in spirit, controlled by the Spirit, and in truth, reflecting doctrine accurately. (John 4:23-24)
7. It is therefore of critical importance that we worship in accordance with biblical doctrines. This is especially important in singing as because of pleasant music it is easy to forget or ignore the meaning of the words being sung.
8. People worshipped the Lord Jesus Christ. (Matthew 2:11, 9:38)
9. People who do not worship God will worship demons. (Deuteronomy 8:19-20, 11:16, 30:17-20, Romans 1:25)
10. All will eventually bow before Jesus Christ and acknowledge Him as Lord, either for blessing or before they are judged eternally. (Isaiah 45:23, Romans 14:11, Philippians 2:10)
11. In eternity there will be perfect worship as there will be perfect knowledge of doctrine. (Revelation 4:8-11)
12. Worship begins at salvation. (Mark 5:1-10, 18-20)
13. Worship expresses a believer's concentration on his Lord. (Psalms 29, 66, 96, John 12:1-11)
14. The song of worship. (1 Chronicles 16:7-36)
15. We worship through:-
 - a) Reading God's Word. (Colossians 4:16, 1 Thessalonians 5:27, 1 Timothy 4:13)
 - b) Studying God's Word. (2 Timothy 2:15, 3:15)
 - c) Teaching God's Word. (Acts 2:42, 6:7, 12:24, 18:28, 1 Timothy 4:6, 2 Timothy 1:13, 2:2)
 - d) Preaching God's Word. (2 Timothy 4:2)
 - e) The sacrifice of our praise. (Hebrews 13:15)
 - f) The sacrifice of our good works. (Hebrews 13:16)
 - g) The sacrifice of our bodies. (Romans 12:1)
 - h) The sacrifice of our substance. (Philippians 4:18)
 - i) The receiving of His Son. (John 1:11-12)
 - j) The keeping of the Ordinances. (1 Corinthians 11:2)
 - k) Through the singing of Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs. (Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16, James 5:13)
 - l) Prayers, Intercessions, Supplications and Thanksgiving. (Acts 2:42, Ephesians 6:18, Philippians 4:6, Colossians 4:2, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, 1 Timothy 2:1-2, 8)
16. Praise
 - a) Praise and thanksgiving are linked in worship. (1 Chronicles 23:30)
 - b) When they praised the Lord at the dedication of Solomon's Temple the glory of the Lord filled the house of God. (2 Chronicles 5:13,14)
 - c) Praise always glorifies God. (Psalm 50:23)
 - d) When Paul and Silas praised God by singing hymns in prison God acted for them. (Acts 16:25)
 - e) The Jews were delivered when they sang praises to the Lord. (2 Chronicles 20:21,22)
 - f) Praise is important in missionary work. (Psalm 96)
 - g) Praise is a feature of the Godly home. (Psalm 118:15)

h) Jesus Christ praises God in the midst of the Church (Hebrews 2:12)

HOLY SPIRIT – SINS AGAINST THE SPIRIT

1. RESISTING THE HOLY SPIRIT (Unbelievers only) (Acts 7:51, John 16:8-11) This is hardening to the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit.
2. BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT (Unbelievers only) (Matthew 12:31) The purpose of the Holy Spirit was to reveal the person of Jesus Christ. The Pharisees rejected this by claiming He was demon possessed.
3. LYING TO THE HOLY SPIRIT (Believers only) (Acts 5:1-3) A sin of false motivation. - Ananias and Sapphira.
4. GRIEVING THE HOLY SPIRIT (Believers only) (Ephesians 4:30) Any sin which the believer commits.
5. QUENCHING THE HOLY SPIRIT (Believers only) (1 Thessalonians 5:19) A believer who is not allowing the Holy Spirit to exert His full influence.
6. UNPARDONABLE SIN (Matthew 12:22-32)
 - a) Rejection of Jesus Christ as God and Saviour is the only sin which cannot be forgiven. This unbelief is shown in Matthew 12:24, denying the person and power of Jesus.
 - b) It is impossible for a believer to commit the unpardonable sin. (Isaiah 1:18, Isaiah 44:22, 1 John 1:7)

