

and they said...

LET US RISE UP AND BUILD

so they STRENGTHENED their hands
for this GOOD WORK⁹⁹

Mehemiah

... MAN of PRAYER
and ACTION!

15th AUSTRALASIAN BIBLE SCHOOL, RATHMINES
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N E H E M I A H

THEME - "LET US RISE UP AND BUILD"

Ch. 2:18

The Man

Nothing is mentioned of his birth, early life, or family history. We are told only that his father was Hachaliah (Ch. 1:1; 10:1).

..... But by his fruits we know him!! Matt. 7:15-20;
Jno. 15:8.

His characteristics, shaped according to the Word, made him a worshipper of Yahweh and a leader of the people. (Ex. 18: 20-21; Deut. 1: 12-17; 1 Tim.3: 1).

He was a man of prayer - thus showing his dependence upon Yahweh, and repudiation of flesh. He prayed when learning of the state of Jerusalem (1: 4-11) ... Before speaking his request to the King of Persia (2:4) ... Threatened, insulted, mocked, while building the wall, he counters with prayer (4:4) ... He answers hostile conspiracy with prayer (4: 8-9) ... When exercising wisdom, asks Yahweh to remember him (5: 19; 13: 14, 22, 31) ... He answers treachery with prayer (6: 9, 14). Returning from Persia he meets infidelity and opposition of the Jews with prayer (13: 29). In all, 11 prayers are recorded in this book.

He recognised Yahweh as :

- ... a great and terrible God
- ... a keeper of the covenant
- ... merciful to His faithful servants (1: 5)
- ... a redeemer of His people (1:11)
- ... ruler in the kingdoms of men (2: 4, 8)
- ... one who can grant prosperity (2:20)
- ... a rewarder of evil-doers (4: 4)
- ... a rewarder of the righteous (13:14)
- ... one who fights for His people (4:20)
- ... one who strengthens His servants (6: 9)
- ... a giver of wisdom (7: 5)
- ... one who could move His people to rejoice in faithful worship (12:43)

Nehemiah exhibits the qualities of the godly man

- upright example for others to follow
- single minded dedication
- enthusiasm that was infectious
- stern, but humble
- courageous, but kind
- determined, but generous
- defended the oppressed
- He faced fear, threats, insults, hostility, treachery - all without allowing himself to be intimidated.
- He was personally moved by the suffering of his people, and at the degradation of Jerusalem (1: 3-4. cp. Jer. 9:1; 13: 17. Isa. 22: 4. Luke 19: 41 Matt. 5: 4).

In his life of devotion to the Truth, he revealed that true religion is a state within, and motivates the desires and actions of a Godly man. It is PRACTICAL in application and OBJECTIVE. (Isa.1:16-19; Gal. 1:3-5). The end result will be manifested in due time. (1 Pet. 1:7; Gal. 6:9.) From the example of Nehemiah we should take courage, realising that our struggle towards perfection is not without purpose.

Above all other qualities, Nehemiah exhibited INTEGRITY - He always desired to do what was right - and God's will was his guide in this regard.

ANALYSIS OF THE BOOKPart 1. Rebuilding the wall Chapters 1 - 6

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CHRONOLOGY

Nehemiah records the last historical events of the Old Testament.

He was contemporary with Malachi.

Nehemiah begins 34 years after the first return of the Jews from Babylon under Zerubbabel, resulting from the decree of Cyrus the Persian. (Ezra 1: 1).

Now: 14 years since completion of the Temple (Ezra 6:14).

Ezra had gone to Jerusalem one year after the dedication of the Temple, from Persia (in seventh year of Artaxerxes). (Ezra 7:7)

Apparently he returned soon afterwards. Thus for 13 years there had been no sound, virile leadership in Jerusalem. Conditions were bad. The difficulties were great.

Conventional chronology: Decree of Cyrus B.C. 536 (Ezra 1:1).

Completion of Temple B.C. 516 (Ezra 6:15). Then a break of 63 years. Then Ezra's return to Jerusalem B.C. 457 (Ezra 7). Thus Nehemiah visited Jerusalem B.C. 444 (Neh. 2:1).

This chronology based on Artaxerxes of Ezra 7:7 and Neh. 2:1; 13:6 being Longimanus, who reigned B.C. 464-424. Thus, Ezra at least 143 when walking in procession (Neh. 12: 27, 36) Cp. Ezra 7:1.

Ezra's father had been slain by Nebuchadnezzar in B.C. 587. Ezra must then have been at least one year old.

Nehemiah states that 20 of 30 priests and Levites who returned under Zerubbabel in 536 (conventional chronology) joined the covenant with Nehemiah. (Neh.10:2-10). Thus they would still be alive 91 years after their return from Babylon, though even there they were heads of their families. (Neh.12:1-7).

An alternate explanation. Books of Ezra and Nehemiah set in the reign of Darius Hystaspes (who reigned 36 years from B.C. 521). The Artaxerxes mentioned by Nehemiah reigned at least 32 years (cp. 5:14 with 13:6). Only one other Persian King reigned this long before Longimanus: Darius Hystaspes. In Apochryphal book 'Esdras' he is identified with 'Artaxerxes'. (Note: Artaxerxes, Darius, Ahasuerus are all titles, not names.)

Thus 'Darius' of Ezra (6:15), 'Artaxerxes' of Nehemiah and 'Ahasuerus' of Esther (1:1) all refer to Darius Hystaspes, who reigned B.C. 521-485, 36 years. Thus Ezra left Babylon in B.C. 515 - 72 years (not 130) after Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed Jerusalem.

One difficulty: Dan. 9:24 says 70 weeks (490 years) would pass from the 'going forth of the commandment' for Jerusalem to be restored (i.e. given to Nehemiah by Artaxerxes (Neh. 2)) to the death of Messiah (v.26). As 'the commandment' was given in 20th year of Artaxerxes (Darius Hystaspes?) in approx. 502 B.C., this would make 530 to death of Christ, thus negating Daniel's prophecy. Answer, Daniel is correct, profane history is wrong. Thus: history from Nehemiah to death of the Lord is 40 years shorter than historians claim. (In 'Elpis Israel' Bro. Thomas rested only on Bible chronology, rejecting profane history.) Chronology of that period rests entirely on the Canon of Ptolemy (A.D. 70-161) which is quite unproved, and uncorroborated. Ptolemy's Canon is contradicted by Persian National Traditions preserved in Firdusi, by Jewish National Traditions preserved in the Seder Olam, and by Josephus. (See 'The Romance of Bible Chronology').

PART 1: REBUILDING THE WALL (Ch. 1-6)

CH 1. JERUSALEM'S PLIGHT - NEHEMIAH PLEADS.

Vv.1-3 Nehemiah seeks knowledge. Cp. Ezra 7:10; Eccles. 7:25; Prov. 2:3-7; Prov. 18:15
c.f. Isa. 5:13; 28:9.

Vl. Nehemiah: "Consolation of Yahweh". He experienced this himself, in spite of many trials, opposition: 2: 9,18. Writes of it: 9: 17, 31-32. Speaks of it: 13: 22,31. He manifested it to Israel.

Hachaliah: "Yahweh is hidden". But His power to console revealed through Nehemiah. Cp. Ezek. 11:22-23.

Chisleu: 9th month of the religious year. Beginning of winter. Nov. December.

twentieth: Approx. 502 B.C.

Shushan: Seat of Persian Rulers, ruling over a vast kingdom (Esther 1:1). Nehemiah was the king's cup-bearer (v.11).

V2. Hanani: "Gracious". A brother. (marg) 7:2.

NOTE that the three names contained in the first two verses provide a sentence which epitomises the purpose of the book of Nehemiah. "You will see the consolation of Yahweh, even though Yahweh is hidden, because He is gracious." (Cp. the glorious prayer in ch. 9, the theme of which is "the graciousness of Yahweh".)

I asked: He is Israel-minded, seeks knowledge (see above).

the Jews that had escaped: The recent pogroms of Haman (Esther 3:8-12).

Jerusalem: He is mindful of people and city. 2 Chron.6:6.

V3. great affliction and reproach: Suffering and poverty were in evidence. Mal. 3: 10-12. Divine blessing withheld. Oppression of the poor was commonly in evidence. Neh. 5. This brought reproach of gentiles. 2: 17; 4:4.

is broken down: In days of Zerubbabel an attempt made to rebuild. Ezra 4: 6,12. But Haman gave opportunity for destruction. Est. 3:8-12. Thus, conditions lamentable. Neh. 2:17. (Jews in Jerusalem, no able leader.)

V4. I sat down and wept: Ezra 9:3. cp. Rev. 5:4. Nehemiah moved, humbled.

mourned certain days: premeditation to seek Yahweh's blessing, and begin work. Prov. 24:27; 1 Cor. 14: 8-9; Heb. 11:7. Premeditation essential for prayer; Dan.9:2-4; Ezra 10:1.

fasted, prayed: "and continued fasting and praying" (Roth.) Apparently for four months. Cp. VI with 2:1. Selflessness. His mind during this period was centred only upon the Truth.

Vv.5-11 Prayer for the peace of Jerusalem. (Ps. 122)Nehemiah's Prayer: (His Qualities) V.5

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| 1. Confession of the Divine character. | V 5 |
| 2. Consistent, humble, plea to be heard | V 6 |
| 3. Acknowledgment of national sin. | V 7 |
| 4. Recalling Yahweh's promises. | V 8-9 |
| 5. Reminds God of Israel's standing. | V10 |
| 6. Asserts his faith in God's ability | V10 |
| 7. A moving plea for national and
personal help in time of need | V11 |

V5. Lord God: The covenant Name. A surety of Yahweh's fidelity. Ex. 3:6 cp. V16.

great and terrible God: A quote from Deut. 7:21. "Ail". "great" = has power. "terrible" = judgments have finality.

keepeth covenant: Quote from Deut. 7:9. Yahweh faithful. Nehemiah has faith.

that love him and observe his commandments: Still quoting Deut. 7 but these words were stated at the giving of the Law. Ex. 20:6.

V6. thine: see 2 Chron. 6:40. Nehemiah is quoting from Solomon's words at the dedication of the Temple. Jerusalem had then been a city of joy and glory. Nehemiah longs for Yahweh's purpose to be fulfilled in Zion.

ear now be attentive and thine eyes open: Nehemiah is quoting the words of Solomon. A request for Yahweh to look upon the lamentable state of Jerusalem. Cp. 1 Pet.3:12.

thy servant : Nehemiah's relationship to Yahweh. Heb. Ebed. "Bond-servant". Lev. 25:39; (same word as used here). 1 Cor. 6: 19-20. Moses and Israel were also servants within the meaning of this word (v 7, 10). Christ, too: Isa. 42:1.

day and night: Luke 18:1; 1 Thess. 1:2; 5:17. 2 Tim.1:3. The principle here is that of self-effacement. (This results from pleading God's cause rather than our own).

confess the sins: This was the work of the High Priest on the day of atonement. Lev. 16:21. See Ezra 9:15; Dan. 9:5; Is. 59:12. Their sins caused their trouble. Yahweh had not forgotten the covenant. Cp. Mal.1:6; 3:8-14.

both I and my father's house: This was personal identification with the national sin. Cp. Ps. 106: 6; Dan.9:20; Jer. 3:25. The reason why this is done - Ps.79:9.

V7. corruptly: "We have altogether broken covenant with thee" (Sept.).

the judgments: Cp. these terms in Deut. 5:31 (cp.V,28-29), Deut. 6:1; 7:11; 8:11-14; 11:1.

thy servant Moses: Occurs only here and in Ch.9:14, and in 1 Kings 8:53.

V8. Remember: Nehemiah now acknowledges the two sides to the covenant.

if ye transgress: Maal. "treachery, unfaithfulness". (Used of Achan: Josh. 7:1; 22:20). Nehemiah is here quoting the Law: Lev. 26: 33, 39-45; Deut. 4: 25-31; 28: 64; 30:1-4.

V9. But if ye turn: "Return" (R.V.) Same as Deut. 30:2. This was one of the terms of the Law, as in the above references.

you cast out: See Deut. 30:4. Note Nehemiah's familiarity with the Scriptures.

I gather them: Nehemiah is still quoting Deut. 30:4.

unto the place: Jerusalem. Such a place had been promised to Moses: Deut. 12:5; Cp. Ps. 132: 13-14.

set my name there: This was significant to Nehemiah!! A place where Yahweh had placed His Name was surely a place worth praying for.

V10. thy servants and thy people: Note the relationship. The same word as in verse 6. This verse is quoted from Deut. 9:26.

redeemed: Padah. To sever, ransom, release. Occurs in Ex. 13:13.

by thy great power, and by thy strong hand: This is an allusion to Yahweh's victory over Egypt. Deut. 5:15; Ex. 32:11; Ps. 136:11-12.

V11. who desire to fear thy name: "Who delight to revere" (Roth.) Cp. the remarkably similar expression in Mal. 3:16.

grant him mercy: He could achieve nothing without Yahweh's blessing. But Yahweh gives His blessing conditionally: Deut. 13: 17-18 (where this same word occurs).

this man: Heb. ish. i.e. the Persian monarch. Cp. Prov. 21:1; Dan. 4:17. This gentile monarch was powerless to prevent Yahweh from working on behalf of His city and His people, if it was His will.

the king's cupbearer: A position of high office; "An officer of considerable importance at Oriental courts, whose duty it was to serve the wine at the table of the King" (Hastings). "An honour of no small account" (Herodotus). In Gen. 40, the word "butler" is the same word as "cup-bearer" here.

CH. 2. JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM - THE CALL TO WORK.

Vv.1-8: Nehemiah's cause made known to the King.

V1. Nisan: Known as Abib until the captivity (Ex. 12:2; 13:4). Beginning of the Jewish religious year. After four months of prayerful preparation (1:1, 4) Nehemiah sought the king's help. (Note the lesson of preparation Rev. 19:7; Heb. 11:7).

Artaxerxes: 20th year of Artaxerxes: A title, not a name. Meaning: "Great King". Note: Darius is also a title ("Lord" - Smith's Bible Dictionary). Also Ahasuerus ("Lion-King" - Smith's Bible Dictionary). History says this Artaxerxes was Longimanus (B.C.464-424) but see reference to difficulties in this regard in the introduction. This was the same as Darius of Ezra 6:14.

I took up the wine: This indicates Nehemiah's closeness to the King.

sad in his presence: Not usually a trait in Nehemiah's character.

V2. sorrow of heart: Prov. 15:13.

very sore afraid: Because he had committed an offence (Esther 4:2). Yet he had apparently calculatingly done this, to win the King's sympathy, in spite of the danger to himself. "Then feared I exceedingly" (Roth.)

V3. Let the king live for ever: The usual oriental salutation.
the gates: See marg. V13.

consumed with fire: A courageous answer. He was a true Israelite. Ps. 137: 5-6.

So I prayed to the God of heaven: Cp. Prov. 3:6; Phil. 4:6. This title "God of heaven" was peculiar to "the times of the gentiles" when Yahweh no longer dwelt in the cherubim. Occurs ch.1:4. First occurs 2 Chron. 36:23. Yahweh had withdrawn. His people were now "Lo-ammi" ("not my people" Hos. 1:9). Nehemiah's trust was in a greater King than the King of Persia!!

send me unto Judah: His forthright request, that I may build it and the reason for it. He knew what he must do.

V6. the queen also sitting by him: Queen = shegal. occurs only here, and Dan. 5: 2, 3, 23; Ps. 45:9. An unusual parenthesis. We believe that this must have been Esther. There is an important reason why Nehemiah records her presence. Perhaps he had earlier enlisted her sympathy and support.

pleased the king: The fruit of Nehemiah's prayer!! (V4) Yahweh gave an immediate dramatic answer to his prayer.

and I set him a time: An understanding was reached, an agreement was made. See marg. Cp. ch. 5:14; 13:6.

V7. letters be given me to the governors: "The Pashas" (Roth.) "A district ruler administering under a sovereign" (Hastings). Note: implies Nehemiah's need for safe conduct on a dangerous journey. Note his care and forethought.

beyond the river: Euphrates.

convey me over: "Let me pass" (R.V., R.S.V.)

V8. a letter unto Asaph: Already he is planning and arranging his work!! Repeatedly, Nehemiah teaches the lesson of the need for prayerful and wise preparation. Asaph = "Collector, gatherer". He was "keeper of the Park" (Roth.) "paradise" (Sept.) Heb. pardec. These letters were of vital importance prophetically. This is the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem (Dan. 9:24). From this time there would "70 weeks" (490 years) to the cutting off of Messiah the

Prince. A glorious testimony to the power of the Living Word. (See Elpis Israel, p. 394).

A special note on Ezra 6: 14. There was only ONE decree; that of Cyrus. (Ezra 1: 1). It was sanctioned by Darius (Ezra 6: 1-6). The word "and" can be rendered "even". Thus: "Cyrus and Darius, EVEN Artaxerxes". (This Darius must have been Hystaspes - B.C. 521-485. The Artaxerxes of Nehemiah was the same man. (See introduction to Nehemiah.)

the palace: "castle" (R.V.) "fortress" (Roth.) Nehemiah was mindful of the defence of the city, in addition to the walls and gates. (Good spiritual lesson: Ps. 62: 1-2; Philip. 1:17; Eph. 6:11).

And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me: Cp. Ezra 7: 6, 9, 28. Ezra had been his teacher, example, inspiration. Both men attributed the success of their efforts to Yahweh's work. Nehemiah acknowledges this to the Jews: V18. "Hand" represents God's purpose (Acts 4:28) and power (1 Chron. 29:16).

Vv. 9-11. Nehemiah comes to Jerusalem - after a journey of 650 miles, probably taking approximately 4 months. (Cp. Ezra 7:9). He arrives with military escort and letters of authority - all watched with malignant ill-will by Israel's enemies.

V9. the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me: Nehemiah was protected. Contrast Ezra 8:22 when the circumstances were different. Nehemiah is the King's Representative, and Governor (5:14). (13 years separated the journeys of Ezra and Nehemiah. Cp. Ezra 7:7 with Neh. 2:1. But conditions now appear to have become much worse.)

V10 Sanballat: Probably "the moon god gives life" (Assyr.) A malevolent enemy to the Jews, intent upon repressing them. An aramaic papyrus identifies him as "governor of Samaria" (Companion Bible). He was influential. Tobiah was his servant: V10, 19 etc. 13:28.

Horonite: Probably Beth-horan. 18 miles N.W. of Jerusalem, on the border of Ephraim. "House of caverns".

Tobiah: Another dangerous foe. "Yah is good". A Hebrew name; perhaps proselyted. But Nehemiah rejected him as an enemy (2:20). See Matt. 7:16; Neh. 2:19; 4:3,7; 6:1, 12, 14, 17, 19; 13: 4, 7, 8.