CHRISTIAN LIFE – COLD - DON'T GO COLD

1. The big danger for believers is going cold in their love for their Lord. This opens the door to sin and evil. Satan's key strategy against believers is to distract and deceive them, so they drift away from the moment by moment fellowship with the Lord who loves them. John 15:7-17. Refer ABIDING.
2. The church of Laodicea is the case history of this problem. Revelation 3:14-22.
3. Paul gives the Corinthians church the remedy to assist believers from going cold in their love and obedience. 2 Corinthians 13:5. He gives specific instruction:
 - [a] Test yourself regularly, by asking some basic questions. Am I dealing with sin quickly? Am I studying God's Word often? Am I praying often through each day? Am I speaking of the Lord daily?
 - [b] Prove yourself a worthy servant. Am I serving the Lord productively? Is the fruit of my life spiritual or carnal? Refer FRUIT.
 - [c] Know yourself. How well do you know your gifts? How well do you know your Old Sin Nature weaknesses?
 - [d] Christ is in you. Practice the presence of Christ. Hourly through each day, is there a deep and meaningful exchange between you and the Lord? Is prayer and the inner dialogue about life and issues a real and present reality? John 14:16-17, 20-21, Romans 8:9-11, Galatians 2:20, Colossians 1:27, 3:16, Ephesians 3:17-19.
4. The church at Laodicea had gone cold through the distractions of the wealth of this world. Like Demas, they had gone astray from the true path the Lord had for them and chased after, money, power, social status, respectability, and influence. They sought a comfortable life, rather than a spiritually active life. 2 Timothy 4:10. This church was still meeting, and still had all the trappings of a church, but without the loving and real and powerful life of a church. They needed to deal with their situation of distraction and open the Word again, so that the Holy Spirit's ministries could begin afresh within them. Refer HOLY SPIRIT - MINISTRIES.

NOTES

CHAPTER 13**INTRODUCTION**

This chapter is, I believe, a summary chapter of Nehemiah's actions through his time in the land. This is his farewell and reflective prayer to the Lord about the things that stood out for him through his years as Governor. In it he identifies the direct actions he had to personally take to deal with the terrible compromises of faith of both the Jewish leadership and the common people. This chapter covers all the period of his rulership and identifies a number of incidents where he had to directly confront the gross and spiritually dangerous disobedience of the people.

Nehemiah is not being self righteous here, but is praying that the Lord will see that he did what he could to stem the tide of evil in the land. It is a prayer of humility and of strength. Nehemiah is still absolutely convinced he did the right things each time, but behind his words I hear the sadness that many older saints have expressed to me as they die; that they wish they could have done more to stop the tide of evil amongst the Lord's people. This is not to say they failed, or fell short, but is simply to identify that the greater the saint, the more aware they are of the impact of evil, and the more deeply they feel their own and other's sin.

Spiritual maturity and greatness of service never produces arrogance, always a sad humility, as the old saint looks at the consequences of the disobedience of man and wishes that they could have done more. It is not wrong to have this feeling pastor. As your own ministry moves to its conclusion, this chapter will become more and more precious to you as a faithful servant of the Lord. Read Paul's own testimony as he nears the end of his own life. **2 Timothy 4:1-8**. Notice that he is still urgent in his warning and orders to Timothy, knowing that the tide of evil is still sweeping in every day upon the people of God.

As the Lord's pastors we are to be vigilant and powerful in our urgings to the people of God every day until we join the Lord in heaven. Until He comes the tides of evil will sweep into the fellowship of His people and the job of spiritual leadership is that of Nehemiah; to stand for truth in the midst of evil, and to be a beacon of light in the dark places until the "Sun of Righteousness" returns and rules. Malachi 4:2.

NEHEMIAH 13:1-31

1 On that day they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was found written, that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever; **2** Because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them: howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing. **3** Now it came to pass, when they had heard the law, that they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude. **4** And before this, Eliashib the priest, having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God, was allied unto Tobiah: **5** And he had prepared for him a great chamber, where aforetime they laid the meat offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the new wine, and the oil, which was commanded to be given to the Levites, and the singers, and the porters; and the offerings of the priests. **6** But in all this time was not I at Jerusalem: for in the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon came I unto the king, and after certain days obtained I leave of the king: **7** And I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God. **8** And it grieved me sore: therefore I cast forth all the household stuff to Tobiah out of the chamber. **9** Then I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers: and thither brought I again the vessels of the house of God, with the meat offering and the frankincense. **10** And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given them: for the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field. **11** Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken? And I gathered them together, and set them in their place. **12** Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn and the new wine and the oil unto the treasuries. **13** And I made treasurers over the treasuries, Shelemiah the priest, and Zadok the scribe, and of the Levites, Pedaiah: and next to them was Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah: for they were counted faithful, and their office was to distribute unto their brethren. **14** Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof. **15** In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day: and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals. **16** There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. **17** Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day? **18** Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath. **19** And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath: and some of my servants set I at the gates, that there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath day. **20** So the merchants and sellers of all kind of ware lodged without Jerusalem once or twice. **21** Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye about the wall? if ye do so again, I will lay hands on you. From that time forth came they no more on the sabbath. **22** And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should come and keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath day. Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy. **23** In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of

Ammon, and of Moab: 24 And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people. 25 And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves. 26 Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin. 27 Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to transgress against our God in marrying strange wives? 28 And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was son in law to Sanballat the Horonite: therefore I chased him from me. 29 Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites. 30 Thus cleansed I them from all strangers, and appointed the wards of the priests and the Levites, every one in his business; 31 And for the wood offering, at times appointed, and for the firstfruits. Remember me, O my God, for good.

REFLECTION

Verses 1 – 3. Nehemiah's reflection on the entire time period of his ministry in Judea begins with the breakthrough of understanding that the people got as they heard the Word of God that day the walls were dedicated. They had been challenged about their foreign wives by Ezra, and there had been action taken then, but not enough. Ezra Chapter 10.

The sexual temptations to take in these foreign women as their wives and lovers were strong and not beaten totally in the days of Ezra. Many men continued to find these "sexually liberated" pagan women exciting, and were led astray by them, just as some of their ancestors had been. Numbers Chapter 25. Even to the very family of the High Priest there was corruption that Ezra was not able to eliminate until Nehemiah took direct action as the Governor and threw out Tobiah's furniture from the temple itself. Compromise had previously been the Jewish people's way of dealing with the threats from the northern satraps until Nehemiah came in strength and taught them to stand tall and resist evil directly.

As they heard the Mosaic Law read aloud the people realised that the pagan peoples of Ammon and Moab had been a snare to their ancestors, and through their sexualised religion, they had brought death and judgements through the ages to Israel. Deuteronomy 23:3-6. They saw that they were cursed people in their paganism and had to be separated from. Now pause and remember, Ruth had been a Moabitess, but had been saved, and so came out from under the curse that was upon her people for their devotion to evil and their sinful life style. Ruth 4:11-22.

In this passage at the end of Ruth the writer reminds the Israelites that David himself was only three generations from his Moabite great-grand-mother. Why was he not under the curse? Why was the family of Judah not under the curse through their Canaanite ancestor Tamar? Why were Salmon's children not under the curse through their mother Rahab? All these non-Jewish women became ancestors of the tribe of Judah and the family of the king. All these women are mentioned in the genealogy of the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ, so they cannot be under any curse. Matthew 1:2-6.

As we read of the separation from the "Mixed Multitude" here we must recall these three important women and understand the nature of the biblical separation that is fully and finally enforced here in Nehemiah's day. Ezra had tried to separate the people from their foreign and pagan wives, but there were still many who quietly compromised as if it wasn't an important thing. Even today we hear these words; "What happens behind closed doors is no-one else's business". The message of this passage is that private morality (or rather immorality) is the entire congregation's business.

These foreign wives and husbands had not accepted the Lord, as had Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth, and so their pagan life style was active and destructive in the heart of the Jewish homes that they dwelt in. These people were determined in their paganism, just as Tamar, Rahab and Ruth had been determined in their genuine faith. Those who wanted to come along to the temple and join in worship, but who also worshipped the pagan gods, had to be cut out of the nation, or the spiritual compromise involved would destroy it. These people lived their paganism, and so were an active "curse" in the homes they had infected.

Sin at the heart of a congregation will rot that congregation, and destroy its witness, and undermine its spiritual success. **1 Corinthians 5:1-13, 11:27-34.** To tolerate evil of any sort in the Church is to open the door for Satan to attack the weak and young believers within the fellowship. Even today we are to deal with sin in the midst of our congregations as Nehemiah and all the New Testament apostles urge, or that compromised local church will cease to be effective in its community. There can be no tolerance for, or compromise with, any pagan elements in our fellowships or our homes.

Any mixing of paganism and genuine faith will lead to the destruction of genuine faith over time. The curse is turned to blessing only through the salvation of the pagan. It is through evangelism alone that the believer is to fellowship with the pagan. There is to be no other form of close contact with those who are determined in their paganism. Close and intimate fellowship with pagans will lead to spiritual and moral compromises with these people, and your witness will be destroyed.

The defilement of sin and evil, and its destructive force, is to be feared by all believers who value their witness and future ministry! Refer back to the BTB study on SEPARATION. Flee these evils and teach your people pastor to flee them also! We are to be fearful of the enemy's power to seduce us into compromise. It is all very well to quote 1 John 4:4 and use it as a reason why we can do things and go to places without fear, but a godly fear of evil's power will keep us safe, and

well away from disastrous attacks that we do not have to face. There are some paths we are not meant to walk down in this life; they are simply not safe. **Proverbs 4:26-27, Hebrews 12:13.**

Many believers get over confident and live to regret the destruction that they let loose in their lives and families. Judah's sexual sins begin through his fellowship with his pagan friend Hirah. They clearly were great friends, but Judah got into sexual sins that nearly destroyed him. Genesis 38. Lot's compromises in faith begin as he moves into Sodom. Both men lived to regret their compromise, but for Lot it was too late to save his family. Genesis 12-18. Let us fear the power of the enemy and keep ourselves safe from his devices by not walking close to his strongholds of evil. 2 Corinthians 2:10-11.