Ammonite: Descended from Lot. Gen. 19:38. Nearly always numbered among Israel's enemies. Deut. 23:3-4; Judg. 10:7-8; 11; 1 Sam. 11; 2 Chron. 20. 2 Sam. 8:12; Ps. 83:7. (Isa. 11:14 foretells their future conversion).

it grieved them exceedingly: First of six forms of opposition: (1) Grief 2:10 (2) Ridicule 2:19 (3) Indignation, intimidation 4:1-3 (4) Violence 4:7-8 (5) Cunning craftiness 6:1-2 (6) Compromise 6:5-7. (The last is the deadliest of all!)

man: Adam. They did not regard him as "ish". They were hostile.

seek the welfare of the children of Israel: This was Nehemiah's objective.

V11. So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days: Cp. Ezra 8:32. During this time he made no public statements or appeals, but quietly assessed the true position.

Vv.12-16. Nehemiah inspects the city.

What he saw:

- ... Adversaries ready to cause trouble (V10)
- ... Few Jews in the city (V17)
- ... The people largely destitute, and without spirit. (V17, Ch. 5)
- ... Gates burnt, walls broken down, rubble everywhere (V13-15).

V13. the gate of the valley: Into the valley of Hinnom (Gehenna). (Nehemiah mentions 12 gates. So also in Ezek. 48: 31-34; Rev. 21:12).

dung port: Refuse was taken through it to valley of Hinnom.

broken down: See marg.

gates thereof were consumed with fire: Thus, the inhabitants were defenceless. What were Nehemiah's thoughts?

V14. the gate of the fountain: Near the pool of Siloam (on the East. 3:15).

no place for the beast: Such was the debris and fallen masonry.

V15. I went up in the night by the brook: Dismounting, he went on foot through the night along the Kedron valley, intent upon missing nothing. (Glorious future for this area: Jer. 31: 40). "Brook" = Kedron. 2 Sam. 15:23 marg.

viewed: Same as V13. Literally means "scrutinise". He weighed all he saw very carefully.

turned back: From Kedron back into the valley of Hinnom.

the gate of the valley: Nehemiah re-entered by the same gate as he had left (V13).

V16. the rulers knew not whither I went: He did not wish to be influenced in forming his opinions, and perhaps, like Ezra, had little cause to trust them - Ezra 9:2. His secrecy was wise.

the rest that did the work: Some were apparently trying to remedy the appalling situation, but lacked sound leadership.

Vv.17-18. Meeting with the Elders.

Nehemiah exhorts to unity and work. Probably the next day, he indicates what must be done. He states that his mission has the blessing of Yahweh, and the King. (V18).

V17. the distress: "You see the trouble we are in" (R.S.V.). Heb. "rah" means bad, or evil. This was a concise summary of the situation. Were all aware of their true state? Did they really care?

in: We need always to be able to discern our true position. Deut. 32:28. Jer. 4:22. Rev. 3: 17, 22.

the gates: See marg. ref.

a reproach: The gentiles were given grounds for ridicule through the Jews' negligence. (Cp. ourselves: 1 Pet. 2:12. See margin references here. Also Ezek. 5: 14-15 i.e. they were not obeying).

V18. I told them: Nehemiah exhorted them that God was with him, and thus would be with them. (See Rom. 8: 28 Roth., R.S.V., Weymouth. 2 Sam. 2:7. Heb. 12:12). This exhort designed to:

(a) Reveal their duty.

(b) Inspire them to work.

He had planned (V 8, 16), examined the situation (V 12-16), and then exhorted the people to work.

the king's words: He was under the Monarch's protection.

Let us rise up and build: Their response to his faith and zeal. They all become united in a common faith, with a common objective!! Philip. 1: 27-28.

Future application: Amos 8:11; Ps. 89:2-3. But also has an application in the present. 1 Cor. 3: 10-14.

strengthened their hands: Weak hands could not labour. Philip. 4:13. Heb. 11:11.

good work: Not simply work, but "good" work. What greater work can we do? Eph. 2:10.

Vv.19-20. Reaction of the adversaries: ridicule.

The events of Vv17-18 had been observed by the enemy.

V19. Geshem: An arab. (6:1). His name means "Rain, shower". He was probably chief of a tribe.

laughed us to scorn: This was the second form of opposition. (See note V10). It is difficult to face up to this form of antagonism. (Cp. Ps. 2).

despised us: "poured contempt upon us" (Roth.) Ps. 31:18.

rebel against the king: A threat of appeal to the King of Persia. (Cp. Luke 23:2).

V20. Then answered I them: Nehemiah had the answer! 1 Pet. 3:15. Prov. 15:28.

The God of heaven, he will prosper us: The quiet assurance of faith - based upon knowledge (Ch. 1:5-11) and past experience (V 8, 18).

his servants: He makes clear to the enemy their relationship to Yahweh.

will arise and build: "We intend to press on with the work". John 9:4; Eph. 5:15-16.

no portion, nor right, nor memorial: Cp. Ezra 4:3. Zerubbabel gave similar reply to the enemy. Apparently Sanballat falsely offered assistance upon learning of the royal assent. This was rejected. Why? Heb. 4:12. Cp. Acts 8: 18-21.

CH. 3. WORK COMMENCES!

On the third day of the fifth month, B.C. 502 (Ch. 6:15), the same month when, about 85 years earlier, the walls and gates were broken down (2 Kings 25:8-10). This was summer. It was hot, dry and dusty. There was no relief from the difficult conditions. These eager workers for the Truth bore the heat and burden of the day. The work would mean long hours, miles of travel, personal sacrifice, and a form of activity for which the people were untrained (cp. Ch.4: 22; Ch. 11:1-3). The work was exhausting and demanding, yet rewarding to those who gave themselves to it fully, and in the spirit of sacrifice. This work left no room for class distinction, whether priests, nobles, or people. The work was divided between 44 teams, some of the people proving more devoted than the leaders (cp. V5 with V27). This list of dedicated labourers is a type of the record kept in heaven, embracing all ages of history - even our own! (1 Cor. 3:13; and Ch. 4:5).

VI. Eliashib: "Ail restores". He was a leader in the work, but though active in material things, did not develop spiritually. Ch. 12: 10, 22. cp. Ch. 13:4, 28. Eventually he compromised the Truth; then betrayed Nehemiah. He became associated with Tobiah, and his grandson married a daughter of Sanballat. A grave warning to all! Where do we stand today? Where will we stand tomorrow? 1 Tim. 4:16. Genealogy: Ch. 12: 10-11.

High priest: He was High priest elect. Ch.12:10,22,26; Ch. 13:4.

sheep gate: The first of 12 gates mentioned by Nehemiah. In the Northern wall. Offerings for the Temple came through this gate, thus it was "sanctified".

sanctified it: See John 5: 2. Appropriate work for Eliashib.

tower of Meah: "A hundred". Rendered "tower of the hundred" in R.S.V. Possibly a distance measured from an important place.

tower of Hananeel: "Ail hath favoured". Referred to by Jeremiah. Jer. 31:38; Zech. 14:10. These two towers were on either side of the Sheep Gate.

V2. next unto him: See margin. So in Roth. "at his hand".

men of Jericho: 345 in number, returned under Zerubbabel (cp. Neh. 7:36; Ezra 2:34). Jericho had been given to the tribe of Benjamin (Josh. 18:21).

Zaccur: A Levite Ch. 10: 9-12.

V3. Fish gate: The second gate. Also on the North side. No doubt fish came into the city by this gate. Occurs 2 Chron. 33:14; Zeph. 1:10.

Sons of Hassenaah: 3,930 in number. Ezra 2:35; Neh. 7:38.

laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors: Difficult, hard work.

V4. next unto them: Same as V2.

Meremoth: "Elevated". A priest. He was consistent and meticulous. He was responsible for the repair of two sections cp. V21. He returned under Zerubbabel. Neh. 12:3. He weighed and registered the gold and silver brought by Ezra (Ezra 8:33) and later sealed the covenant with Nehemiah (Ch. 10:5).

Meshullam: "A friend". Active in physical labour, but lacked spiritual qualities. Repaired two portions (cp. V4 with V30), but allowed his daughter to marry Johanan, son of Tobiah, with tragic results Ch. 6:18.

Zadok: "Righteous". He sealed the covenant with Nehemiah. Ch. 10:21.

V5. Tekoites: Tekoa, birthplace of Amos. Means "trumpet". About 6 miles South of Bethlehem, near Hebron. These men worked diligently, but not their nobles.

nobles: "Chiefs" (Roth.) To these chiefs it was not important to sacrifice self for the building up of Jerusalem. They no doubt agreed with the work being done, but would not soil their hands or bend their backs. But these commoners repaired two portions. (V27).

V6. the old gate: Prob. on N.W. corner of the city.

Jehoiada: One of the Nethinim. (Those set apart to do the menial work of the Temple). Ch. 3:6; Ezra 2:49.

V7. Melatiah the Gibeonite: Gentiles, converted in the days of Joshua. Josh. 9: 3-4, 27.
Note: The oil from the two trees combusted into divine light in Zech. 4: 1-3, one Jewish tree, one Gentile.

Meremothite: Unknown. Possibly N.W. of Gibeon (Nelson).

Mizpah: Tribe of Benjamin. (Josh. 18:26). Eight miles North of Jerusalem.

the governor: "Who pertained to the throne of the Peshabeyond the river" (Roth.) These gentiles were truly a part of Israel. Sanballat was not.

V8. goldsmiths: Priests whose hereditary office it was to repair or make sacred vessels. They could have stood on their dignity, and said, "Such common labouring work is not for us!"

Hananiah: The same as Ezra 10: 28?

the apothecaries: Exod. 30:25; Exod. 37: 39; Eccles. 10:1 (marg. "perfumer"). Expert mixers of ointments, now found soiling their hands and doing hard physical labour!

V9. ruler: Lit. "a head person". Occurs Vv. 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19. (All nobles).
The nobles became common labourers, thus abolishing all class distinction, and bringing unity to the work!
An exhortation to us all.

the half part of Jerusalem: The ruler of the other half is given in V12.

V10. Jedaiah: Could it be the same as the one "crowned" in Zech. 6: 10-14, which is a type of the rewarding of the saints at the coming of Christ, and when Jerusalem shall be built up in all her glory?

Hattush: He, too, sealed the covenant with Nehemiah Ch. 9: 38; Ch. 10: 1-4. Was he the same as in Ezra 8:2?

V11. Malchijah: Had put away his gentile wife! Ezra 10:31; Ezra 2:39.

Hashub: Later joined in the sacred covenant. Ch.10:23.

the tower of the furnaces: N.W. corner. cp. Ch.12:38.

V12. Shallum: Probably one of the two in Ezra 10: 24, 42, who put away gentile wives. (Cp. V15 here, where another Shallum is listed).

and his daughters: A family group. Daughters did the work of sons. The enemy was belligerent, but they worked on.

V13. The valley gate: Near S.E. corner. 2 Chron. 26:9.

Zanoah: In the low country of Judah. 10 miles west of Jerusalem. Josh. 15:34.

V14. the dung gate: See ch.2:13.

Malchiah: "Yahweh is King".

Bethhaccerem: "House of the vineyards". But the Rechabites abstained from wine. Jer. 35: 1-9. cf. Judah: Jer. 6:1.

V15. gate of the fountain: Near South-East corner.

Col-hozeh: Father also of Baruch (ch. 11:5). A descendant of Judah.

Mizpah: Cp. V7.

the pool of Siloah: "The pool that was made" (V16) i.e. by Hezekiah, when beseiged by Sennacherib 2 Chron. 32:4 Cp. John 9:7. Josephus places it outside the city wall, hence the "conduit" (Heb. "a channel") to bring the water inside the city. (Same as the Pool of Siloam, and "the waters of Shiloah") Isa. 8:6.

the king's garden: This was nearby, and indicates that the king's palace was in near proximity to the Pool.

the stairs that go down: Southern portion of the Temple mount. (i.e. Zion. The East side of the city).

V16. Nehemiah: No kin to the author of the Book.

ruler: Another "noble" or "prince" working with the rest.

Beth-zur: In the mountains of Judah.

the sepulchres of David: That is, in the area of Zion.

the house of the mighty: Probably a guardhouse.

V17. Rehum: Possibly the same person as in ch. 10:25.

Hashabiah: A chief of the Levites (Ch. 12:24) who subscribed to the covenant (ch. 10:11).

Keilah: In the plain of Judah, 8 miles N.W. of Hebron. A large city at this time, having two prefects (cp V18).

V18. Bavai: His brother also worked (V24) thus one of many family efforts. But, were many families not wholeheartedly united in this effort? What a wonderful and heartwarming thing it is to see entire families united in their devotion to the Truth and wholeheartedly working for the common good of their own families and the ecclesia.

Henadad: A Levite, with sons active in the Truth. cp. Ezra 3:9.

uler: Another "working" noble.

V19. Jeshua: Apparently no kin to other men of this name.

Mizpah: See V7.

Another piece: "A second length" (Roth.) So in other places where this expression occurs in this chapter.

the armoury: Probably the "house of armour" which Hezekiah showed to the Babylonian ambassadors (Isa.39:2).

V20. Baruch: Later joined in the covenant Ch. 10:6. A faithful man.

Zabbai: Was he the same one as in Ezra 10:28? Divorced his gentile wife because he was moved by the Word.

earnestly: The only one of whom this is said. He must have been outstanding in his devotion. Lit. "to glow". Fig. "To blaze up, in anger, zeal, or jealousy". (Strong) That is, he was on fire with the Truth!!! Rendered "zealously" (Roth.) See Eccles. 9:10; Prov. 10:7; Psalm 112:6.

V22 the priests, the men of the plain: Some Temple officers dwelt in the plain, near Jerusalem, especially the Singers - Ch. 12:28. Some Priests, it appears, dwelt with them.

V23 Benjamin: Same as Ezra 10:32? Put away his gentile wife. Later helped to purify the walls.

Hashub: Apparently no kin to the Hashub of V11.

over against their house: A personal touch. They would have an especial interest in working upon this part of the wall. See V8.

Azariah: A Levite, later assisted Ezra in expounding the Law (Ch. 8:7) and sealed the covenant with Nehemiah (Ch. 10:2), then assisted at the dedication of the walls (Ch. 12:33). (A faithful man!)

V24 Binnui: A Levite (Ch. 12:8) who returned under Zerubbabel; thus probably one of those who "did the work" (Ch. 2:16) before Nehemiah's arrival.

Henadad: A Levite. Helped Zerubbabel and Joshua in restoring the Temple. Ezra 3: 8-9.

Another piece: See note V19.

V25 The tower which lieth out from the King's high house: "The tower that projecteth from the upper house of the king, which belongeth to the court of custody." (Roth.)

the court of the prison: Where Jeremiah had been imprisoned more than once. Jer. 32:2; 33:1; 38: 7, 13. This is in the area of the King's Palace Jer. 32:2.

Parosh: His descendants, numbering 2,172 returned with Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:3; Neh. 7:8). He later sealed the covenant. Neh. 10:14.

V26: the Nethinims: "One given" i.e. to the Temple service. Name given to menial workers in the Sanctuary. First occurs 1 Chron. 9:2. Elsewhere occurs only in Ezra (8 times) and Nehemiah (9). Originated by David (Ezra 8:20) the office had nevertheless existed since the days of Joshua (Ch. 9:21) when the Gibeonites had been so appointed. Josh. 9: 17-27. Therefore in later times the office became associated with proselyted gentiles. However, the first actual Nethinim were the Levites (Num.3:9; 8:19) who were relieved from much menial work by the Gibeonites. Only 612 Nethinim returned from Babylon. 392 with Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:58; Neh. 7:60) and 220 with Ezra (Ezra 8:20). Although embracing the Jewish religion (Exod. 12:48; Deut. 29:11; Josh. 9:21; Neh. 10:28) they occupied a very lowly position, being generally despised by the Jews.

Ophel: Appears to have been near Mt. Moriah. 2 Chron. 27:3. Josephus says it adjoined the Kidron Valley and the Temple Mount.

the water gate: Bordering the Kidron Valley. Used by the Nethinim to bring in water for the Temple use: also used to convey water to the King's Palace.

V27: the Tekoites repaired another piece: cp. V5. They thus emphasized the lack of effort and dedication on the part of their nobles.

V28: the horse gate: cp. 2 Kings 11:16; 2 Chron. 23:15; Jer. 31:40. S.E. of the Temple, close to the House of David.

over against his house: Priests who lived near the Temple.

V29: Zadok: A priest. From here to the end of V30 all are priests. ("Repaired the priests" V28).

Immer: Same as Ezra 2:37, 39?

Shemaiah: A descendant of Zerubbabel. 1 Chron. 3:22.

the keeper: One in authority, setting an example.

the east gate: East of the Temple, and either connected to it or near it.

V30 Meshullam: See note V4.

V31 Malchiah the goldsmith's son: His trade made him unsuited for this work, yet he laboured.

The gate Miphkad: "Muster Gate" (R.S.V.) In Ezek.43:21 rendered "the appointed place" in reference to the place set apart for burning the sin offering.

V32 the sheep gate: Cp. V1. Thus the whole city was surrounded by the wall. Note: 10 gates are mentioned in this chapter; 2 more are mentioned later: the gate of Ephraim (Ch. 8:16) and the Prison Gate or Gate of the Guard (Ch. 12:39 cp. Ch. 3:25). Thus the city had 12 gates (as in Ezekiel's prophecy Ch. 48: 31-34 and the new Jerusalem of Rev. 21:12).

CONCLUDING SUMMARY TO CHAPTER 3.

The work done was a testimony to the dedication and faith of the labourers; all class distinction being set aside. All worked enthusiastically. Priests (V1), Levites (V2), commoners (V5), jewellers, doctors (V8), rulers (V9), women (V12), labourers (V31), merchants (V32) - all who worked were motivated by a desire to serve Yahweh. "The people had a mind to work" (Ch. 4:6 see 1 Cor. 15:58).

But doubtless many remained unmoved by the appeal of Nehemiah, or fell away through trial or loss of interest. THIS IS ONE OF THE MOST DANGEROUS AND SUBTLE FORMS OF TRIAL TO FACE THE BRETHREN OF CHRIST IN THESE CLOSING DAYS OF THE GENTILES. Let us all be warned.

CHAPTER 4. OPPOSITION FROM THE GENTILES.

A stronger Jerusalem would mean a weaker Samaria. Thus, Samaria's Governor Sanballat would use his authority and influence to stop the work. Sanballat had authority over the army (V2). His allies were Tobiah (an Ammonite chief) and Geshem (an Arab Sheikh). Thus they were able to offer powerful and influential opposition to Nehemiah. From the first, Sanballat had been "grieved" (Ch. 2:10) that Nehemiah had come to Jerusalem (see Ch. 2:10 for the 6 forms of opposition). Here, Vv1-3, Sanballat tries indignation and intimidation. But all his efforts are answered by prayer, vigilance and work.

Vv. 1-6 SANBALLAT INTIMIDATES:

NEHEMIAH PRAYS AND WORKS!