Verses 4 – 9. The example of just how powerful compromise can be in undermining an entire nation is seen in the actions of Eliashib the High Priest of the days of Ezra and possibly even into the first days of Nehemiah's Governorship. This man had married one of his daughters to Tobiah the northern satrap of Samaria.

He possibly believed that this was a dynastic marriage that would create an alliance that would keep the Jews safe, but he had no business allying himself to a pagan when he was called to stand for righteousness and truth. His job was to mentor faith and trust in the Lord's power to protect, not trust pagans. He had then committed the grossest sacrilege and cleared out an apartment for Tobiah in the very temple courtyard. He had cleared out an area that had previously been used to gather and sort offerings for the Levites.

This under valuing of the Levites support had led to their being despised and not paid for their services, so that they spent more time away from the temple in their farming areas raising crops to feed themselves. Without support from the tithes they were unable to spend the required time for their worship and support duties in the temple. Nehemiah sorts this out, but he identifies that it begins with Eliashib's act of compromise.

Tobiah became a sworn enemy of the Jews, and when he married his daughter to Eliashib's son he was their enemy and determined to keep the Jews poor and oppressed, and their city wall with holes in it. He was cunning in his use of his pagan daughter and he delighted in the suppression of the Jews, and despised the high priest who was old and foolish and didn't see his evil. Eliashib had been made a fool of and yet he believed his actions were saving his people! Like Neville Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister, who tried to appease Hitler before World War 2, he foolishly believed that evil could be negotiated with. Evil only negotiates to buy time, or keep control. Satan does not give ground except to the spiritual power of the Holy Spirit. He is defeated by spiritual power never mastered by negotiation.

Our job is not to play politics with the forces of Satan, nor entertain them, but to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit, dressed daily in the armour of the Holy Spirit, and stand for truth, without any compromise at all. We are not here to socialise with the devil or his people, but to destroy all the works of the enemy in the power of the Holy Spirit. We are under the Lord's orders, for He is our Commanding Officer, and he orders us to separate from such evil people, and have nothing to do with them. **Romans 13:11-14, 1 John 3:7-10.** Refer back to the BTB studies on WALKING, CHRISTIAN SOLDIER, and FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Nehemiah tells us that the great chamber that Eliashib turned into the apartment previously held many of the offerings that should have gone to the priests, Levites, porters, and singers. For a time the offerings may have been given directly to these servants of the temple, but over time it was easier to simply not collect things that they couldn't store. Corruption entered in and the payment of the Levites stopped. Nehemiah notes that all this occurred before he took over, but the legacy of this and other compromise activities is what he had to face.

When he took over completely he was grieved to discover this evil in the midst of the temple and he got his men to enter the apartment and empty out all Tobiah's furniture onto the street. He then ordered the chamber purified from its defilement with his pagan items, and then it was restored to its former and proper usage as a storage area. Even if Tobiah hadn't brought idols into the temple, all his things were polluted by the paganism he believed in and practised. Everything he touched was polluted by his evil thinking. **2 Corinthians 6:17, Jude 23.** Let us hate everything that is associated with evil and sin and oppose all compromises that will water down truth and righteousness.

Verses 10 – 13. Around this time Nehemiah also worked out that the Levites were "missing" and that the reason was the lack of tithes going their way. He realised after some investigation that the priests had been corruptly holding back tithes owed to the Levites and they had to work their lands to live and feed their families. The robbery of the Levites was threatening the very survival of temple worship and had broken the bond within the house of Levi. It was the satanic evil of factionalism that still is a major tool of the enemy to destroy churches. To withhold support from the Lord's people is to rob God! **Malachi 3:8-15.**

If the enemy can undermine the unity of the people of God then he succeeds in destroying the witness of the Church. If the unbeliever sees believers cheating each other and dealing with their own brethren disgracefully they will believe that the truth of God's Word is a lie and a fraud; the value given to the Word of God will be judged by its application by God's people! Do not be surprised about this or complain, for this is the way we all think; we judge movements by their disciples and their actions. We cannot expect the world to judge us any better than we judge the world!

Nehemiah takes direct action to organise the collection and distribution of the appropriate tithes. He had left this to the priests previously, but their corruption and compromise meant they could only be rebuked and bypassed. The men who should have done this work are directly rebuked and they are replaced by faithful men who will do what is required.

Verses 14 – 21. Nehemiah had also to deal with Sabbath breakers from amongst the Jewish people. There will always be those in every group that believe the rules are for other people, but they are exempt or special cases. These people are those we call today Narcissistic Personalities. They are self centred people who believe the rules of God are for everyone else. Such people are to be solemnly warned of the dangers they are in, and told that the Lord judges all evil and all sin, and that they stand in danger of the SIN UNTO DEATH if they persist.

The Sabbath breakers in Nehemiah's day were conducting all forms of business and farm work, and once he was told this was occurring he set out to find them. He had to ride out into the countryside to verify these things, and so break the Sabbath provisions himself, but that was required to end the evil. Nehemiah asks the Lord to look upon his heart in this matter, for his desire was the holiness of the nation and he took every action he could to ensure the Sabbath Day rules were kept. Refer back to the BTB study THE SABBATH AND THE LORDS DAY.

These Jewish people were so brazen that they even brought their goods to market on the Sabbath day and sold them in the city. Nehemiah confronts these people in the city and ends their markets with severe threats. The merchants of Tyre also brought their fish to market on the Sabbath day. While they were not covered by the Sabbath Day provisions, they were not to be allowed to lead astray the people either. Nehemiah confronts them and eliminates all markets on the Sabbath Day, and he directly confronts the nobles, who likely are running the market and making money from the stall holders!

The love of money was the root of this evil, and these pious nobles wanted to make their money from the stall holders who sold their wares on every day of the week. Just like the corrupt stall holders of Jesus day who exchanged money corruptly, with the profits going to the high priesthood, so these markets were truly "rackets" being run corruptly under Nehemiah's very nose. He acts against the nobles who run the market, and against the stall holders, both Jewish and pagan, and after two Sabbaths when they camp outside the city gates, he tells them that if they come a third time they will be attacked and killed.

Verse 22. The Levites were needed to man the gates of the city on the Sabbath Day to ensure that the Mosaic Law was kept on that day. Nehemiah's specific ordering of the Levites into the gate keeper roles on the Sabbath Day raise an interesting point. The priesthood had failed to support the Levites and this led to their having to live most of the time on their farms away from the city. Did they do this to ensure that the Levites couldn't stop the Sabbath markets? Were the priests also involved amongst the "nobles" in this corrupt practise that broke the Mosaic Law?

Nehemiah has over ruled the priests a number of times and he feels bad about this, and prays for the Lord to witness his actions, for he took them through desire to serve the Lord, and honour His Word. He prays that the Lord spares him in mercy, seeing the heart behind his actions. It may be that this verse, and some of the others where he prays for forgiveness, indicate that he had to take very severe actions against some of the priests and nobles, even to executing some. He is far more sensitive to his actions than we would expect if he was just rebuking people.

A great deal of conflict has occurred for Nehemiah to bring in his reforms to back Ezra, and it is clear from Nehemiah's words that Ezra, great man that he was, was clearly blocked by the nobles and high priest from thorough reform. These two men have had to take quite extreme measures against the heart of the evil in the nation, but both cast a cloak over these things, and it is only Nehemiah's broken hearted prayer here that gives us a glimpse of the seriousness of some of the actions he may have had to take.

Verses 23 – 28. The next threat to the nation's identity and religious integrity was related to more mixed marriages. Ezra's reforms had occurred over a decade before, and this reference here is a reminder that bad habits are never eliminated by single actions. Evil does not go away after one confrontation. Satan is not that weak and pathetic, and he does not drop a good strategy which always works to destroy people's spiritual life.

Mixed marriages have quietly made a come back by the later years of Nehemiah's governorship. The result is that the half Jewish children speak the language of their home, which is not Hebrew. Nehemiah acts strongly to deal with this threat. The Jewish people are to speak Hebrew and read Hebrew so that they can daily hear the words of Moses and David and understand them. For Jewish children to grow up with a foreign tongue as their first language, and not be able to speak Hebrew was to rob them of their cultural and spiritual heritage.

Nehemiah publicly insults and curses such men who have allowed this mixed marriage curse to come upon Judea. He also takes direct action and beats up some, and possibly executes others. He reminds them that this was the sin of Solomon, and it led to the destruction of his kingdom and the loss of everything he had built up. 1 Kings 11:1-13. Nehemiah literally beat up Eliashib's grand-son and chased him from the city. He would exile any who sided with the enemy of Judea, Tobiah.