V1 when Sanballat heard: The activities of the Jews were reported to Samaria! A tremendous drama is about to unfold.

he was wroth: "It angered him" (Roth.)

mocked the Jews: Cp. Heb. 11:36. A great trial, as the work proceeded.

V2 he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria: A speech designed to incite the military (of Persian power) against the Jews.

these feeble Jews: An expression of contempt. Also an indication of their apparently pitiable condition - both the people and the city. But this is the type of "material" that brings glory to Yahweh. Cp. 1 Sam. 14: 12-14; 1 Cor. 1:27. We are so regarded by the world today! So is Israel. But see Lev. 26:8.

will they fortify themselves? : Are they capable? Have they either the will or the determination? Sanballat thought not. Cp. Ch. 2:16.

will they sacrifice? : Perhaps the implication is "will they call upon their God to defend them?" Sacrifice was later offered when the walls were dedicated. Ch. 12:27, 43.

will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish: They were literally doing this. Much of the rubbish hindered them. (Cp. V10). But they laboured on in faith! Ch. 2:18. ("Revive" cp. Ezek. 37:3; 37:13. Hos. 6:2 has the same word.) Apart from the wooden beams, they were building with rubble!

V.3 Tobiah the Ammonite: Makes a speech in support of Sanballat, also intended to incite the army.

if a fox go up, he shall even break down: Cp. Lam. 5:18. Thus the adversaries mocked faithful men. "What a wall it will prove to be!"

V.4 Hear, O our God: Nehemiah's answer: Prayer (V4) and work (V6). Psalm 120; 121; 122; 123: 3-4; 124.

We are despised: "A contempt" (Roth.)

Turn their reproach: Thus calling upon Yahweh to vindicate the faith of the Jews, and to act against their enemies. Ps. 74:3-10, 22.

Upon their own head: Cp. Rom. 12:19-20. The work of rebuilding was Yahweh's. The Jews were but His servants Ch. 1:11; 2:20.

give them for a prey in the land of captivity: Make them as we have been, in this land.

V.5 cover not their iniquity: Heb. kasah. Not kaphar. ("To cover by atonement").

let not their sin be blotted out: Not a vindictive request. Heb. can be rendered "their sin will not be blotted out". By pursuing this course, these people were Yahweh's enemies. Cp. Jer. 18:23; 2 Tim. 4:14; Isa. 43:25.

they have provoked thee to anger: Their opposition was against Yahweh, thus His honour was at stake.

V.6 so built we the wall: A determined, defiant expression!!! They prayed and worked; a two-fold necessity if Yahweh is to bless our efforts. Here was the two-fold answer to ridicule and intimidation.

all the wall was joined together: Encirclement was completed.

unto the half thereof: Half-way up.

for the people had a mind to work: In Bible marking, this expression should be double underlined, for it is probably the key phrase in the chapter. Prepared as a result of forthright and stirring exhortation, and fortified by the exercise of prayer, these Jews were determined to succeed against all attempts of the enemy to wreck their labours and their hopes. The word "mind" is more correctly rendered "heart" by Rotherham. They did not work in a mere mechanical fashion, for their heart was in the work.

Vv. 7-8. THE ENEMIES DECIDE TO FIGHT -
ANSWERED BY PRAYER AND WATCHFULNESS.

V7. Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites: The imposing array of enemy forces gather to fight. The Jews needed faith and courage at this time.

the Ashdodites: Ashdod, one of the five principal cities of the Philistines (with Gaza, Gath, Ekron, Ashkelon). Bitter enemies of the Jews. But cp. Ch. 13: 23-25.

the walls of Jerusalem were made up: See marg. Results of their labours now becoming apparent! The walls had gone up! Yahweh had protected them!

the breaches began to be stopped: "Closed up". Same as Dan. 12:9.

they were very wroth: Same as V1.

V8 all of them together: United in hatred. Cp. Acts 23:12. God's enemies endeavour to discredit and destroy His people. John 11:53; 12:10. Acts 5:33. 2 Tim. 3:12.

come and fight against Jerusalem: They were in deadly earnest. But God brought all their counsel to nought. V15. (Cp. a future similar incident yet to occur: Zech. 14:1).

V9 we made our prayer unto our God: Precisely the right thing to do. See Psalm 50:15; Ps. 55:16, 22.

set a watch: Outcome of a spiritual mind, developed in part through prayer. 1 Pet. 4:7; Ch. 5:8. Matt. 26:41. Prayer must be followed by action.

Vv.10-12. SOME WAVER, BECAUSE OF THE PRESSURE
OF DIFFICULTIES FROM WITHIN AND WITHOUT

V10 And Judah said: They were working day and night (V21). Belligerent opposition and heavy work took its toll, causing some to see only the hardships and the difficulties.

the strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed: "The strength of the burden-bearer faileth" (Roth.) They felt unequal to the task and weary. How true of God's servants in all ages! Exhortation is needed. Luke 18:1; Gal. 6:9; Heb. 12:1. Maintaining integrity under trial will prepare us for the kingdom. Rom. 8:20; Acts 14:22; Rev. 7:14.

there is much rubbish so we are not able to build the wall: In our work today there is also much rubbish to hinder us! This work must have been exhausting and heart-breaking.

V11 our adversaries said: With their faith weakened, they quote the enemy.

they shall not know: The adversaries had a well-planned attack which was to be effected speedily.

slay them and cause the work to cease: This was the ambition of the enemy.

V12 ten times: "Ten" is the number for "fulness". Cp. Zech. 8:23; Amos 6:9; Dan. 1:20. Here used to denote repetition.

From all places whence ye shall return: "From all places whither ye shall turn (they will be) upon us!" (Roth.) "They come up from all places against us!" (Sept.) The Jews journeying daily to the work sites brought messages giving details of preparations by the enemy, as they organised their attack! These Jews said: "Mere watching will not help us when war breaks out!"

Vv.13-20. NEHEMIAH ORGANISES THE DEFENCE OF THE CITY. HE SEES WHAT MUST BE DONE: UNITE THE PEOPLE! STRENGTHEN THEIR FAITH! ARM, AND PREPARE TO FIGHT! Now follows (V14) a powerful and magnificent exhortation.

- V13 Now therefore set I: Preparations for defence thoughtfully and wisely set in motion. Cp. Vv 17 and 18; Eph. 6:11 and v.17.
- V14 Be not afraid of them: Are they stronger than Yahweh? Rom. 8:31; Isa. 59:1-2. "Fear" means reverence. Israel was to "fear" only One! Deut. 1:21; Josh.1:8-9; Josh. 11:4-6; Ps. 46. With faith in God, the enemy would fail.
- remember the Lord: "Yahweh" (C.B.) One of the 134 Sopherim changes. A pleading cry for faith to be manifested. See Ps. 20:7. "Remember" occurs 7 times in Neh. Cp. ch. 13:14, 22, 31. It is most difficult to do this when under trial, yet it produces the most rewarding results.
- great and terrible: Cp. ch. 1:5 quoting from Deut. 7:21. These two words represent "power" and "judgment".
- fight: "So shall ye fight for your brethren ..." etc. (Roth.) i.e. fight in faith because you must "not be afraid of them" because they will "remember Yahweh" knowing that he is "great and terrible". See Deut. 20:1-4. God would fight for them.
- V15 it was known unto us: That is, knowledge of the planned attack.
- God had brought their counsel to naught: Cp. Ps.33:10; Job 5:11-13 (Marg.); Prov. 21:30-31; Isa. 8:9-10; Isa. 44:23-28. Miracles do happen in answer to faithful prayer. Matt. 9:22.
- we returned everyone unto his work: Renewed in faith, strengthened by exhortation and prayer (V14). Do we so respond? Cp. Ch.2:18.
- V16 my servants: Heb. Naar. "A boy, from infancy to adolescence" (Strong). These were young men, constituting Nehemiah's personal entourage.

the other half of them held both the spears: While half the number worked on the wall, the other half displayed defensive vigilance.

habergeons: Coats of mail.

the rulers were behind all the house of Judah: Once again unity was achieved! The result of exhortation (V14). The leaders supported and encouraged the people, in spite of threats from the enemy! (Note the contrast with the lack of unity earlier, in verses 10 to 12. The answer to disunity is -

1. prayer
2. faith in Yahweh
3. sound leadership and exhortation
4. combined action from all the Ecclesia, based upon truth and faith.

V17 bare burdens: Those of verse 10. Note their renewed strength of mind and purpose. Nehemiah's personal servants now spent half their time on guard, the other half working. Others worked, swords by their sides. Cp. 2 Cor. 10:4-5. Our need.

one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other held a weapon: Consistent preparedness. Cp. 1 Peter 5:8-9.

V18 by his side: See marg. So in Roth. In anticipation of sudden attack.

he that sounded the trumpet: Nehemiah thus leads the people in defending their work. (Cp Jude V3; Philip. 1:27; 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7). In the event of an attack, an alarm could be sounded immediately. The people worked on, in this atmosphere of tension. Nehemiah was everywhere!!

V20 hear the sound of the trumpet, resort: Be ready to run to defend any part of the city!

our God shall fight for us: Another stirring exhortation from this man of faith and courage. Cp. V15; 6:16; Deut. 20:1-4. (See also Zech. 14:3, Yahweh has not yet finished fighting for Israel!)

Vv.21-23. FAITH, PRAYER, AND CONSTANTVIGILANCE BRINGS YAHWEH'S BLESSING.

V21 So we laboured in the work: In spite of the dangers and the difficulties, these people were determined to serve Yahweh. 1 Cor. 3:14; John 6:27; 1 Cor. 15:58.

from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared: Long hours of working and watching.

V22 Let everyone with his servant lodge within Jerusalem: Those who lived outside the city were accustomed to returning home nightly (Ch. 11:1). But now, with violence imminent, they are asked to remain - not only for their own safety, but to help their brethren should it prove necessary.

V23 none of us put off our clothes: They almost literally never slept. Activity was continuous day and night. Thus in a mere 52 days the wall was finished! (Ch. 6:15). An astonishing example of what can be accomplished in the Truth, with faith, enthusiasm, loyalty, sacrifice, dedication. As individuals, we will never greatly advance the cause of the Truth or our Ecclesia without manifesting these qualities. 2 Thess. 5: 5-8. Rom. 13:11-13; Rev. 3:2.

saving that everyone put them off for washing: They did not take off their clothes. Lit. "none of us put off our clothes; each man went with his weapon water" (i.e. went for water, taking his weapon with him in case of sudden attack). See Roth.

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CHAPTER 5. OPPOSITION FROM WITHIN THE ECCLESIA.

A grave weakness within the Ecclesia is now revealed. There were troubles within, in addition to the dangers without. The Jews returning from Babylon 34 years earlier had been wealthy (Ezra 2: 66-67; Neh. 7: 71-72). But Yahweh had sent drought and famine as the settlers drifted from the Truth (Hag. 1:9; Zech. 8:10). Later these conditions were lifted (Hag. 2:19), but then further harsh conditions were reimposed. (Mal. 3:9-10). Many of the commoners (V1) had left homes and work to build the wall, and as a result had experienced severe financial hardship. Wealthy brethren had taken advantage of such poverty (Vv. 3, 5). For the law on this matter see Exod. 21: 2, 7; Deut. 15: 12, 14. These laws had been disregarded: V8.

Vv.1-5. OPPRESSION OF THE COMMON PEOPLE REVEALED.

- V1. a great cry: A similar situation to their days in Egypt. Exod. 3:9. But now, brethren are chargeable with the same crime as the Egyptians. Cp. Isa. 5:7; James 5:1-3.
- the people: The common folk.
- against their brethren: A terrible indictment. Lev. 25: 35-38. Cp. Luke 6: 34-35.
- V2. sons and daughters: Ps. 127:3.
- we are many: Many to be provided for. Richer brethren, instead of assisting, imposed oppressive usury conditions on loans. Usury condemned: Exod. 22: 25-27.
- V3. mortgaged our lands: These they would forfeit unless the repayments were met. Should they leave the walls to return to work?
- dearth: Famine. Extreme poverty is here indicated.
- V4. king's tribute: A tax levied by the King of Persia. This was an added burden. Cp. Ch. 9:37; Lev. 26: 17-18; Deut. 28: 47-48.

V5 our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren: Yet the oppressors denied the principles of equality and brotherly generosity. Cp. James 2: 5-6; Mat. 18:25.

we bring into bondage our sons: According to Exod. 21:7, but cp. Lev. 25:40. Heb. kabash, "to tread down, subject". "Putting in subjection.... for bond servants" (Roth.) Such oppression disregarded God's great mercy to all Israel. Lev. 25: 39-42.

neither is it in our power: Financially destitute, they were unable to meet the high payments of interest.

Vv.6-13. NEHEMIAH REACTS AND INTERVENES.

V6 I was very angry: Heb. charah. See meaning ch.3:20 where this word is rendered "earnestly". Expressive of Nehemiah's zeal for truth, justice and mercy, upon Divine principles.

V7 I consulted with myself: "So my heart took counsel unto me" (Roth.) A man of intense integrity. Cp. Ps. 4:4; Ps. 27:8.

I rebuked: "To toss, grapple, hold a controversy". Rendered "contended" in R.V. and Roth. Nehemiah thus upholds Lev. 19:15. Cp. 2 Chron. 19: 5-7; Ps. 82: 1-4; Prov. 27: 5-6.

ye exact usury: Heb. Nashab. Not the usual word for "usury", but having a similar meaning. The R.V. follows the A.V., thus preserving the basic meaning. "A loan on interest" (Roth.) "You are exacting interest" (R.S.V.)

a great assembly: The Ecclesia. Occurs only here and Deut. 33:4.

V8 I said unto them: Nehemiah now again exhorts strongly.

we have redeemed: "Bought" (Roth.) "Repurchased" (Companion Bible). Heb. kehillah, not gaal. Some had been redeemed from slavery through the generosity of others. This should have been done by these wealthy nobles, but they did the reverse. Cp. Gal. 6:10.

sell your brethren: They should have bought their brethren out of gentile bonds, but instead they imposed similar harsh conditions of slavery.

held their peace: What could they say? Nehemiah's forthright rebuke was unanswerable. But note: His wisdom and knowledge and personal integrity were also impressive!

V9 walk in the fear of our God: Appears to be a reference to Lev. 25: 17, 36, 43 i.e. combined faith and works to manifest the Truth. Eph. 4:1-3.

reproach of heathen our enemies: Their actions brought the reproach of gentiles. Lesson: Be consistent! Rom. 2: 21-29; 1 Pet. 2:12. Useless to build walls unless manifesting godliness. All the Ecclesia must hear this exhortation.

V10 I likewise: Nehemiah was not a party to this oppression. He was an example of honesty and integrity. He exhorted, but also manifested the truth himself.

V11: Restore this day: Act immediately to rectify the position. Ezek. 18: 8, 13.

one hundredth part: Interest was exacted monthly, thus 12 per cent per annum. Restore both interest and principal.

V12: We will restore: They respond humbly to the rebuke and the exhortation. Once again, Nehemiah's dedication, example and zeal for the truth must have moved them.

called the priests: As witnesses, to see that the matter was finalised honestly.

V13: shook my lap: A symbolic action, which the audience beheld.

man: Heb. ish, "A great man". A man becomes "great" when he sacrifices the things of the flesh that the things of the spirit might be manifested.

Amen: Means "so be it, firm, faithful, sure". (See Deut. 7:9 where this same word is translated "faithful". So also in Isa. 49:7. The word is rendered "truth" in Isa. 65:16 and "sure" in Psalm 19:7.

The word indicates that as Yahweh is faithful in all that He promises and does, so we must learn to be also. Cp. 1 Peter 1: 14-16; Rev. 3:14.

praised Yahweh: They not only obeyed Nehemiah, but saw that they glorified Yahweh by doing His will.

Vv.14-19. NEHEMIAH'S EXAMPLE AND INTEGRITY.

THROUGHOUT THIS BOOK IT SHOULD BE OBSERVED THAT NEHEMIAH LIVED THE TRUTH AS WELL AS PROCLAIMING IT.

V14 I and my brethren have not eaten: The people supplied bread and wine for the Governor's table (and also money, V15). That his integrity be unimpeachable, Nehemiah had never accepted these offerings. "my brethren" indicates that even the servants of the Governor usually exacted goods from the people, but Nehemiah's servants had not done so. But the nobles had not followed Nehemiah's fine example.

twentieth year: See marg.

V15 former governors: Those who succeeded Zerubbabel, the first governor after the exile (cp. Ezra 2:1-2; Haggai 1:1).

but so did not I: Prov. 29:12 cp. Paul 2 Cor. 11:9; Prov. 16:6.

V16 also I continued in the work: He did not take advantage of the poverty of the people, not even to accepting his recognised dues from them. Rather, he gave himself and his financial resources to the work. (V17). He was wholly dedicated. See Rom. 2:7.

my servants: They worked, and did not live off the people.

neither bought we any land: Buying up cheaply, in the general crisis, with the object of profiteering.

V17 at my table an hundred and fifty: He virtually kept "open house" - at his own expense, to further the cause of the Truth. This is self-sacrifice. Note "beside those", which indicates many others. Cp. David: 2 Sam. 9:7, 13; Rom. 12:13; 1 Peter 4: 9-10.

V18 one ox six sheep: An abundance of food for their needs. Food for more than 200 men.

prepared: At Nehemiah's own expense.

because the bondage was heavy: Another godly characteristic. Psalm 37: 21, 25-26; Luke 6: 35.

V19 think: "Remember unto me" (Roth.) see Ch. 13: 14, 22, 31. He desires no reward from man. His hope is in Yahweh. Cp. Matt. 6: 3-4; Luke 6: 38; Rom. 2:29; Psalm 18: 25.

for this people: "Ye have done it unto me" (Matt.25:40). He had "the care of all the Ecclesias" 2 Cor. 11:28.

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CHAPTER 6.

The walls were now completed, ready to receive the gates (v1). The great activity of recent weeks was now reaching a climax. The intense activity had been observed by the evil eyes of the enemies. During this time the faith of the workers was being tested (1 Peter 1: 7). Many of the brethren had fallen away (Vv. 17-19) seduced from the Truth by wicked men.

The enemies outside were becoming more frustrated and malevolent. They had tried expressions of grief (Ch. 2:10), ridicule (Ch. 2:19), indignation and intimidation (Ch. 4:1-3) and violence (Ch. 4: 7-8). Now they attempt to defeat the work by cunning craftiness, guile and hypocrisy (Vv. 1-2), and then compromise (Vv. 5-7). Through it all Nehemiah remains steadfast, unmoveable (1 Cor.15:58).-- and eventually triumphs (V15). He refuses to be turned from the work until it is completed. (Cp. Christ: Luke 13: 31-32).

Vv. 1 - 4. SANBALLAT DESIRES A CONFERENCE -
NEHEMIAH REFUSES TO CEASE WORK.