Verses 29 – 30. The extent of the defilement of the priesthood and their corruption is now hinted at in this final prayer of Nehemiah. He ought not to have had to do this, but Ezra was clearly unable to make inroads into the highest and most corrupt of the priestly circles and effect the required changes. Nehemiah has to seriously break heads and egos, and he does so to bring in reform. He calls for the Lord to remember and judge those who defiled their holy office as priests. He took direct control off the hands of the corrupt high priesthood and personally appointed the men to lead the priestly courses and the Levitical ingathering of the tithes.

To eliminate the corruption he had to take over from the spiritual leadership of the land. He was the governmental leader, but he had to usurp religious control to eliminate the corruption, and he asks the Lord for forgiveness for this intrusion, but calls on the Lord to certify eternally that it was required. We must be ready to act against corruption, even in the highest and most noble of places.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. Flee immorality and idolatry! Flee from anything that even looks evil! The apostolic warning is urgent and powerful and we need to preach it with their clarity of understanding of the corrosive force of Satanic thinking and behaviours. **1 Corinthians 6:18, 10:14, 1 Timothy 6:3-12, 2 Timothy 2:22, James 4:7.** Let us warn the Lord's people to be clear in their thinking about the need to be separate from evil men and women lest their witness and blessing be destroyed by the paganism of this world. Refer also to the BTB study on WORLD, and WORLDLINESS.

2. Let us guard our social lives and avoid all contacts with the people who are sold out to our spiritual enemy. We are to give the Gospel message to all who will hear, but we are called to resist and reject the Devil and all his henchmen. Let us neither socialise nor play politics of any kind with evil men. Let us practise the doctrine of Separation daily and so maintain our witness in the midst of this dirty and compromised world.

3. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is unity between brethren, and the spirit of discord is the evidence of satanic influence. Let us do all we can to keep the unity of the brethren, and deal with any bitterness or unforgiving spirit that exists in the church. Let us publicly expose all works of the Devil, and preach the fruit of evil clearly so that our people may spot the works of Satan quickly and not be led astray by him or his people.

4. When men who are assigned to a task fail to perform it, or corruptly use their position, they are to be publicly dealt with. All sin and evil in the use of a church office is to be publicly exposed and the people who have fallen short of what is required removed from office. No person is to be left in an office who has failed to perform their duty in that office. They are to be dismissed. All people under such discipline are to be publicly rebuked and seriously warned, for they have robbed God of legitimate service and are in danger of the SIN UNTO DEATH.

DOCTRINES

CHRISTIAN LIFE – SEPARATION See page 64

CHRISTIAN LIFE – WALKING

1. Physical walking is analogous to the faith rest life: step by step. Romans 14:5,6, Ephesians 5:16-18, James 4:13-15.
2. Being regularly filled with the Spirit and feeding on the Word are similar to walking.
3. Attacks on believers occur when they are caught off balance. Romans 13:13.
4. Walking depicts the pattern and function of the believers life in time. Philippians 3:18, Ephesians 4:17.
5. It can also represent a backsliding believer who are said to be walking backwards. Ephesians 4:17.
6. We are all told to:
 - a) Walk in the Spirit. Galatians 5:16, 25
 - b) Walk in the faith. 2 Corinthians 5:7, Colossians 2:6, 4:5
 - c) Walk in doctrine. 3 John 3
 - d) Walk in the truth. 2 John 4
7. Walking is an analogy for spirituality
 - a) Walk not after the flesh. (Romans 8:4)
 - b) Walking in Love. (Ephesians 5:2)
 - c) Walking in newness of Life. (Romans 6:4)
 - d) Walking worthy of our vocation. (Ephesians 4:1)
 - e) Walking worthy of the Lord. (Colossians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 2:12)
 - f) Walking honestly as in the day. (Romans 13:13)
 - g) Walking in good works. (Ephesians 2:10)
 - h) Walking in light. (Ephesians 5:8, 1 John 1:7)
 - i) Walking in Christ Jesus. (Colossians 2:6)
 - j) Walking circumspectly. (Ephesians 5:15,16)
 - k) Walking as ye ought. (1 Thessalonians 4:1)

CHRISTIAN LIFE – SOLDIER IN EPHESIANS 6 See page 32

HOLY SPIRIT – FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. The Holy Spirit indwells every believer. We are commanded to allow Him to fill (or fully control) our lives (Eph 5:18).
2. The filling (controlling) of the Spirit can be broken by:
 - a) Grieving the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30) - sin, doing something you shouldn't.

b) Quenching the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19) - not doing something you should (like quenching a fire, allowing the flame to go out).