V1 Sanballat and Tobiah: See Note Ch. 2: 10.

Geshem: See Note Ch. 2: 19.

I had builded the wall: Nehemiah's success added to their bitterness. (So it can be with our own enemies!) Thus they conspired again to defeat Nehemiah.

set up the doors: Effected ch. 7: 1.

V2 sent unto me saying, Come: A false offer of amicably coming to terms. Cp. Psalm 37: 12, 32.

plain of Ono: A village of Benjamin, S.E. of Joppa.

But they thought to do me mischief: He must have known of their plans. "They were plotting to do me harm" (Roth.) Heb. "Rah" = bad or evil. Perhaps they intended to kidnap or murder him. But Nehemiah was not deluded by these tactics.

V3 I am doing a great work: He does not say that he has reason to mistrust them, as they may have countered with a violent attack upon the city. Matt. 10: 16. Nehemiah simply states his own objective. We should follow this principle.

why should the work cease: John 9: 4.

V4 four times: They persisted, hoping to wear him down.

answered after the same manner: He refused to be swayed or pressured. 1 Peter 5:9. Contrast Samson: Judges 16: 6-21.

Vv. 5-7. A LETTER OF LIES AND INSULTS.

V5 open letter: So others could read it. This was also an insult; custom and etiquette demanded that letters to people of such prominence should be placed in silk bags, and sealed (Nehemiah was governor of Judah (Ch. 5: 14), thus this act was an expression of contempt).

V6 among the heathen: "Nations" (Roth.)

Gashmu saith it: "Geshem" (marg.). He is the false accuser. Nehemiah accused of rebellion and sedition. Cp. Ezra 4: 1, 11-16. Matt. 5: 11.

V7 appointed prophets: The enemy then did this very thing! Vv. 10-13.

There is a king in Judah: "He hath become king in Judah" (Roth.)

Come and let us take counsel together: Intimidation. "Come and meet me, or we send this information to the king!" (Cp. Paul, Acts 23: 11-16; 24: 12-13; 25:7).

Vv. 8 - 9. NEHEMIAH DENIES THE CHARGES -
CALLS UPON YAHWEH FOR HELP.

V8 feignest: "Invent". Eccles. 7: 29. contrast V25. Psalm 36: 1-4; Psalm 38: 12; Matt. 12: 34; John 8: 44.

V9 they all made us afraid: Tactics of intimidation, to undermine the morale of the Jews. But Nehemiah did not fear: Vv. 11, 14.

Their hands shall be weakened: This was the objective of the enemy. Cp. Ezra 4:4. The proper reaction to such trial: Heb. 12:11-15.

Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands: ("O God" omit). Cp. David 1 Sam. 30: 6; Psalm 56: 1-4; Psalm 68: 35. See Philip. 4:13. Where does this man place his confidence?

Vv. 10-14. THE DECEPTION OF TREACHEROUS BETRAYERS.

But Nehemiah refused to become fearful.

V10. I came unto the house of Shemaiah: Claimed to be a friend, but was false and in the pay of the enemy. Cp. Matt. 7:15; Jer. 23:14.

the son of Delaiah: "Yah is deliverer".

the son of Mehetabeel: "Ail is doing good".

shut up: Confined to his house. Cp. Jer. 36: 5. May have been due to some claimed defilement.

meet together in the house of God: ("THE God" Heb.) Had

Nehemiah heeded this advice, he would have walked into a trap. The people would have been left leaderless and would have become fearful and demoralised at Nehemiah's show of fear. Perhaps at this point the enemy would have struck powerfully. Psalm 37: 12-13.

for they will come to slay thee: Shemaiah endeavours to put fear into this brave man.

in the night: See John 3: 19-20. cp. Judas!!

V11 Should such a man as I flee? As governor, he was the leader of the people. He had to show by example and courage that he was determined to succeed. "Shall I leave the flock without a shepherd?" Prov. 28:1; Psalm 112: 4-10. Cp. Luke 13: 31-32; Acts 20: 22-24; Heb. 11:27.

I will not go in: Not being a priest, it would be unlawful.

V12 I perceived: He observed that this man spoke contrary to Yahweh's purpose and law.

God had not sent him: Ezek. 13:22; Jer. 23:16.

Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him: Micah 3:11; John 10:12. Cp. Nehemiah's example of faithful generosity, not looking for personal gain. Ch. 5: 14-19.

V13 Therefore: Heb. "To this end" (So in Roth.) Note the five steps here which Nehemiah foresaw would have brought about his destruction:-

1. I should be afraid
2. and do so (i.e. what they suggested)
3. and sin
4. give the enemy grounds for an evil report
5. they would then reproach me! ("expose, strip").

(One thing leads to another!) How careful we need to be!! Cp. Dan. 6: 4-5; Matt. 22: 15; Matt. 26:59; Acts 6: 13; Titus 2:8.

and sin: Nehemiah, not being a priest, would have sinned by entering the chambers of the Temple. News of this would have been swiftly circulated by his

enemies, bringing him into disgrace for his sin and his cowardice.

they might reproach me: "To expose, as by stripping".

V14. My God: Again, the exercise of prayer. Yahweh is constantly in his mind, a prayer always upon his lips. His strength is in Yahweh. Psalm 63: 1.

according to these their works: Cp. Paul. 2 Tim.4:14.

the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets: Noadiah means "Yahweh convenes" but her name was a mockery. Her conspiracy was not convened by Yahweh! An investigation by Nehemiah revealed the truth: Not one, but a number of brethren and sisters were betraying him - And they were led by a sister!! Israel had been constantly warned at the results from heeding false prophets: Isa. 9: 13-16; Jer. 14: 13-16.

Vv. 15-16. THE WALLS COMPLETED -
THE GENTILES DEFEATED.

V15 So the wall was finished: These words constitute the highlight of the first part of the book (Chapters 1-6). In spite of all the trials and difficulties the work was completed. Many times the position must have appeared hopeless. (Ch. 4:10-12). But faithfulness will be rewarded in the end.

twenty fifth day of Elul: The sixth month of the Jewish religious year. (August/ September). Six days later a new civil year was to commence. (Could it have been a year of release? Cp. Ezek. 40: 1).

in fifty and two days: Work commenced on the third day of the fifth month, Ab - The same month in which Nebuchadnezzar's troops had destroyed the walls 85 years before (2 Kings 25: 8-10). A remarkable but not impossible feat; Yahweh's hand had been upon them! Cp. Ch. 2: 18, 20.

V16 they were much cast down in their own eyes: "They fell greatly in their own eyes." (Roth.) They lost face.

this work was wrought of our God: Nehemiah can have made no secret of the source of his strength. Egypt had to acknowledge this: Ex. 14:25. So in the future: Ezek. 38: 18, 23. Psalm 126: 1-2.

Vv.17-19. TREACHEROUS BRETHREN CONTINUE
COLLUSION WITH THE ENEMY.

V17 the nobles of Judah: Those who should have been leaders and example to the flock. 1 Pet. 5: 1-2.

sent many letters unto Tobiah: "Busy with their letters". (Roth.)

the letters of Tobiah came unto them: From V14 on, there is no further reference to Sanballat, except an indirect one in Ch. 13: 28. He must have faded from the contest. But Tobiah remained strongly. V19; Ch. 13: 4, 7, 8.

V18 many in Judah sworn unto him: Heb. "Baal (a master, husband) Shebuwah (fem. pass., an oath.)" They were "married" to Tobiah, as unto Baal!! Cp. Jer. 3:2. Here was the treachery of false brethren. Tobiah was still determined to defeat Nehemiah. Later, through Tobiah and these brethren, the ecclesia was led into greater trouble, with the result that the Jews in Jerusalem became almost completely apostate. Ch. 13:4 cp. Matt. 24: 9-13.

the son-in-law of Shechaniah: Many marriages had been made with Gentiles. Ezra 9:2; Neh. 13:23. Result: See Psalm 106: 34, 36.

Those supporting Shechaniah and Johanan thought Nehemiah too harsh in his rejection of gentiles (cp. Gen. 6:2; Deut. 7:1-6; Ezra 9:2; Neh. 13: 23-27; 1 Cor. 7: 39; 2 Cor. 6:14.

his son Johanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam: Had been to the fore on the work on the wall (Ch.3:4, 30), but is now in league with the enemy! We must exercise care! Where will we stand tomorrow! 1 Tim. 1: 19.

V19 They reported his good deeds before me: "Listen, Nehemiah, they are not so bad, really." Classic

deceit, suggesting that the enemy was really concerned for their good! Prov. 28: 4; John 7:7; John 15: 19.

and uttered my words to him: These false brethren, betrayers of the principles of the Truth, kept Tobiah informed, thus behaving as fifth column spies within the ecclesia.

Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear: This had been tried earlier by Sanballat, with equal lack of success (Ch. 6: 5-7). This form of intimidation had no effect upon Nehemiah. He was a man of faith, prayer, courage, and determination.

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CHAPTER 7.

THIS COMMENCES PART 2 OF THE BOOK: REBUILDING THE ECCLESIA

OFFICIAL LISTING OF THE REMNANT. Through faith, work and prayer, the walls had been completed, in spite of all the difficulties. The work had prospered because of Yahweh's blessing (Ch.2:20; Ch. 4:15). cp. Phillipians 4:13; 2 Tim. 4: 17. Now, Nehemiah works for consolidation. Defeat of the enemy in time of danger is not enough. The ecclesia must be established and built upon sound principles (Eph. 2: 20-22). To merely get the people safely inside the walls was not enough. Sanballat had been defeated - now the ecclesia must be strengthened. Luke 22: 32; Rev. 3: 2. Once again, God is with Nehemiah in his work: V5.

Vv. 1 - 4. THE CITY TO BE SAFELY GUARDED.

V1 I had set up the doors: Work on the walls and gates had now been completed. But still they could not be certain of their defence or protection.

Porters and singers and Levites were appointed:
For the Temple service (Ch. 10:39) but also for
defensive duties, as the population was small.
(11: 1).

V2. my brother Hanani: Cp. Ch. 1: 2. He must have
returned with Nehemiah to Jerusalem.

Hananiah: Probably a son of the first governor,
Zerubbabel. (1 Chron. 3: 19).

the palace: "The stronghold" Ch. 2: 8.

for he was a faithful man: Can be rendered "the
truth's own man". (Companion Bible). Note: These
two men carefully chosen for their spiritual
qualities. Psalm 106: 6; 1 Cor. 4: 2; 2 Tim.2:2.
Such men would not prove treacherous. (Contrast
Ch. 6: 12-18).

V3. until the sun be hot: i.e. Sunrise. 1 Sam.11:9-11.
To be shut again at sunset.

while they stand by: As guards.

appoint watches: Everything properly and diligently
organised.

every one to be over against his house: Much of the
work had been done in this way: Ch. 3: 23, 28, 30.
All were obliged to guard the section of the wall
closest to their own house. The danger was not past!
Not an easy task, as the population of Jerusalem was
not large at this time. This work also was to be
done in faith: Psalm 127: 1.

V4. the city was large and great: See marg. "The city
was broad on both hands, and large, but the people
were few in the midst thereof". (Roth.)

and the houses were not builded: The city was not yet
rebuilt; an indication of the terrible conditions
Nehemiah had seen on his arrival. (Under what con-
ditions had they lived as they worked on the walls?)
Houses had been built in the provinces. Haggai Ch.1:4;
Neh. 7: 73. But the city still lay in ruins. cp.
2 Kings 25:9.

Vv. 5 - 69: THE REGISTER OF THE RETURNED EXILES.

V5 And my God put into mine heart: He was engaged upon God's work, and always acknowledged God's guidance. He had learned to yield to God's will (Philip. 2:6-8). He was thus a true spiritual Israelite. In all his ways he acknowledged Yahweh.

that they might be reckoned by genealogy: This was important. The true seed had to be determined, for it was

"THE HOLY SEED" Ezra 9: 2

"THE GODLY SEED" Mal. 2:15

"THE SEED ROYAL" 2 Kings 11: 1

Messiah would come through this seed, in a line from David. Thus, the genealogies preserved "the hope of Israel". An earlier record had been kept: 1 Chron.9:1.

I found a register: Names of those who had returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel. This register now became the basis for the new record. A careful examination of each family then ensued. (cp. Ezra 2: 59). Those who could not prove their Jewish descent were excluded (Vv. 61, 64) but there were also gentiles who were devoted to the things of Israel (V46). There were Jews unworthy of the name of Israel (V63). And there were the faithful. (All these have their counterparts in the modern ecclesia). 1 Cor. 15: 10; 2 Cor. 3: 5; Philip. 2: 12-13.

which came up at the first: See Ezra 2: 1.

V6 whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away: 2 Kings 24: 13-16; 25:11; Jer. 39:9.

and came again: Thrilling words! Yahweh works! Prophecy fulfilled. Jer. 29: 9-10; 25:12.

V7 Who came with: These were the leaders. Cp. Ezra 2:2.

Zerubbabel: Ezra 1:11. Contemporary prophets: Haggai and Zechariah.

Jeshua: Sometimes translated Joshua. Ezra 2: 8-9.

Azariah: See marg.

Raamiah: Probably called Reelaiah, Ezra 2:2.

Mordecai: Could it be Esther's cousin? Cp. Esther 2:5-6.

Mispereth: Called Mizpah. Ezra 2:2.

From verse 7 these verses appear to follow the record of Ezra 2.

V33 the other Nebo: Two Nebo's are recorded in Ezra: Ch. 2:29; Ch. 18:43.

V34 the other Elam: To distinguish him from the Elam of V12. Note the attention to detail.

V44 The singers: In the Temple service, David had a trained choir of 288.

V46 The Nethinims: See notes on Ch. 3:26.

V63 the daughters of Barzillai: A socially prominent prince of Gilead. 2 Sam. 17:27; Ch. 19:32.

and was called after their name: Preferred social standing in preference to the priesthood. They therefore dishonoured their high calling. Cp. 2 Tim. 2: 20-21; 2 Pet. 1:10. Now, with Israel's star beginning to rise again, they hoped for their office, but are rejected. Cp. Matt. 25: 1-13.

V64 therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood: "Therefore were they rejected from the priesthood as polluted." (Companion Bible). Many will be similarly rejected when the greater than Nehemiah comes to rebuild Jerusalem. Matt. 7:22-23; Luke 13: 25-26.

V65 the Tirshatha: See marg. Cp. Ch. 8:9; Ch. 10:1. A title of Persian origin, "one feared, revered" (Unger). Applied to Nehemiah. Had earlier applied to Zerubbabel: Ezra 5:14.

Till there stood up a priest with Urim and Thummim: A difficulty. Here were priests whose credentials could not be proved. They were permitted to settle but not to serve as priests. True identification in this regard must await Christ's coming, as Nehemiah here appears to infer. The Urim and Thummim is described in Exodus 28:15. In Eureka, Brother Thomas refers to it in these words: "It was not a plate of metal, but a texture wrought of gold, blue, purple, scarlet and fine twined linen. It was four-square, and of equal sides. It was filled in with settings of precious stones; four rows of them, and three in

a row, and each stone set in gold. Upon these twelve stones were engraved, as upon a seal, the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, thereby showing that these tribes were represented by them; so that symbolically speaking, the whole nation of Israel was contained in the square ornament, and borne upon the breast, or heart of the High Priest in the Holy Place. This ornament, styled in our version "the breastplate of judgment" was attached to a robe called "ephod" because it was "put on" over all other vestments. Having prepared the four-square texture, Moses was commanded to put into it the Urim and the Thummim; that is, the twelve precious stones: not that the stones abstractly were the Urim and Thummim, but were indispensable to its manifestation. The Urim were the "glistering" of the stones - the "lights" refracted and reflected from their cut and polished surfaces, and developing "lights of divers colours". These were styled "Urim" lights; and the twelve stones themselves, "Thummim", "fullnesses, that is of number and measure - fullness of number, and fullness of measure." (Eureka Vol. 2, pp. 313 - 314.)

V66 The whole congregation: "Ecclesia" (Sept.)

forty and two thousand three hundred and three score: 42,360, same total as in Ezra 2:64. But, Ezra's total, if added would equal 29,818. Nehemiah's total would equal 31,089. But Nehemiah gives 1,765 not listed by Ezra: and Ezra mentions 494 not stated by Nehemiah. Thus, remarkably, they agree. Ezra: 29,818 + 1,765 named by Nehemiah but not in Ezra = 31,583. Nehemiah: 31,089 + 494 named by Ezra but not in Nehemiah = 31,583. This leaves a deficiency of 10,777 (the total is stated to be 42,360 both here and in Ezra). Probably these were people of the ten Tribes, and not of Judah or Benjamin. Exiles did return from all tribes ("all Israel" occurs Ezra 2:70; Ch. 6:17; Ch. 8:35; Neh. 7:73). — But most were of Benjamin and Judah. And the register recorded names only of those from these two tribes.

V70 some of the chief of the fathers: "And a portion of the ancestral chiefs gave unto the work." (Roth.)
All did not support the work. How many of those on this "ecclesial roll" were really "of Israel"? We are

similarly enrolled. But where do we really stand?
Cp. David: 1 Chron. 29: 3-9. Cp. Exodus 25: 1-8.

The Tirshatha: See notes on V65.

gave to the treasure: In Ezra 2: 68-69 different values are given, but Ezra records only that which was given by one section of the community. Nehemiah lists the offerings of chiefs, governor and "the rest of the people". (Vv 70-72). Note the wealth. They had gone into Babylon in poverty but had been blessed materially. Now, many were rich. Cp. Deut. 8: 17-18; Jer. 51 :20.

V73 all Israel dwelt in their cities: The register would have helped to establish in which areas the various families belonged. Cp. Ezra 2:70. Examination of this register must have taken a month. (Ch. 6:15, Elul = the sixth month).

the seventh month: Tisri. (Sept/ Oct.)

CHAPTER 8.

INSTRUCTION IN THE LAW - THE JERUSALEM BIBLE SCHOOL.

The solid and carefully rebuilt walls of the city would protect the people physically, but Deut. 8:3 (Matt. 4:4) had now to be applied. Man must not live only by physical sustenance. An ecclesia without the indwelling Word, is dead. (Rev. 3: 1-2). Thus a great reformation was now begun, with the help of the elderly priest Ezra. The enemy was at work within (Ch. 6: 17-19), and a sound knowledge of the Word was the only defence for the ecclesia. There was keen enthusiasm at the news of Ezra's return. Also, a new year was about to commence. Was it perhaps a year of release? Deut. 15: 1-9; 8:18 cp. 31: 10-12.

EZRA.

Ezra, now an old man had exhibited a profound love for the Word (Ch. 7:10) was a man of excellent judgment (Ch. 7:25) and integrity (Ch. 9:3). Like Nehemiah, he always acknowledged God's hand upon him (Ch. 7:6, 9, 27, 28; Ch.8: 22, 31). His genealogy went back to Phineas, grandson of Aaron (Ezra 7: 1-5). He also appears to have been the great-grandson of Hilkiyah, and thus related to Jeremiah the prophet. Ezra was respected and influential, both among the Jews and at Court. (Ch. 7: 6, 10; Ch. 10: 1-16).