3. The filling (controlling) of the Spirit can be restored by confession of sin and full surrender to do the will of God (1 John 1:9)

4. The Spirit produces the very character of the Christ in the believer: (Galatians 4:19, 5:22, 23, Ephesians 3:16, 17, Philippians 1:20, 21, 2 Corinthians 3:3)

a) The fruit of the Spirit:

- i) Galatians 5:22-23 - Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-control.
- ii) Romans 14:17 - Righteousness, Peace, Joy.
- iii) Colossians 3:12-15 - Compassion, Kindness, Humility, Gentleness, Patience, Forgiveness, Love, Peace, Thankfulness.
- iv) 1 Thessalonians 1:3 - Faith, Love, Endurance, Hope.

b) Rejoicing in Christ (Philippians 3:1, 4:4).

c) Loving one another (John 15:12, Romans 12:10, Ephesians 5:2).

d) Striving for the faith (Philippians 1:27, Jude 3).

e) Putting away all sin (1 Corinthians 5:7, Hebrews 12:1).

f) Abstaining from all appearances of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

g) Submitting to injuries (1 Corinthians 6:7).

h) Subduing the temper (Ephesians 4:26, James 1:19).

i) Shunning the wicked (2 Thessalonians 3:6).

j) Abounding in the works of the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58, 1 Thessalonians 4:1).

k) Showing a good example (1 Timothy 4:12, 1 Peter 2:12).

l) Following after that which is good (Philippians 4:8, 1 Timothy 6:11).

m) Perfecting holiness (2 Corinthians 7:1, 2 Timothy 3:17).

n) Hating defilement (Jude 23).

o) Overcoming the world. (1 John 5:4-5)

p) Adorning the gospel. (Philippians 1:27, Titus 2:10)

q) Forgiving injuries. (Romans 12:20)

r) Living peaceably with all. (Romans 12:18, Hebrews 12:14)

s) Visiting the afflicted. (James 1:27)

t) Sympathising with others. (Romans 12:15, 1 Thessalonians 5:14)

u) Honouring others. (Romans 12:10)

v) Submitting to authorities. (Romans 13:1-7)

w) Being content. (Philippians 4:11, Hebrews 13:5)

x) Walking worthy of the Lord. (Colossians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 2:12)

y) Walking in the newness of life. (Romans 6:4)

z) Walking as children of light. (Ephesians 5:8)

aa) Glorifies Christ in his body. (Philippians 1:20, 21)

bb) Christ is at home in his body. (Ephesians 3:16,17)

cc) A lifestyle which honours God in the presence of men. (2 Corinthians 3:3)

5. The filling of the Holy Spirit in every believer only occurs in two dispensations:

a) Church age Ephesians 5:18, Galatians 5:22,23

b) Millennium - Joel 2:28, 29 (characterised by ecstasies)

SIN – SIN UNTO DEATH See page 72

SABBATH AND THE LORD'S DAY See page 69

WORLD

1. World under control of Satan:

a) ruler of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11)

b) god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4)

c) he deceives the world (Revelation 12:9).

d) Satan is filling the world with his propaganda (1 Timothy 4:1).

2. Jesus Christ created earth (Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 45:18). He gave control to original mankind (Genesis 1:28) but man lost it at the fall (Genesis 3:6).

3. Sin and spiritual death are the basis of Satan's rule over this world. Therefore, God so loved the world that He gave a Saviour (John 3:16), hence Christ as a title in this connection. Christ is the light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5).

4. Therefore Christ is the saviour of the world (John 3:17; 4:42; 1 John 4:14). The Saviour who gave His life for the world (John 6:33); hence Christ has a title in this connection. Christ is the light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5).
5. Therefore Christ has overcome the world (John 16:33), so that the believer can overcome the world (1 John 5:4,5).
6. Consequently believers in Christ must not love the world (1 John 2:15,16). Nor must believers conform to the world (Romans 12:2). Worldliness is what you think, which may be demonstrated by what you do.
7. World control by Satan will stop at the Second Advent. However, believers will continue forever (1 John 2:17).
8. Also, the Word of God abides forever (1 Peter 1:23,25), and is designed to overcome the ruler of this world (1 John 2:14). Therefore, not conforming to the world and overcoming the world are accomplished through Bible doctrine, by which God has made foolish the wisdom of the world (1 Corinthians 1:20; 3:19).
9. It is therefore of greatest importance that the believer's attitude is based on the Word of God (Philippians 2:5; 2 Timothy 1:7; Isaiah 26:3,4; Philippians 4:7; 2 Corinthians 10:4,5; 1 Corinthians 2:16; 2 Corinthians 1:5,6,8).
10. Backsliding is characterised as friendship with the world (James 4:4).