After an absence of 13 years (Ezra 7: 7; Neh. 2: 1), Ezra returned again to Jerusalem from Persia (he had originally come up from Babylon (Ezra 7: 6). It appears he may have left Jerusalem to submit a report to Artaxerxes (Ch. 7:14). Probably he had resided at Jerusalem for eight months (Ch. 10:17).

Vv.1-8. WONDROUS THINGS READ OUT OF THE LAW.
PSALM 119: 18.

Vi all the people: Once again they were united, except for those who still maintained a smouldering rebellion against Nehemiah and his faithful ways. A command would have been issued for this gathering.

man: Heb. ish. "great man".

into the street: Heb. "broad area". "into the broad way that was before the water gate". (Roth.) A large open area on the East side of the city.

water gate: See Ch. 3:26.

spake unto Ezra: So they acknowledged Malachi 2:7. Ezra was greatly respected.

the book: Scroll. (Lit. "writing").

which Yahweh had commanded: They acknowledged their need of God's law, and of one to expound it. Isa. 8:20; Mal. 4:4. (Contrast Jer. 8: 8-9).

the priest: Cp. Deut. 17:8-13; 33:10. Cp. 2 Chron.17:1-9.

- V2 congregation: "ecclesia" (Sept.) Cp. Ezra 3:1.
all that could hear with understanding: Cp. Rom. 10:17.
 God appeals to human intelligence. Children were excluded because of the solemnity and seriousness of the occasion.
- first day of seventh month: The feast of trumpets. Seventh month of religious year = first month of the civil year. There was a blowing of trumpets (Lev.23:24) which was a symbolic call to the nation to "awake". The day of atonement followed ten days later.
- V3 he read therein: The only source of divine light. Psalm 138: 2 marg. Matt. 7: 28-29; 1 Thess. 2: 13. Cp. Christ's expression: "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" (Luke 10:26).
from morn until midday: See marg. "from the time it was light until the noon of day." (Roth.) Wonderful reading; keen, dedicated interest. (No complaints are recorded here at the length of the exhortation!)
and the ears etc. "and the ears of all the people were unto the book of the law." (Roth.) They gave themselves fully and attentively to hearing and absorbing the message. As it should be, at a Bible School. This is what we need today, as never before!
 Cp. Rev. 2:17.
- V4 a pulpit of wood: Heb. migdal. "a tower, a platform". This was a dignified presentation of the Truth by one of example, to an orderly and co-operative flock. (Note: the English "pulpit" is derived from the latin pulpitum, meaning "a stage of a theatre" - appropriate for clerical actors!)
made for the purpose: Thoughtful planning had gone into this Special Effort.
beside him stood: 13 priests and Levites assisted him. (Type of Christ and 13 apostles).
- V5 opened the book: i.e. unrolled the scroll.
all the people stood: Manifesting respect for the Word. Cp. 1 Kings 8: 12-14; Job 29:8; 37:14.

- V6 Ezra blessed Yahweh: Heb. barak. "To bend the knees, to kneel down" (Gesenius). The primary notion is "breaking, breaking down". The glorious message here is that when man is abased Yahweh can be exalted. (The verb occurs 2 Chron. 6:13. Cp. Dan. 6:11; Ps. 95:6).
- amen, amen: Double usage for great emphasis. "So be it". Implies that they will be faithful as Yahweh is. Deut. 7:9.
- lifting up their hands: Cp. Ps. 134:2; Lam. 3:41; 1 Tim. 2:8; Heb. 12:12. As an Israelitish custom, it was perhaps likened to ascending incense.
- faces to the ground: After this prayer, the reading commenced. Thus, a blessing was asked upon the reading of the Word.
- V7 caused the people to understand: cp. "distinctly" V8. It seems the Levites moved among the people, translating and explaining. (Some would not have had a good understanding of Hebrew due to the captivity of 70 years duration. Jer. 25:11).
- V8 distinctly: "with an interpretation" (R.V. marg., Roth. marg.). Heb. parash. "To cleave, to separate". The Vulgate gives "distinct" i.e. "word by word". That is, verse by verse exposition.
- gave the sense: Heb. siym ("seem to put"). sekel ("intelligence"). They gave full emphasis to the teaching and exposition of the Word.
- understand: Third occurrence in this chapter. Cp. V3, 7, thus very important. Heb. biyn, "to distinguish, to separate." Note dependence upon the ability to correctly discern. Contrast Prov. 7: 7; Neh. 13: 7.
- caused them to understand: "giving the sense, caused them to understand". (Roth.) Eyes were opened to divine truth, and its meaning and application. This continued through the morning (V3) - they were deeply moved (V9) - they were impressed, and met again similarly the next day (V13). Cp. Acts 8: 30-35; 17:1-3; 28:23.

Vv. 9-12. THE PEOPLE MOVED TO MOURN,
BUT TOLD TO REJOICE.

V9 mourn not: Because they "wept". Why did they weep? Because they turned the Word inward upon themselves, and found themselves wanting. If this is not done, the Word does not move us! As they had learned this lesson from the Word, they are now told to be joyful, for it was a year of release. (Joy and sorrow come from understanding the Word. 1 Cor. 7: 9-10; Matt. 26:75). See Deut.12:5-9.

V10 eat the fat: Heb. mashman, "a rich dish", same as Gen 27: 28, 39; Dan. 11:24. But not the same as Lev. 7 where the word is cheleb, meaning "fat; the richest part".

send to whom nothing is prepared: Though joyful, remember the poor. Let the poor rejoice, too! Deut. 26:11-13. 1 Tim. 6: 17-18.

the joy of Yahweh is your strength: If flesh is humbled, Yahweh may be exalted, and thus become a strength to His servants. Ps. 28: 7-8; 2 Cor. 8:2.

V11 So the Levites stilled all the people: "And the Levites were quieting all the people, saying hush!" (Roth.) They acted as shepherds, showing care for the flock and feeling for their needs.

V12 eat and drink: Not "for tomorrow we die", but because they "had understood" the spiritual message. This was worshipping Yahweh. Cp. Ps. 126: 1-3. What a grand celebration is yet in store!

had understood the words: Cp. Ps. 19: 7-11; Jer. 15:16.

Vv.13-15: A SECOND DAY OF UNITY AROUND THE WORD.

V13 gathered together the chief of the fathers: These key leaders were doubtless called especially to discuss implementation of the Law.

understand: Different to V3, 7, 8, 12. Here: Sakal. "to give attention to." (R.V., Roth.)

they found: indicates a search for truth. Cp. Luke 4:17. See Deut. 16: 16.

V14 in the law they should dwell in booths: Feast of Tabernacles. Lev. 23: 34-42; Deut. 16: 13-15; Num. 29: 12-40. Commenced 15th day of seventh month (Tisri) and lasted seven days. Purpose of this feast: to recall the wilderness wanderings after deliverance from Egypt.

V15 should publish and proclaim: Lev. 23: 4.

olive, pine, myrtle: Symbols for peace and well-being. Signifies a time when Israel is at peace with God. (Isa. 41: 17-20; Rev. 7:9).

as it is written: Note the principle. Cp. Ex. 20:6; 2 John V6.

Vv.16-18: KEEPING THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES.

V16 roof: Deut. 22:8; 2 Sam. 11:2.

V17 congregation: Same as V2. "call together" (Gesenius.)
Rendered "ecclesia" in Sept.

since the days of Joshua: "The son of Nun" clearly alludes to the Joshua who succeeded Moses. Perhaps this is the first fully correct and wholehearted national observance of this feast since that time. For example, 2 Chron. 8:13 mentions the offerings of the feast, but not the booths.

and there was very great gladness: "rejoicing" (Roth.) Cp. "afflicting" themselves on the day of atonement. Lev. 23: 32, 40; Deut. 26:9-11. This feast typifies joy in the Kingdom Age. (Zech. 14:16; Rev. 7:9; Heb. 4:8) Cp. Heb. 11: 9, 13, the example of Abraham.

V18 day by day: This was indeed a "special effort" with daily exposition of the Word - it was, in effect, "The Jerusalem Bible School".

a solemn assembly: Heb. atserah. "an assembly" derived from atsar, "to hold back" (i.e., from servile work. Num. 29: 35-39; Deut. 16: 8). It thus speaks of rest from fleshly labour and dedication to Yahweh. See Deut. 31: 10-13.

manner: "regulation" (Roth.) They meticulously followed the requirements of the Law. The principle is: sound education will result in correct understanding, and right conduct. 1 Tim. 4:16.

CHAPTER 9. DEDICATION OF THE PEOPLE -
PREPARATION FOR RENEWING THE COVENANT.

The Bible School achieved its objective. Jews from the City and surrounding districts had joined together in unity upon the basis of the Word. They were encouraged and exhorted under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah. In this chapter we are now enabled to see the results which can be manifested when a Body of people, as individuals, are moved by the power of the Word of God acting upon them. A national day of fasting and self-denial is culminated with a national prayer, which expresses the history and calling of the nation of Israel.

Vv.1-3: THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT-WORD: SEPARATION
AND DEDICATION.

V1 the twenty and fourth day: On the first day of this month = the feast of trumpets; tenth day = day of atonement; fifteenth day = feast of tabernacles. Thus, this was almost immediately after the feast of tabernacles, which began on 15th Tisri, and concluded 22nd. This was the seventh month. (Lev. 23:34).

assembled with fasting: A national day of fasting. (Probably as in Joel 2: 15-18 - note future application. Num. 10: 1-9). Cp. 2 Chron. 20: 1-4. Fasting signifies a denial of the flesh, and a confession of dependence upon Yahweh, the bread of life. (Deut. 8: 2-3)

sackcloth: A humble preparation prior to petitioning Yahweh in a national prayer. (Neh. 1:4; Dan. 9:3). This was a rough garment, intended to have the effect

of "roughing" the flesh. Ps. 35: 13; 69:11. (Sackcloth could be made from hair, Rev. 6: 12. Cp. Mat. 3:4. "All flesh is grass").

earth upon themselves: Symbolically, they were showing themselves to be creatures of the earth, humbled to the dust. They were in a state of humiliation before Yahweh. (Josh. 7:6; 1 Sam. 4:12). A state of mind worthy of emulation.

V2 separated themselves: The first principle in divine worship is separation from that which is evil or of the world. 2 Cor. 6: 17-18. Rev. 18:4. The next action is dedication to Yahweh, which now follows here.

from all strangers: "from all the sons of the foreigner" (Roth.) Heb. ben (son) nekar (foreign). The latter word is derived from nakar, "to scrutinize intently, then recognise". A tremendously important lesson is contained in this expression.

confessed their sins: Cp. 1:6; Ezra 9; 1 John 1:7-9. Heb. chata, "to miss the mark", hence to stumble and fall. This results from the weakness of the flesh. (See Lev. 26: 38-41).

iniquities: Heb. avon. "perverseness; to be bent; crooked".

V3 stood up: Again, a mark of respect. Cp. 8:5.

read in ... the law: Probably such passages as Lev. 26; especially Vv38-41.

one fourth part of the day: Three hours. Cp. 8:3.

confessing and worshipping: Note the order:

- (1) Deny the flesh
- (2) Humble to the dust
- (3) Separation
- (4) Confession of sins
- (5) Meditation and dedication
- (6) Prostration before the Mighty Yahweh.

"worshipping" here is shachah, "to depress, prostrate". (Note: they did all this willingly, being persuaded out of the Word.)

Vv.4-37: A NATIONAL PRAYER. "BY GRACE YE ARE SAVED".

This prayer reviews Israel's history, and lays bare the past folly of the nation. The prayer sets forth:

- (1) the Oneness and Majesty of Yahweh (V6)
- (2) the Mighty Creator of all things (V6)
- (3) the founding of the nation (V7)
- (4) God's promises to Abraham (V8)
- (5) Israel's separation and deliverance from Egypt (V9-11)
- (6) Led in the wilderness, given law at Sinai (V12-14)
- (7) God's continuing mercy in spite of national sin (V16-21)
- (8) Land of Canaan conquered by Israel (V22)
- (9) National ingratitude for Yahweh's blessings (V26)
- (10) Transgressions led to God's discipline (V27-30)
- (11) Humility and confession brought salvation (V28-30)
- (12) Israel's continued survival a proof of divine mercy (V31)
- (13) Israel now calls on Yahweh's mercy, acknowledging His justice upon them (V32-35)
- (14) A confession of sins, and a promise to keep the covenant (V37-38)

V4 with a loud voice: Reveals their fervour. (Note the assurance of Ps. 3:4. Cp. Ps. 34:4; 77:1; 130.)

V5 Stand up: They were prostrate, confessing sins.

and blessed be Thy Glorious Name: "Yea, let them bless Thy Glorious Name which is exalted above all blessing and praise". (Roth.) Thus the prayer begins, acknowledging the glorious divine purpose, as revealed in the Name! Deut. 28:58.

Thou, thou, thou: Three times for emphasis.

art Yahweh alone: Apparently a reference to Deut. 6:4.

made the heavens: Therefore Yahweh is so powerful He is surely able to keep the covenant.

thou preservest them all: "holdest them all in life" (Roth.). He is the giver of life to all, and by His power He preserves created things. Job 34:14-15; Ps. 104: 29-30.

host of heaven worshippeth thee: This expression could be used of the heavenly bodies in the sense that they are under divine dominion. They fully obey divine law, and thus typify the Creator's grand purpose. Gen. 1. Cp. Ps. 19; Ps. 148; Rev. 22:16.

Vv.7-8: ABRAHAM - EXAMPLE OF DIVINE SELECTION
(Cp. Acts 15:14)

V7 choose: Abraham had no rights or privileges at this point in time. He was "called". (Heb. 11:8) Cp. Isa. 41:8-9; 51:1-2.

broughtest him forth: First separation, then dedication. This principle now applied to these Jews, offering this prayer. Deut. 7: 8-11; 9:4-6.

Ur: "Light". But it was fleshly "light" and therefore "darkness". Matt. 6:23; 1 Pet. 2:9.

Abraham: The purpose behind the change in his name is here alluded to. The fifth letter of the alphabet (He) was added to the names of Abram and Sarai (5 = number of "grace") as a symbol of the divine favour (that is, grace) through which they had been called.

V8 heart faithful: This was a WORKING faith, and not merely an acceptance of certain "words". Cp. Heb. 11:13. Like these Jews in the days of Nehemiah, Abraham had come out of Babylon, and into the very area where these Jews now dwelt. Like them, Abraham had been surrounded by evil, idolatrous nations. (Six such are listed here - 6 being the number of man!) Abraham exhibited integrity, because his "heart" was fully devoted to keeping the truth (Gen. 15:6). For exhortation on this point, see Gal. 3:9; Heb. 6:13-15.

to give him the land: Abraham had been "chosen" and "brought out" (V7), now we are told that God was to "give" him the land. This was, purely and simply, the GIFT of God.

and hast performed thy words: The area outlined in this verse was not all the area that had been promised. See Gen. 15: 18-21; Cp. Josh. 21: 43-45; Acts 7:5; Heb. 11: 39).

thou art righteous: Therefore we can be sure that Yahweh will fulfil all that He has promised.

Vv.9-12: ISRAEL DELIVERED FROM EGYPT, GUIDED
THROUGH THE WILDERNESS

V9 didst see the affliction in Egypt: Ex. 2:25; 3:7-10. Whilst Egypt symbolises spiritual darkness, it also represents "affliction" for the people of God. Let us be warned! 2 Tim. 3:12. Do not look for friendship with the world!

heard their cry: From V7 the theme has been constantly set forth: divine grace extended for our deliverance. The same theme continues through the remainder of the prayer. Isa. 59:1.

V10 they dealt proudly: "they ruled proudly over them" (Roth.)

showed signs: Ex. 8 - 10; Acts 7:36; Ex. 18:11.

get thee a Name: See Ex. 9:15-16; 10:1-2; Isa.63:11-14. Divine power goes forth for the deliverance of God's people; such deliverance is an exhibition of grace and mercy - and such grace and mercy, exercised on behalf of Yahweh's chosen and faithful ones, will result in an "everlasting Name" for the Deity. Ex. 20:6; 33:18-19; Ezek. 20:9.

V11 divide the sea: Manifestation of divine power, for the salvation of His people. Ex. 14:21.

their persecutors thou threwest into the deeps: Yahweh as a man of war. Ex. 15:3. The two sides to the divine character will result in the deliverance of His people, and the destruction of His enemies. Rom. 11:22.

as a stone: Quoting from the song of Moses" Ex. 15:5.

V12 leddest them: A reference to Ex. 13:21. Again, the broad reference is to the outpouring of divine grace. Here, Yahweh is represented as a great Shepherd, "leading" the flock. Cp. Ps. 80:1; 78: 52-54.

to give them light: A strong moral implication. Yahweh is always present with His people, through His Word, to give them light. (Ps. 119: 105, 130). Whether "light" be literal or intellectual, either requires divine power and grace before such may be manifested, thus the reference once again is to the outpouring of divine grace.

in the way wherein they should go: Ps. 143:8, 10.

Vv.13-14: DIVINE MANIFESTATION AT SINAI.

V13 gavest them right judgments, etc. "and gavest them just regulations, and faithful laws, good statutes and commandments". (Roth.) Cp. Rom. 7:12; Deut. 4: 5-10. "True laws" can be rendered "laws of truth". (See marg.)

Vv.15-21: YAHWEH'S MERCY CONTINUED DESPITE THEIR PERVERSENESS.

V15 gavest them: A loving Father caring for His children. Again, a reference to the outpouring of divine grace. He gave them bread to appease their hunger (Ex. 16 cp. John 6); and water to satisfy their thirst (Ex. 17 cp. John 7:37); and a land to possess (V36). Note the great moral implication in the teaching of this verse: Cp. Deut. 8:3; Isa. 55:1; John 4: 10-14; John 6; John 7:37).

the rock: "that rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10:4).

hadst sworn: Heb. nacah. "to lift up". Thus: "which thou hadst lifted thy hand to give them" (Roth.) This had been Yahweh's work, not theirs. He had caused it all to become a reality. Cp. Eph. 2:8, where the same principle is emphasised.

Thus we have been told that Yahweh promised... brought...
gave ... led...
performed gave light..
Deut. 1:8; Ps. 77:15.

V16 dealt proudly: The same expression as used of the Egyptians in V10! Used again of Israel in V29! Such is the folly of human nature. Here was divine power and action being exercised on Israel's behalf, that they might be delivered and humbled - but they reacted with PRIDE! "Proudly" in Heb. signifies "to seethe, to be insolent" thus is an effective word to describe rebellion against Yahweh (V17). The teaching in this lesson is powerful: WHEN FLESH IS ELEVATED, GOD IS DEBASED IN MAN. Deut. 9:6, 13, 23, 27; 32:15; Ps. 78:8; Rom. 2: 4-5.

hardened their necks: Refused to either turn to, or bow before, Yahweh, their great King and Saviour. The neck under the yoke was a figure borrowed from the language of agriculture. It implied ownership of the wearer by another; it implied that the wearer of the yoke depended upon its master for guidance - and it implied that the wearer was encumbered with the yoke that he might toil in his master's service. The expression "broken yoke" therefore spoke of recovered freedom. Isa. 10:27; Jer. 27:8; Acts 15:10; Cp. Israel: Deut. 31:27; Jer. 7: 26; Neh. 3:5. Such rejection signified a refusal to recognise Yahweh's right to possess, command, and direct.

hearkened not: The reason for it all: (1) they refused to hear; (2) hardened their necks; (3) dealt proudly, insolently. Deut. 5:29; Ps. 81:8-14; Rom. 10:17-21.

V17 refused to obey: Implies a decision after consideration. They thought it over, and then decided they liked their religion just as they had organised it for themselves! The prophets were thus looked upon as demanding, interfering, fanatical busybodies! This phrase may well be a direct reference to Num. 14; especially Vv.6-11.

neither were mindful of thy wonders: Materialism has this effect. Material prosperity largely destroys one's dependence upon Yahweh. Deut. 8:11-16; Cp. V3. "Mindful" means "kept in mind." (Roth.) Ps. 78:10-11, 42-43. Always remember Yahweh's wonders, and His works on our behalf! 2 Pet. 1:12.

hardened their necks: Repeated from V16, for emphasis.

appointed a captain to return: Faith was rejected. They knew the way back, but had no faith to go forward. Num. 14:1-4; Acts 7: 36, 39.

to their bondage: What utter human folly! Do we do this, rather than yield to Yahweh, and have faith in His power to lead us, and in the end deliver us?

a God ready to pardon: See marg. "thou art a God of forgiveness" (Roth.) If He had not been so merciful, the nation would have perished ten times in the wilderness! (Num. 14:22).

among them: Can be rendered "with them".

gracious and merciful, etc: A quotation from Joel 2:13, which is taken from Ex. 34:5-7, which teaches that in Yahweh's dealings with men, the characteristics He reveals are those of Judgment and Mercy.

of great kindness: Heb. rab. "abundant". "Abounding in lovingkindness". (Roth.)

forsook them not: Because He was faithful, whilst they were faithless.

V18 See marg. refs.

wrought great provocations: "and wrought great insults". (Roth.) i.e., flinging Yahweh's goodness and mercy back in His face. This is precisely what occurs when we worship upon the principles of flesh, rather than the humbling principles which the Word demands.

molten calf: The three thousand leaders who had inspired this folly were slain by the sons of Levi. (Ex. 32:26-28). How were they recognised by the Levites? Gold is a symbol for a tried and robust faith - but these people had removed the gold from their ears! (V2). They no longer heard the faith!

V19 manifold mercies: "Abounding compassions" (Roth.). Again, divine grace.

the pillar of cloud: "The pillar of cloud departed not from over them" (Roth.). What magnificent spiritual lessons were to be learned from this cloud!

- (a) It led the way...
- (b) In the midst of darkness, it gave light...
- (c) It covered them, as a defence...
- (d) It provided the dew of morning, and shelter from the heat...

Thus the cloud was a beautiful symbol for Yahweh Himself. (Ex. 14:19; Isa. 19:1; Ezek. 1:4; Heb. 12:1, etc.). But they looked not up to the heavens, to learn the lessons of the cloud; instead they looked at their calf, and said: "Behold, our God!" (Note: they were "baptised in the cloud, as in the sea; hence the apparent accuracy of the Rotherham translation that the cloud was "over them". (See 1 Cor. 10:1-2).

V20 thou gavest: Again, divine favour.

thy good spirit: A reminder that the Law was of divine origin. Cp. V30; Isa. 63:11; 2 Pet. 1:21.

V21 forty years: Ex. 16:35; Acts 13:18. The number for probation and judgment.

they lacked nothing: These are the most important words in this chapter for us to remember. Yahweh provided every necessity for them to gain their inheritance. And so He does for us also. Like Israel of old, if we fail to gain the kingdom we will have no-one to blame but ourselves.

their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not: The work of the angels, working daily miracles for the deliverance of Israel! Deut. 8:4; 29:5; Mat. 19:26. This is the principle upon which we may be saved: complete faith in Yahweh's ability to provide all necessities for our salvation.

Vv.22-24: ENEMIES DEFEATED - THE LAND ENTERED.

V22 divide them into corners: Heb. peah. "quarter or region". "which thou didst allot after their portions" (R.V.) See Josh. 15:5, etc., where the word "quarter" is the same as "corners" here.

and the land of: These words are wanting in some MSS., including the Sept. Sihon was king of Heshbon (of the Amorites). Num. 21: 21-29. This battle was his last! (The word "vau" here could be translated "even" instead of "and").

Og, king of Bashan: He fared no better than Sihon. See Num. 21: 33-35.

V23 as the stars of heaven: As promised: Gen. 15:5.
Cp. 22:17.

V24 So the children went in: Heb. ben ("sons"). Cp. Num.14:31,
V29. Their elders did not go in!

thou subduest: "Humiliate, vanquish" - Again, Yahweh worked for them. A continuation of divine grace.
Ps. 44:1-3.

the Canaanites: Used in the wide sense to cover all the nations of the gentiles who dwelt in the land.

Vv.25-26: VICTORY BLUNTED BY ISRAEL'S REBELLION,
THE FRUIT OF MATERIAL PROSPERITY.

V25 they took strong cities: Such as Jericho, Ai, Libnah, Lachish, Hazor, Hebron, etc. But only by Yahweh's power!

a fat land: The land constituted an established civilization. No really hard work was involved for the Israelites.

houses full of all goods: Quotation from Deut. 6:11.

became fat and delighted themselves: Deut. 8:11-15, 20; Cp. Deut. 8:3; 32:15. The greatest single danger confronting any Ecclesia in an age of general prosperity: MATERIAL WELL-BEING DISPLACES FAITH AS THE MOTIVATING FORCE IN LIFE!!

Herein lies a tremendous warning for today!
Note that they delighted "themselves" - not Yahweh!
"They did eat and were filled, and luxuriated in thy great goodness." (Roth.) "Delighted" is the Hebrew "adan" which means "to live voluptuously; soft; pleasant". It is somewhat akin to the word "eden" which means "delight; pleasure". See Hos. 13:6-9; Contrast 1 Kings 8:66; Rom. 2:4. Thus, the children of Israel corrupted themselves.

thy great goodness: Here was the source of their blessings, which were turned into a curse because of their pride and arrogance. Deut. 6: 10-13.

V26 nevertheless... they rebelled: This is telling us that these people thought they could manage without Yahweh! Thus they elevated themselves and debased Yahweh. Acts 7:52; 2 Chron. 36: 14-16.

slew thy prophets: Cp. Matt. 23:37; Luke 11:47)

which testified against them: "Solemnly admonished them" (Roth. marg.) What would the reception be for the prophets in the Ecclesias of today?

Vv.27-31: THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES AND THE KINGS.

V27 into the hand of their enemies: The Law had promised that this would occur (Lev. 26: 14-46) and was therefore righteous judgment (Dan. 9:10-14). Note the expression: "I will break the pride of your power" (Lev. 26:19). Cp. V16 here to see the development of this tragic state. Human pride was at the forefront of the reasons for their troubles. They refused to yield willingly and wholeheartedly to the will of Yahweh.

when they cried unto thee: In time of trouble it is necessary to recognise and confess our need of Yahweh, and our utter dependence upon Him. This must be done in humility. Ps. 22:4-5.

saviours: Types of Christ. Judg. 3:9; 1 Sam. 12:8. Christ was "the arm of Yahweh", for this purpose. Isa. 53:1. The book of Judges was particularly in mind at this point.

according to thy manifold mercies: "thine abounding compassions" (Roth.). Once again, the emphasis is fully upon divine grace.

V28 after they had rest: A reference to Judg. 3: 11-12.

they did evil again: That is, when the "pressure" was removed. Here is a grave warning for all. Cp. Acts 14: 22, Rev. 7:14, where the word "tribulation" signifies "pressure". Such pressure is necessary for the perfecting of the saints. In effect, the world is putting this pressure upon us all the time. Pressure is also applied by our own weak flesh, often strongly manifested when we are not facing pressure from without.

many times didst thou deliver them: Continuing mercy, for their preservation. Apart from this, they would have been destroyed. Ps. 106: 41-45.

V29 testified against them... bring them again unto thy Law: Again, divine grace - with the offering of a permanent remedy for their troubles. They were chastised and instructed. Prov. 3:11-12; Heb. 12: 6, 11.

dealt proudly: See note on V16.

hearkened not: Contrast Rev. 2:7, etc. The same principles apply today. To refuse to hearken to the divine voice is to ensure spiritual death.

judgments: Heb. mishpat. The same as Lev. 18:5, which is here being quoted. It means "A verdict, law, decree".

which, if a man do, he shall live in them: Quoting Lev. 18:5. Quoted by Paul in Gal. 3:12 to show that where confidence was placed in the Law, human pride resulted, and faith was absent. Paul also cited Lev. 18:5 in Rom. 10:5, where he substituted the word "by" for "in" thereby defining the Judaiser's approach to Lev. 18:5. With a merely literal approach towards this verse, works replaced faith. But note how Paul, in Vv6-7 of Romans 10, immediately following the reference to Lev. 18, disproves the traditional Jewish attitude. Here were two things which no man could do! Thus, the keeping of the Law without faith was a useless and profitless exercise.

withdrew the shoulder: An expression which implies a refusal to accept discipline, a refusal to be controlled by another, and a rejection of the call to labour in a Master's service. The metaphor is taken from the action of a beast of burden which draws back, refusing to accept the yoke and go forward with the burden. Cp. Mat. 11: 28-29.

hardened their neck: See notes on V16.

V30 forbear them: Heb. mashak, "to draw". "many years didst thou bear with them" (R.V.). See marg. Cp. 2 Kings 17: 13-14.

thy spirit: Cp. Acts 7: 51. Stephen says that they had always resisted Yahweh's spirit. A continuing succession of prophets had been sent by Yahweh.

V31 Nevertheless for thy great mercies' sake: Israel's entire history was a testimony to Yahweh's grace and mercy. Lam. 3:22; Mal. 3:6; Isa. 1:9.
a gracious and merciful Ail: A reference to Ex. 34:6.

V32 the great, the mighty, and the terrible Ail: See note on 1:5. Quoting Deut. 7:21. "Mighty" is gibbor, a warrior. The One able to conquer Israel's enemies. We, likewise, must learn to have confidence in this God, and in His power. ("Terrible" is yare, "fear, revere".)

who keepest covenant and mercy: See notes on 1:5. Quoting Deut. 7:9. We must learn to have confidence in this, also!

let not all the trouble seem little before thee: Yahweh sees all, and pities. Ps. 103: 13-14. "Trouble" is lit. "weariness" but is here clearly used to indicate suffering.

on our kings... and on all thy people: A confession that all the nation, from the highest to the lowest, have been guilty, and have thus been brought low.

since the times of the kings of Assyria: These kings had been Yahweh's means for punishing His people. They were "the rod of mine anger", as God described them (Isa.10:5). See marg. refs, 2 Kings 17:3.

Vv.33-35: AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT THAT THE JUDGMENT
WAS RIGHTEOUS AND DESERVED.

V33 thou art just: Fulfilling the requirement of Lev. 26: 40-42. This must be the first principle in seeking forgiveness for sins. Ps. 116: 1-5; 145:17. Rom. 3: 25-26.

we: Expressive of all Israel (Cp. V32). A confession of national guilt, such as the High Priest would make on the day of Atonement.

we have done wickedly: Heb. rasha. "Lawless" (Roth.)

V34 commandments and testimonies: As set before the nation by the prophets. (Cp. V30.)

V35 they have not served thee: Heb. abad. Speaks of submission to God, rather than elevation of self.

their kingdom: Rendered "thy kingdom" in Sept., Syriac, Arabic. Cp. Ex. 19:6, to which this would appear to be an allusion. If the A.V. reading is accepted, the emphasis appears to be upon Israel's regarding the kingdom as "theirs" rather than Yahweh's.

in thy great goodness thou gavest them: Again, divine grace.

Vv.36-37: ISRAELITES NOW IN BONDAGE TO GENTILES,
THROUGH THEIR OWN FOLLY

V36 we are servants this day: Acknowledging Deut. 28: 47-48. Because they would not be Yahweh's servants, they are given into the hand of a gentile monarch.

V37 it yieldeth much increase unto the kings: As promised in Lev. 26:16.

because of our sins: They now know and acknowledge the reason. Cp. V33.

they have dominion over our bodies: A reference to Lev. 26:17.

V38 because of all this: The nation is now made fully aware of the reasons for all their distress. And now they take this action of renewing the covenant that they might prevent a repetition of the sins and punishments of the past.

make: Heb. karath. "to cut". Rendered "covenanted" in 2 Chron. 7:18; Hag. 2:5; Rendered "make a league" in 1 Sam. 22:8. The animals were slain, and the representatives of the nation passed between the pieces. See Gen. 15:9-10; Jer. 34:19.

sure: "certain".

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 9.

Through the ages, Israel had been preserved through the outpouring of Yahweh's grace, because He remained faithful. "Who is an Ail like unto thee? Because of this, Israel were to be humbled, and had no ground for boasting. Mic. 7:18-20; 1 Sam.12:22; Ps. 106:6-8, 45. "HE saved them, for His Name's sake." Such is now our own privileged position. Let us not prove faithless to our high calling.

CHAPTER 10

Vv.1-13 records the names of 39 priests and Levites, plus Nehemiah. Thirty priestly and Levitical families had earlier returned under Zerubbabel - and twenty of them are listed here, and therefore still alive for the sealing of the covenant with Nehemiah.

The commonly accepted chronology has it that Zerubbabel returned in B.C. 536, the first year of Cyrus, but that Nehemiah served Artaxerxes Longimanus. Thus the walls would have been rebuilt B.C.444, followed by the events of chapter 10 some time later, about 90 years after Zerubbabel's return from Babylon. Thus the twenty listed here (whom, it should be especially noted, were already heads of families when they returned with Zerubbabel) would be another 90 years older than at the time of their return. This would make them at least 130 years old, if they were 40 at the time of Zerubbabel's return from Babylon - and even 40 would be an extremely young age for them to be heads of their families. (See chronology notes at the beginning).

The alternative explanation is that the Persian monarch at this time was Darius Hystaspes, who was also the Darius of Ezra 6:14, the Ahasuerus of Esther, and the Artaxerxes of Ezra 7. Thus, those who returned with Zerubbabel in B.C. 536 sealed the covenant 34 years later, as described in this chapter.

Those who sealed the covenant:

- V1. The Governor
- V2-8 The priests
- V9-13 The Levites
- V14-27 The heads of the people
- V28-29 The rest of the people, through their representatives.

Where was Ezra? As spiritual leader, he was officiating.

Where was Eliashib, the high priest? Nowhere to be seen! He is not numbered among Nehemiah's supporters; and the evidence points to him being one of the leaders of the opposition, within the Ecclesia. He had been foremost in the early work (3:1) but soon weakened, and now obviously disapproves of Ezra and Nehemiah. He had become a supporter of Tobiah (13:4 cp. 6:17-19) and advocated a more liberal and broadminded approach than either Ezra or Nehemiah were prepared to accept. Note how clearly this had resulted in a form of division. The fruits of this division very nearly resulted in complete apostacy! (Ch. 13). What a warning! Cp. 1 John 2:19.

V9 Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel: These represent the three chief families of returned Levites. Cp. Ezra 2:40; 3:9.

V14 chiefs: "heads" (Roth.)

V28 the rest of the people: Occurs 7:72. Thus Nehemiah enumerates the various classes of the people in the same way as Ezra (2: 70). There was thus a general, if not universal, acceptance of the terms of the covenant, and renewal thereof.

all they that had separated: Put the emphasis upon "had". The result is quite dramatic. It implies that all had not heeded the exhortations of Ezra and Nehemiah. All had not separated. (See note on 9: 2). See 6:17-19; Cp. 13:3; Lev. 20:24-26; Ezra 9:1-2; 10:11, 19; Num. 16:21; 1 Kings 8:52-53; Ex. 34:11-16.

unto the Law of God: Note that the Truth, when it works in us, separates us FROM the world TO God. Thus there is taught: separation from the world, dedication to Yahweh, through His Word.

nethinims: See notes on 3:26.

and everyone having knowledge and understanding: True separation and dedication cannot take place without these two qualities. Where they are absent, individual and Ecclesial weakness will be manifested.

V29 They clave to their brethren: "Cleave to that which is good" (Rom. 12:9) - and "abhor that which is evil".

entered into: This was not to be taken lightly.
Ps. 119: 106.

a curse and an oath: A reference to Deut. 29:10-14.
Cp. Deut. 27:15. The Law promised blessings (Deut. 28:1) and cursings (Deut. 30:1, 19).

to walk in God's Law: The way of life in the Truth is an ACTIVE one. The faith of the scriptures has got to be a WORKING faith. Cp. Eph. 4:1; Colos. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:12; 4:1, etc.

commandments, statutes, judgments: Refers to Deut. 6:1; 5:31; Cp. John 15:14.

V30 that we would not give our daughters, etc. Refers to Deut. 7:3. Cp. Ex. 34:16; Ezra 9:1, 12-14; 10:10-12. As it had been in the beginning: Gen. 6:1-2. The basic action in maintaining separateness. Cp. 1 Cor. 7:39.

V31 on the Sabbath day... we would not buy: Under the terms of the covenant, the sabbath laws were to be fully respected. Ex. 20:10; Isa. 58:13-14.

holy day: Ex. 12:16; Lev. 16:29.

the seventh year: "Leave" the seventh year, means leave the land untilled. Because it meant "rest" for the year, it was sometimes known as a Sabbatical year. See Ex. 23: 10-11; Lev. 25: 2-7.

exaction of every debt: Cp. 5:2-13; Deut. 15:1-2. Mat. 6:12; 18:27, 35. James 2:13.

V32 the third part of a shekel: The Law required a half shekel. (Ex. 30:11-16). Why one-third here? This may have been an additional offering to that demanded by Ex. 30, as the half shekel was to be paid whenever Israel

was numbered, whereas this third shekel was to be paid annually. An alternate explanation is that because of the general poverty of the people, a lesser amount than the Law stipulated was now accepted and agreed upon. This was to be a yearly voluntary offering for the work of the Temple. The principle was above the letter of the Law in any event, as silver is a symbol for redemption: giving: Prov. 3: 9-10.

V33 shewbread: Lev. 24:5-8. Twelve cakes of fine flour.

meat offering: Heb. minchah. The gift or meal offering. Fine flour mingled with fine olive oil.