WORLDLINESS

1. Worldliness means to follow the beliefs and philosophy of man rather than that of God
2. Worldliness is the opposite to godliness; it is thinking/doing in opposition to God's revealed word. Titus 2:11-14.
3. All people are faced with the constant choice of following God's way or the world's. Romans 5:12, 3:19, 1 Corinthians 1:21, Ephesians 2:12, James 1:27, 2 Peter 1:4, 2:20.
4. Satan is the "prince of this world", and has power to deceive those who are negative to God's plans. John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11, 1 Corinthians 4:4, 1 Peter 5:8,9.
5. We must not love the world, 1 John 2:15-17.
6. We must hate all the world stands for, in thought and in deed. 1 Corinthians 5:9-13, 11:30-32, Galatians 6:14, James 1:27, James 4:4, 2 Peter 1:3,4, 1 Corinthians 3:18, 19.
7. We must not return to our old behaviour patterns, Ephesians 2:1-7.
8. This evil world system and the prince of this world will be condemned. Matthew 18:7, John 12:31, 16:11, 1 Corinthians 6:2, 2 Peter 3:7, 2 Peter 2:1ff.

DOCTRINES

DOCTRINE	PAGE
ANGELS – SATAN – ADVERSARY	46
ANGELS – SATAN'S STRATEGY AND TACTICS	46
ANGER	30
ANTI-SEMITISM	21
CHRIST – FIRST AND SECOND ADVENTS	6
CHRISTIAN LIFE – BACKSLIDING AND RECOVERY	80
CHRISTIAN LIFE – COLD - DON'T GO COLD	96
CHRISTIAN LIFE – CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS	13
CHRISTIAN LIFE – CONFIDENCE	32
CHRISTIAN LIFE – CONSECRATION	57
CHRISTIAN LIFE – ELECTION AND PREDESTINATION	58
CHRISTIAN LIFE – ETERNAL LIFE	68
CHRISTIAN LIFE – FAITH	51
CHRISTIAN LIFE – GIVING	82
CHRISTIAN LIFE – MATURITY	82
CHRISTIAN LIFE – MENTAL ATTITUDE	14
CHRISTIAN LIFE – PRAYER	13
CHRISTIAN LIFE – REWARDS AND CROWNS	58
CHRISTIAN LIFE – SEPARATION	67
CHRISTIAN LIFE – SERVICE	76
CHRISTIAN LIFE – SOLDIER IN EPHESIANS 6	33
CHRISTIAN LIFE – SUBMISSION	76
CHRISTIAN LIFE – THANKFULNESS	77
CHRISTIAN LIFE – THINKING BIBLICALLY	57
CHRISTIAN LIFE – WALKING	101
CHURCH – PASTORAL REMUNERATION	83
CHURCH – WORSHIP AND PRAISE	95
CHURCH OFFICERS – PASTORS/ELDERS	39
COVENANTS – ABRAHAMIC COVENANT	69
FEAR	31
FEASTS OF ISRAEL	59
GOD – GOD CARES FOR YOU	45
GOD – CHARACTER OF GOD	12
GOD – COMFORT FOR BELIEVERS	44
GOD – DIVINE GUIDANCE: THE WILL OF GOD	21
GOD – DIVINE INSTITUTIONS – FREE WILL	73
GOD – NAMES OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT	68
GOD – PLAN OF GOD	7
GOD – SHEKINAH GLORY	70
GRACE	69
HOLY SPIRIT – FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT	101
HOLY SPIRIT – MINISTRY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT	68
HOLY SPIRIT – SINS AGAINST THE SPIRIT	96
ISRAEL	67
JUDGEMENT – GREAT WHITE THRONE	47
JUDGEMENT – JUDGEMENT SEAT OF CHRIST	40
MILITARY	91
MIRACLES – PURPOSE	71
MONEY	38
MUSIC	94

NATIONAL DIVINE DISCIPLINE (FIVE CYCLES OF DISCIPLINE)	14
OFFERINGS – LEVITICAL OFFERINGS REPRESENTING CHRIST	87
PRIESTHOOD – OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT	90
PRIESTS	88
PRIESTS – LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD	89
PROPHECY – DANIEL’S SEVENTY WEEKS	7
PROPHECY – EMPIRES IN DANIEL	9
PROPHECY – SEQUENCE OF END TIME EVENTS	11
PROPHET AND PROPHECY	47
SABBATH AND THE LORD’S DAY	72
SALVATION – SANCTIFICATION	81
SIN – OLD SIN NATURE	38
SIN – JEALOUSY	32
SIN – SIN UNTO DEATH	75
WAR	91
WEeping	60
WISDOM	82
WORK	25
WORLD	102
WORLDLINESS	103