This verse is important, for it reveals an understanding of what the Law required.

continual burnt offering: Num. 28:1-8.

the set feasts: Such as the Passover, feast of trumpets, etc.

V34 the wood offering, to bring it: In earlier times, this had been a duty of the Gibeonites (Nethinim) Josh. 9:21. Now, due to desolation of the land by invaders, wood was scarce. Lots were drawn to decide which districts would supply the wood. (According to Josephus, this later became an annual feast, called wood-bearing).

according to the Law: Lev. 6:12.

V35 the firstfruits: As required by the Law. Deut. 26:1-15; Lev. 23:9-14. See also Ex. 23:19; Num. 18:12; contrast Mal. 3:8-12.

of all fruit of all trees: Num. 18:12; Deut. 18:4.

V36 firstborn of sons, cattle: Ex. 13:2-13; 22:29; 34:19.

V37 tithes: Lev. 27:30-33; Num. 18:21; Deut. 14:28.

V38 the tithe of the tithes: A tenth of the tenth. Those which the Levites gave to the priests, of the tithes they had received from the people. Num. 18:26-28.

V39 we will not forsake the house of our God: The expression "house of God" has occurred 8 times in this chapter.

(8 is the number representative for the cutting-off of flesh.) See V32, 33, 34, 36, 36, 37, 38, 39. The implication is: go consistently to the house of God, and the flesh will be cut off, the individual purified.

here was a wonderful resolution from the people: "We will not forsake the house of our God". If only they had remained loyal to it! Ps. 122; 1 Cor. 3:16.

To fulfil such a vow as this, we must:

- * Continue in the faith -----V29
- * Separate from the gentile world -----V30
- * Observe the commandments -----V31-33
- * Labour with those who are dedicated to
the work of the truth -----V34
- * Produce fruit to the glory of God -----V35-37
- * Make sacrifices for the truth -----V35-38
- * The whole Ecclesia to be united in
serving Yahweh -----V39

These were the grand ideals upon which this grand reformation was based -- but the tragic result is found in chapter 13; for these people, in large measure, did not remain faithful to this covenant after Nehemiah's departure from the City. They came under the influence of evil men who desired to undermine Nehemiah's work, and weaken the people in their obedience to the truth. Cp. Rev. 3:22.

CHAPTER 11

SMALL POPULATION OF JERUSALEM INCREASED

Nehemiah now turned his attention to correcting the population problem. In this chapter he tells of the steps he took to correct the deficiency within the City. (Cp. 7:4-5). Working in a spirit of co-operation, the people agreed that one tenth of the population of Judea should live in Jerusalem. This was a sort of tithe of people rather than goods. A census would have been necessary to provide this information. The population in general realised that it was essential to have a numerically strong Jerusalem, so they applied themselves to filling this need.

V1 the rulers dwelt in Jerusalem: This was required by the Law: Deut. 17:8-9.

cast lots: A fair method, and doubtless properly supervised. Cp. 10:34; Josh. 18:10; 7:16-18.

bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem: Thus the people offer themselves as human tithes; the true spirit of self-denial. Not only would the defences be strengthened, but rebuilding of the City would be advanced with these additional numbers.

the holy city: Set apart, separated from all other cities. Deut. 12:5, 11; 1 Kings 8:29; 2 Chron. 7:12.

V2 the men that willingly offered themselves: This is the only sacrifice which Yahweh will accept! (Ex. 25: 2, 8; 2 Cor. 8:12; Mark 12:41-44; Gal. 5:6). Considerable sacrifice was involved. There was little attraction for the flesh in this proposition. Jerusalem was still largely a heap of rubble. There would be danger, hard labour, and few facilities. But these Israelites were spurred on by a zeal and a faith that the world at large cannot understand. Down through the ages there have been many such servants of Yahweh. Sadly, in these "last days" this spirit of zeal, dedication, and self-sacrifice for the Truth, is largely undermined by a spirit of lethargy, indifference, and pursuit of self-interest. Let us rally to the mighty exhortation of Nehemiah, and let us "RISE UP AND BUILD!"

V3 the chief of the province: "now these are the chiefs of the provinces" (Roth.). A census of the leaders was taken, and where they resided. (Here are included not only those who returned with Zerubbabel, but also names of those who returned with Ezra and Nehemiah).

children of Solomon's servants: Solomon formed, from the Canaanitish population of his day, a separate servile class (1 Kings 9: 20-21). They still continued within Israel as a distinct class, apparently inferior to the Nethinim. See also 1 Kings 5: 13; 2 Chron. 8: 7.

Vv.4-36: THE LEADERS LIVING IN JERUSALEM,
AND ELSEWHERE.

- V 4- 9 -- men of Judah and Benjamin.
 V 10-14 -- the priests
 V 15-18 -- the Levites
 V 19 -- porters, gatekeepers
 V 20 -- priests and Levites throughout the land
 V 21 -- the Nethinims in Ophel
 V 22-23 -- the singers
 V 25-30 -- the villages of the children of Judah
 V 31-36 -- the villages of the children of Benjamin.

V4 at Jerusalem dwelt: Certainly not only members of Judah and Benjamin. Those of other tribes also lived there. Cp. 1 Chron. 9:3.

Perez: See marg. properly Pharez, a twin son of Judah, by Tamar. Gen. 38:6-30; 1 Chron. 2:4; Gen. 46:12; Ruth 4:12; 1 Chron. 11:11; 27:2.

V5 Shiloni: Lit. "the Shilonite". Probably residents of Shiloh. 1 Chron. 9:5.

V6 valiant men: Men able to bear arms.

V7 the sons: See 1 Chron. 9: 6-9.

V9 Judah: 1 Chron. 9:7.

overseer: A superintendent. So in V14, 22; 12:42.
second over the city: Second in charge.

V10 Of the priests: Nehemiah here, apparently, passes from the names of individuals to family names. (1 Chron. 24: 7, 17).

V11 Seraiah: This was the family of Ezra. (Cp. Ezra 7:1-5).

Zadok: This was the family which furnished the high priest at that time. The actual high priest in Nehemiah's day was Eliashib.

V13 chief: heads.

- V14 mighty men: Gibbor. "strong men of ability" (Roth.). That is, for the service of the house of God.
- V16 the outward business of the house of God: "the outside business" (Roth.) The civil administration of the Temple area, but not within the priestly precincts. This would involve the supply of food for the priests within, animals for sacrifices, etc.
- V17 the principal to begin the thanks giving: "leader of the praise who giveth thanks in prayer". (Roth.) i.e. the Master Singer, or lead-singer. Leader of the choir.
- V19 kept the gates: Cp. Ps. 84:10.
- V21 Ophel: Near the Kidron Valley and Temple mount. See notes 3:26.
- V22 Asaph: Appointed by David to preside over the Temple choral services (1 Chron. 16:5; cp. 25:1-2). Descended from Gershon, eldest son of Levi.
- V23 the King's commandment: Cp. Ezra 6:10; 7:20-24. This was Artaxerxes.
- V24 Pethahiah: The Persian King's direct representative in civil matters.
- Zerah: See marg., "Zarah". Twin son, with Pharez, of Judah and Tamar.
- Vv.25-30: THE VILLAGES OF THE CHILDREN OF JUDAH - many of them in areas south of Jerusalem, dominated by Idumeans.
- Vv.31-36: VILLAGES OF BENJAMIN - some situated in Samaria (Lod, Hadid, Gittaim, Ono, etc.)
- V31 from Geba dwelt at Michmash: Rather, "dwelt from Geba to Michmash, and Aija, and Bethel" etc. Geba was an extreme city of Benjamin on the western side. These other three places were all near Bethel.

V32 Anathoth: Between Geba and Jerusalem (Isa. 10:30), and was a Levitical city. (Josh. 21:18)

V36 of the Levites were divisions in Judah and Benjamin:
A certain number of Levites were dispersed among the towns and villages. Thus, the effects of wise and careful planning were now being manifested.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 11.

The carefully developed program of Nehemiah's work reveals a sound approach towards Ecclesial work:

1. The people were exhorted to labour.
(Expound and heed the Word).
2. The service of the Temple restored.
(Sound worship).
3. Defensive walls rebuilt.
(Sound doctrine and knowledge).
4. The people instructed.
(Sound understanding of responsibilities).
5. Population increased.
(Gospel extension activities).

CHAPTER 12

THE DEDICATION OF THE WALL

In the impressive and moving ceremony of the dedication of the walls, Ezra was assigned the leading part. His age, wisdom, and priestly office would have fitted him for this high honour. (For notes on Ezra's return, see introduction to Ch. 8). Again, family names of those taking part are meticulously recorded. Temple ministers and priests were appointed by hereditary right, hence the importance of genealogies. For the true purpose of Temple service, see 1 Pet. 4:11.

Vv.1-9: CHIEFS OF THE PRIESTS WHO HAD RETURNED
WITH ZERUBBABEL.

- V1 these are the priests and the Levites: Not all, but the heads of families are listed. (Cp. V7, 12, 22, 23, 24).
Zerubbabel: Ezra 1:8; Hag. 1:1; Zech. 4:6.
Jeshua; Joshua, high priest of Zerubbabel's time.
 Ezra 2:2; Hag. 1:1; Zech. 3:8.
- Ezra: Not the Ezra of this book (or the Book of Ezra). This same name occurs V13; his son, Meshullam, was chief of this family in the time of the high priest Joiakim (V12).
- V7 chief: heads
the chief of the priests: Originally, 24 orders, or courses, of priests had been established by David. (1 Chron. 24:18). Sixteen of them were descendants of Eleazar, and eight descended from Ithamar.
- V8 over the thanksgiving: "over the choirs" (Roth.) i.e. the principal singers.
- V9 over against them: "relieved them in their watches" (Roth.)

Vv.10-11: LIST OF HIGH PRIESTS FROM JOSHUA TO JADDUA, covering a period of at least 205 years, from the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus (B.C. 538) to the submission of Jerusalem to Alexander the Great (B.C. 333).

JOSHUA: A great man of faith. Returned with Zerubbabel in the first year of Cyrus. Revealed great strength of character and faith, in the face of great difficulties.

JOIAKIM: He is not mentioned, except here.

ELIASHIB: A traitor to the faith of his grandfather. (There are many Eliashib's in Ecclesial history!!) A leader in the work of rebuilding the wall (3:1) - but then he compromised the Truth; and did not even repair the section of wall outside his own house (3:20-21). He betrayed Nehemiah by becoming allied to Tobiah (13:4) and worked strongly to undermine Nehemiah's work after he departed from Jerusalem. Then, later, one of his grandsons married a daughter of Sanballat (13:28). There is a sober lesson to be learned from the tragedy of Eliashib's life: LEARN THE TRUTH; BE PERSUADED OF IT; EMBRACE IT UNRESERVEDLY; WALK IN IT; CLING TO IT, EVEN IN THE FACE OF TRIAL; REMAIN LOYAL TO IT, AND TO THOSE WHO ARE OF THE SAME MIND. Yahweh will never forsake those who manifest these characteristics.

JOIADA: Called Judas by Josephus. Followed the evil example of his father, and compromised the faith. One of his sons married a daughter of Sanballat. (13:28)

JONATHAN: Called Johanan, V22, 23. Josephus says Johanan murdered his brother in the Temple, because his brother was endeavouring to supplant him.

JADDUA: The last high priest mentioned in the O.T. Josephus and Eusebius say he was high priest at the time of Alexander's entrance into Jerusalem, and was still high priest after the overthrow of the Persian Empire. But, once again according to Josephus, his brother married a descendant of Sanballat, a daughter of one by that name who was living at that time. Manasseh had been rejected in Jerusalem, and banished. Sanballat, with the blessing of Alexander (whom Sanballat had joined, having betrayed Darius to do so) built the Temple upon Mt. Gerizim, and installed Manasseh as high priest. Many of the priests in Jerusalem had revolted, and joined the banished Manasseh.

V10 Jeshua: The Jeshua of V1, not V8.

Vv.12-21: THE HEADS OF THE PRIESTLY COURSES
IN THE TIME OF THE HIGH PRIEST
JOIAKIM.

Vv.22-23: THE TIME DOWN TO WHICH LISTS OF
LEADING PRIESTS AND LEVITES WERE KEPT.

V22 to the reign of Darius: Most probably this was Darius Codomannus, the last king of Persia, who opposed, and was defeated by, Alexander the Great. Jaddua was contemporary with him.

Eliashib: Here mentioned in Nehemiah's diary, but where was he when these momentous events were taking place? Cp. V10, 23. Next mentioned: 13:4.

V23 book of chronicles: Not a Biblical book; this list is not recorded therein.

Vv.24-26: CHIEF LEVITICAL FAMILIES IN THE TIME
OF JOIAKIM, AND LATER.

V24 God: Heb. "THE Elohim".

ward over against ward: i.e. division over against division.

V25 thresholds of the gates: "wardens in charge of the storehouses at the gates." (Moff.)

V26 governor: pasha. V26 now brings this priestly and Levitical chronology up to date to the time of dedicating the wall.

Vv.27-43: THE DEDICATION OF THE WALL -

A ceremony in appreciation of the spirit of Psalm 127.

V27 they sought the Levites out of all their places: Link this verse with 11:36, from which appears to carry on a continuing narrative. The Levites were summoned from all the surrounding provinces, and came joyfully to Jerusalem for this solemn and moving ceremony - a service of dedication. It is perhaps likely that Psalms 48, 122, 127, 147, and 150 were included in the service.

to keep the dedication with gladness: Cp. 1 Kings 8:63; 2 Chron. 5:13; 7:5. It appears that the pattern of Solomon's dedication of the Temple was that followed on this occasion. The pattern is one of praise and thanksgiving, with musical instruments featured in the ceremony. (2 Chron. 5). They marched to the sound of trumpets, singing, and instruments of music.

V28 the sons of the singers: Levites who belonged to the class of the singers. (1 Chron. 15: 16-22).

Netophathi: 1 Chron. 9:16. A town not far from Bethlehem.

V29 house of Gilgal: Beth-Gilgal. N.E. of Jerusalem. Deut. 11:30.

Geba: A Levitical city of Benjamin, N. of Jerusalem.

round Jerusalem: To have ready access to the Temple.

Azmaveth: A town of Benjamin, near Anathoth.

V30 priests and Levites purified themselves: Probably with water: Ex. 19:10; cp. Isa. 1:16; Ps. 51: 2, 7; Eph. 5:26. See Hezekiah's instruction, under similar circumstances: 2 Chron. 29: 5, 15. Note that here both priests and Levites appear equally zealous to purify themselves. Contrast 2 Chron. 29: 34; Ezra 6:20.

purified the people: By sprinkling: Num. 19: 13, 19. Cp. Lev. 20: 24-26; Ex. 24: 6-8.

gates and wall: Cp. Deut. 23:14; Lev.14:34-53. Inanimate things could contact a form of defilement.

V31 I brought up: Nehemiah arranged two processions. In each group were priests, Levites, princes, and common folk. One group was under the direction of Ezra (V36), the other under Nehemiah (V38). The place of assembly was the western wall.

and appointed two great companies: "and I appointed two large choirs" (Roth.). The Hebrew word does not necessarily signify "choir", but this appears to be the sense, for during the procession they were to sing praises and thanksgiving to Yahweh, to the accompaniment of the musical instruments.

on the right hand upon the wall: Along the western wall; then Ezra's company marched south, then east along the southern wall. Nehemiah's group marched north, then east along the northern wall. The two groups met nearly midway along the eastern wall, between the water and the prison gates, outside the Temple. Cp. Vv37-40; Ps. 48: 11-13.

V32 after them: i.e. the singers.

Hoshaiah: Perhaps the Hoshea of 10:23, who sealed the covenant.

half the princes of Judah: The other half were with Nehemiah.

V33 Ezra: Not Ezra the scribe. One of the heads of the courses of priests.

Azariah: The son of Maaseiah, repaired part of the wall (3:23-24); was one of the Levites who assisted Ezra in expounding the Law (8:7); then sealed the covenant (10: 2) - and now assists at the dedication of the wall. A faithful Israelite, indeed!!

V34 Judah, Benjamin: Ordinary folk from these tribes.

Shemaiah, Jeremiah: Priestly families: 10:2-8; 12:1, 6.

V35 certain of the priests sons with trumpets: Cp. V41.

V36 the musical instruments of David: That is, dating from days of David. 1 Chron. 15: 16-21.

Ezra the scribe before them: As their leader. As Ezra and Nehemiah had previously unitedly addressed the people with exposition from the Word (8:9) so now they join together to conduct this ceremony. It is significant that there is no jealousy manifested by Ezra, against the younger Nehemiah, who has virtually succeeded him.

V37 fountain gate: 2:14; 3:15.

water gate: 3: 26.

V38 company: "choir" (Roth.) See note on V31.

I after them: Nehemiah, leading the other group, now describes the course of that procession. Starting from the same part of the western wall, they moved northward to the north-west corner, then eastward, then south.

tower of the furnaces: 3:11

broad wall: 3:8

old gate: 3:6

fish gate: 3:3

tower of Hananeel, Meah, sheep gate: 3: 1. Note: almost exactly identical with the progression recorded in 3:1-11; but in reverse.

V40 so stood the two companies of them that gave thanks in the house of God: "So the two choirs came to a stand at the house of God". (Roth.) See note on V31. "At" the house of God, not "in". So in Roth., Moff., Comp. Bible. The two companies had now arrived at a place on the eastern wall, near the Temple area.

V41 with trumpets: Cp. V35.

V42 the singers sang aloud: The climax to the ceremony was now building up. The voices of the two choirs now merged as one, lifting high in a moving song of praise and thanksgiving. The stirring beauty of the singing carried over the holy city, for all to hear in reverent silence. See Ps. 81: 1-3; 95: 1-3.

V43 offered great sacrifices: Cp. Ezra 6:17. The climax to the ceremony was now reached in the offering of "great sacrifices" (Roth.)

God had made them rejoice with great joy: The joy and happiness now experienced is ascribed to the work of Yahweh, who had laboured on behalf of His people. All their achievements had been due to the divine mercy, and not to their own strength.

the wives also and the children rejoiced: A partial fulfilment of Zech. 8:4-8. Here was the true family atmosphere of Israel at its best. Wives rejoicing with husbands, children educated in these matters to the point where they, too, can appreciate the joy of the occasion.

the joy of Jerusalem heard afar off: What a thrilling and deeply moving experience it must have been!! (Cp. Ezra 3:13). But what of the glorious future re-enactment of this scene, when Messiah reigns; and when Psalms such as 24, 48, 122 are fulfilled!! And Ezra and Nehemiah, together with their faithful brethren WILL BE THERE!! Can we not be moved by this picture of past faithfulness, and the prospect of future glory to come?

Vv.44-47: THE COVENANT PUT INTO EFFECT FOR THE
TEMPLE SERVICE

It was not enough for the people to merely renew the covenant (10:28-39). The Truth is practical in application. Faithful ACTION was therefore required. The people were to thoroughly provide for the priests and Levites, who in turn would be fully free to develop the spiritual life of the nation. Effort was therefore required from all.

V44 the chambers for the treasures: Store-chambers attached to the Temple building (13:4-5).

for the offerings: Heb. terumah. Heave-offerings. Part of the Peace Offering, thus teaching of fellowship with God. It was always a surrender of something to God, (Ex. 25:21; Num. 5:9). The right leg of the animal was offered, as part of the Peace Offering; the choicest and strongest part of the animal - thus representing the dedication of all physical strengths and labours to the service of Yahweh. (See also Num. 15: 17-21).

to gather into them: Rather, "by them" i.e. these officials collected the tithes throughout all the territory, and conveyed them to Jerusalem.

the portions of the Law: See marg. i.e. required by the Law, to be set apart for sacred uses. Lev. 27:30-33.

for Judah rejoiced: "for Judah rejoiced in the priests and Levites who served" (Moff). That attitude which is manifested in an Ecclesia when there is sound, dedicated Leadership, a fine example set by the shepherds; and a receptive, responsive flock!! Prov. 8: 32-35.

V45 ward: "charge" (Roth.)

commandment of David: 1 Chron. 23:28. They maintained the standards and forms of worship as demanded by David.

V46 For in the days of David and Asaph: A marked swing to Conservatism; and attempt to restore the standards of the past. Asaph had been a Levite, appointed by David to preside over the Temple choristers. (1 Chron. 16:5; 2 Chron. 29:30.

V47 all Israel: Used of Judah, Benjamin, and all who returned from other tribes.

gave the portions: i.e. paid their tithes regularly.

they sanctified things unto the Levites: That is, the people set apart for the Levites all that the Law demanded; and the Levites set apart for the priests their due share, "a tithe of the tithe" (Num. 18:26).

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 12.

See especially the climax to this chapter: V40. The nation had five great reasons for offering praise and thanksgiving:

- (1) For the wall itself; a strong defence against enemies without.
- (2) For the way in which they had been led, and caused to prosper in the work.
- (3) For the victory gained over great obstacles and powerful opponents.
- (4) For the rapidity with which the work had been completed.
- (5) For the restoration of sound Temple worship.

CHAPTER 13REQUIREMENTS OF THE LAW IMPLEMENTED - NEHEMIAH'S
"SECOND COMING" - HIS EFFORTS FOR TRUE REFORM.

Nehemiah, a type of Christ: Mal. 3: 1-3.

Nehemiah had been Governor for 12 years, after which, according to his prior agreement with the King of Persia, he returned to the Court of the King, where he remained for a time (V6). But reports of apostasy in Jerusalem caused him to plead permission to return again to Zion. (Who sent these reports to Nehemiah? Could it have been through the efforts of Malachi that he returned? See Mal. 3:1-3.)

Thus, like the great future re-builder of Jerusalem, he "came again!"

Nehemiah returned to find that his earlier work had been undermined; the chief of the false brethren being Eliashib, who was allied to Tobiah (V4) and Sanballat (V28). Compromise with the gentiles had been permitted, and possibly even encouraged. The presence of many gentiles within the walls would encourage idolatory and apostasy (V16).

The priests and Levites had been Nehemiah's main instruments for maintaining a spirit of faithfulness among the brethren - so Eliashib and Tobiah undermined their influence by encouraging:

- (a) Non-payment of tithes and offerings, thus causing the priests and Levites to leave the city to earn a living (V9-10).
- (b) The Temple services to largely cease (V10).
- (c) Abuse of the sabbath (V15).
- (d) Marriage out of the Truth (V23; cp. Ezra 10.)

Thus the nation, undermined from within (Eliashib) and without (Tobiah) was in a state of spiritual decay.

The development of such apostacy does not appear to have taken long. Malachi (it seems) had raised his voice against these same four grave weaknesses:

- (a) Non-payment of tithes: Mal. 3:8
- (b) Temple worship treated lightly: Mal. 1:7, 12-13.
- (c) Abuse of the sabbath: Mal. 3:14; 4:4.
- (d) Marriage out of the Truth: Mal. 3:11-16.

The majority, due to apostacy, had become "robbers, adulterers, sorcerers, false swearers, oppressors" (Mal. 3: 5, 8) and so had "departed out of the way" (Mal. 2: 8). But there still remained a faithful remnant who "feared Yahweh and thought upon His Name" (Mal. 3:16).

Nehemiah would thus have returned in partial fulfilment of Mal. 3: 1-5, if our chronological suggestion is correct.

Vv1-3: APPEAL TO THE LAW - SEPARATION FROM THE GENTILES

V1 On that day: The day of which he is now about to write, the time of his "second coming" to Jerusalem. (Cp. V6).

they read in the book of Moses: Nehemiah, finding an appalling state of affairs, assembled the people for a public reading of the Word, with emphasis upon those aspects of the Law in which they were grossly offending. He applied the principles of Deut. 4:1-10, and Deut. 6. Only the Word could effectively move them.

was found written: Deut. 23:3-6. These brethren and sisters were led into apostacy through their own lack of knowledge of the Word.

Ammonite: Descended from Lot, by his youngest daughter. Meaning: "son of my kindred" (Gesenius). See Ezek. 25: 1-11; Amos 1:13-15.

Moabite: Derived from "mo" meaning "from" and "ob" meaning "father" - thus, "from a father". Num. 25:1; Cp. Isa. 15 - 16; Jer. 48; Ezek. 25:1-11; Amos 2:1-3.

should not come into the congregation: "Ecclesia" (Sept.) There must be no compromise! (Ezra had to deal with this same problem: Ezra 9:1-2).
of God: "of THE Elohim" (Heb.)

V2 Because they met not: Quoting Deut. 23:4-5, but substituting the third person for the second person.

hired Balaam: Num. 22.

curse into a blessing: Throughout his ministry, Nehemiah has continually emphasised how Yahweh had continually intervened to preserve Israel.

when they had heard the Law: It is necessary for the Ecclesia to respond to the Word of God. It is the only means of transforming individuals, fitting them for the kingdom: Rom. 12:1-2; Ps. 119:93; John 17:17.

the mixed multitude: Always a snare to the Ecclesia! Num. 11:4; Cp. Ex. 12:38. Heb. Ereb. "a web, or transverse threads of a cloth". Influence from the gentiles will "cut across" our attempts to walk faithfully before the God of Israel! (Cp. Ezra 10:10-19).

Vv.4-9: ELIASHIB CONFRONTED - THE TEMPLE CLEANSED.

V4 Eliashib the priest: See notes "Post-exilic High Priests" (Ch. 12); also 3: 1.

having the oversight: "in charge of the chambers" (Moff.)

chamber: Heb. lishkah. Here, apparently used in a collective sense of the entire building.

allied: Heb. qarowb, meaning "near". Sometimes applied to kinsfolk. Indicates a close association. Cp. V28; 6:17-19.

(Note: in the entire narrative, Eliashib is absent - apart from the genealogy reference in 12:10 - from 3: 1 to 13:4. He had not been a supporter of Nehemiah; but rather had identified himself with the opposition faction within the Ecclesia).

V5 where aforetime they laid: Previously the tithes had been stored there, but now the tithes were not being presented.

meat offerings: Minchah. Meal offering.

offerings: Heave offerings.

offerings of the priests: "the tithe of the tithes".

V6 in all this time was I not at Jerusalem: His first sojourn at Jerusalem had been for 12 years (5:14), after which he had returned to the Court (13:6) in fulfilment of his agreement with the king (2:6). What had caused his return now? Probably word from Jerusalem (from Malachi?) advising of the apostate state of affairs. The fruits of Eliashib's work is what develops when there is an absence of sound leadership. Cp. Ex. 32:1; Judg. 2:7-13; 2 Chron. 24:17; Mat. 13:25.

after certain days: See marg.

obtained I leave of the King: See marg. He was anxious to serve Yahweh and his people, as at the first. Trial, adversity, toil, had not blunted his faith or his zeal. (Cp. 1:4; 2:3).

V7 I came to Jerusalem and understood: No doubt he would have again carefully assessed the situation. (Cp. 2:11-17). Then, with characteristic vitality and determination, he would have begun the work of reformation. "(I) had intelligence of the wickedness which Eliashib had committed for Tobiah." (Roth.)

a chamber in the courts: Desecration. A flagrant example of apostasy, practised by the shepherds, and which example the flock might be expected to follow! Past examples of punishment were forgotten or disregarded. Lam. 1:10; Ps. 79:1; Jer. 51:51.

V8 it grieved me sore: "I was deeply hurt" (Moff.) "It is displeasing to me" (Young's Lit.)

therefore I cast forth: "I threw all Tobiah's belongings out of the chamber, and ordered the chambers to be purified." (Moff.)

(Cp. the action of Christ in the Temple: Mat. 21:12-13; John 2:13-17; - in this last quote, note the citation from Psalm 69.)

Angered at the disgraceful conduct of Eliashib, appalled at the power wielded by the Ammonite, Tobiah, Nehemiah

acted swiftly and decisively. His action was a declaration of righteous hostility towards these forces which were destroying the Ecclesia. (Cp. Ps. 119: 53).

V9 cleansed the chambers: Cp. 2 Chron. 29:15-18. This was necessary because of pollution, after holy buildings had been converted to mere secular uses.

thither I brought again: He ordered the restoration of all things which had been removed to accommodate Tobiah.

Vv.10-12: INVESTIGATION AND EXHORTATION RESULTS
IN RESTORATION.

V10 I perceived: He conducted an investigation.

portions of the Levites had not been given: Thus, the covenant, previously so solemnly embraced, (Ch. 10) was profaned. Evidence of unkept promises!

that did the work: i.e. kept the Temple services continuing.

were fled every one to his field: Without provisions from the people, the priests and Levites had to leave the Temple and the city to earn in the fields, to provide for themselves and their families.

Thus, the covenant had been broken in this respect (10:35).

V11 then contended I: "Then I confronted the deputies" (Moff.) Heb. ruwb, "to toss, to grapple, to wrangle". He had previously resorted to this: 5: 7 (same word).

On this second return he contended with the rulers (V11), with the nobles (V17), and with the people (V25).

the house of God forsaken: As a result of the events of V10. They had manifested a direct denial of their covenant: 10:39 - Note that Nehemiah quotes their very words to draw attention to their infidelity! The priests were at fault for deserting their responsibilities, but these influential and wealthy Jews were also to be blamed, for keeping back the tithes. They coveted that which was Yahweh's. These Arranging Brethren permitted these flagrant abuses of the Law, without attempting to either defend the Truth of the matter, or encourage the people to do what was right.

I gathered them together: As a shepherd.

in their place: See marg. Temple services were again resumed, the Levites restored, and the people returned to worshipping Yahweh in the manner appointed. (Cp. Mal. 3:3-4).

V12 Then brought all Judah the tithe: This was the direct result of Nehemiah's ACTION (V8), ENQUIRY (V10), and CONTENDING (V11). Cp. Mal. 3:10. This had been the plea and exhortation of Malachi.

Vv.13-14: FAITHFUL BRETHREN APPOINTED TO OFFICE.

V13 over the treasuries: "in charge of the storerooms" (Moff.) Previously Eliashib had been in charge of these rooms: V4!! These four brethren: one was a priest, one a Levite, one a professional Scribe, one a layman of rank (10: 22).

next to them: i.e. to assist them.

for they were counted faithful: Wonderful words. These brethren had remained faithful. Heb. aman, "a builder, architect; hence to support, to foster, to be firm, faithful." (Gesenius, Strong.) This word is used of the essence of divine wisdom, in Prov. 8:30; used in relation to Israel's lack of oneness with Yahweh, in Ps. 78:8 (where the word is rendered "steadfast"); used of God's commandments, to show that they are "sure", in Ps. 111:7. This faithfulness is something we can only prove under trial - as did these brethren. They had remained faithful when others had deserted the cause of the Truth, and when large-scale apostasy had become rife. They refused to be moved from the path that lay before them, in remaining faithful to the truth. This is all we are told of these brethren, but they will receive their reward! Cp. 7:2; Mat. 25:21; Luke 12: 42-44; 1 Cor. 4:2.

to distribute unto their brethren: Their duties were to receive, account for, and disburse the tithes.

V14 remember me, O my God: Or, "think upon me, my God" as the same words are translated in 5 :19.

wipe not out my good deeds: "Do not wipe out my loving-kindnesses which I have done for the house of my God, and for those keeping charge thereof". (Roth.)

Nowhere does it appear that Nehemiah expected to gain salvation through his works, but rather through faith in divine power and mercy (V22). This is the prayer of a faithful Israelite, who had faith that Yahweh would deliver him from death in due time. Cp. Job 14: 13; 1 Thess. 1:2-4; Heb. 6:10; Ps. 20:4-9; Jer. 18:18-20; Ps. 106: 1-5.

Vv.15-19: SABBATH-KEEPING REINTRODUCED.

V15 treading winepresses...bringing in sheaves, etc:

In the country areas, winepresses were worked, farming operations continued, on the sabbath.

which they brought into Jerusalem: In the city, trade was continued on the sabbath without interruption.

I testified against them: "I protested" (Roth., Moff.)
Once again, evidence that the covenant was being flagrantly disregarded! (10:31; Cp. Ex. 20:8; Jer. 17:21-23, 27).

in the day: "on the day" (Moff.)

V16 there dwelt men of Tyre therein: The great danger from these gentiles was not simply their presence in the city, but the influence they exercised over the Israelites. At this time of reformation, they should not have permitted these gentiles to dwell within the city; 9:2; 13:3. But even when "strangers" were permitted to do so, they were to have respect for the sabbath, even as the Israelite: Ex. 23:12.

V17 contended: See note on V11.

with the nobles: Once again the rulers (V11) and the nobles, are the chief offenders. Arranging Brethren must set the finest example. They must be knowledgeable in the Word, and guide the Ecclesia with wisdom. They must stand for the purity of the Truth, without compromise, and encourage the flock to follow their example. The evils outlined in these verses resulted from lack of true knowledge, indifference, and the pursuit of self-

interest. Cp. Jer. 5:5; 8:9; James 3:17. Because of these sins Nehemiah was contending against, judgment would finally come upon both shepherds and the flock. Mic. 3:1, 6, 12.

V18 Did not your fathers thus: See notes on V17. Cp. Jer. 17: 21-27; Ezek. 20:13; 22:8, 26.

did not God bring all this evil: Judgment came for disregarding the teaching of God's Word: Jer. 17:27.

profaning the sabbath: Their crime could not have been more serious than this. But it appears that, due to spiritual blindness and unsound leadership, they were unable to see this!

V19 I commanded: "I ordered" (Moff.) A clear-cut stand, without compromise on the vital issues. Nehemiah was once again in complete control.

began to be dark: Note the important word "began". "When the gates of Jerusalem made a shadow, before the sabbath" (Roth.) The gates would have been customarily closed at darkness, as an approved act of safety - but, by leaving it so late, the Jews contravened the sabbath law. Nehemiah demanded an earlier closing.

some of my servants: Cp. 4:16; 5:16. He would see that his instructions were observed.

no burden: There would be no compromise! Ex. 31:14.

Vv.20-21: SABBATH MERCHANTS UPBRAIDED

V20 lodged without Jerusalem: Could not leave their goods, and so camped outside the city walls!

once or twice: Such a state of affairs was not permitted to continue for long, as it apparently caused diversion and confusion, and disturbed the sabbath. Thus, Nehemiah threatened to arrest them (V21) whereupon the practice ceased.

V21 I testified against them: Same word as V15.

I will lay hands on you: He would arrest and imprison them, without further warning. This threat, issued with determination, had the desired effect. Cp. Ezra 7:26.

V22: LEVITES TO GUARD CITY GATES TO PREVENT
ANY ABUSE OF THE SABBATH LAW

V22 I commanded the Levites: Nehemiah's servants had officiated temporarily, whilst general law and order was being established. (This had been a duty of the Levites when the gates had earlier been set up: 7:1).

Remember me, O my God: See notes on V14. He trusted not in his own works, but cast himself upon Yahweh, trusting in His mercy. (Cp. Hezekiah: Isa. 38:1-3. See Ps. 25: 6-7; Rom. 2:7; Philip. 3:8-9.

spare me: The anguished cry of a man conscious of his sinful state, and his need of divine mercy. Ps.130:3-6.

according to the greatness: "abundance" (Roth., Comp. Bible) an allusion to the divine character: Ex. 34:6.

of thy mercy: "Lovingkindness" (Roth., Comp. Bible).

Vv.23-28: MARRIAGE WITH GENTILES UNCOMPROMISINGLY
CONDEMNED

V23 saw I Jews who had married: Again, the covenant had been profaned: 10:30.

wives of Ashdod: One of the five principal cities of the Philistines. (The others: Gaza, Gath, Ekron, Ashkelon). These gentiles had consistently been hostile to Israel - and only recently had been declared allies of Israel's bitter enemies! (4:7).

Ammon, Moab: See notes on V11.

V24 half in the speech of Ashdod: A hybrid language. The father speaking in Aramaic, the mother in a gentile tongue. Proof that these gentile women had not embraced "the hope of Israel" (Cp. Zeph. 3:9).

V25 I contended: See note on V11. He "confronted" them with the facts and the Scriptures. (Cp. V27)

cursed them: "Laid a curse upon them" (Roth.) He announced the cursings of the Law which would come upon them if they remained rebellious (10:29). Cp. Deut. 28:20; 30:19; 27:26.

smote certain of them: Had them punished by whipping, according to Deut. 25: 1-3.

plucked off their hair: Heb. marat "to polish, hence to make bald". He probably had their heads shaved as a mark of public disgrace. (Cp. Ezra 9:3).

made them swear by God: "I put them on oath by God" (Roth.) i.e. dictated the words of the oath, binding them to keep the Law. Thus, if they intermarried with the gentiles they could expect to receive the curse of the Law.

ye shall not give your daughters: Ex. 34:11-16;
Deut. 7:1-6.

or for yourselves: Remember the importance of your own example to the younger generation!

V26 did not Solomon... sin by these things: Solomon was of Judah, and had been endowed with great wisdom and tremendous responsibilities. His sin had far-reaching effects: 1 Kings 11:1-40; Eccles. 7:26.

no King like him: Hence his suitability as an example.

beloved of his God: 2 Sam. 12:24.

King over all Israel: 1 Kings 4:1.

V27 shall we then hearken unto you: They appear to have argued their case against Nehemiah, strongly defending their views. He is saying: "Shall we listen to your fleshly reasoning and repeat Solomon's folly, with an equally disastrous result?"

V28 one of the sons of Joiada: Joiada himself had been influenced by his father, Eliashib - now his son is found defiantly confronting Nehemiah, and challenging his right to implement the reforms! He was supported by other priests (V29) - thus there was revolt and division.

son-in-law to Sanballat: Thus the family of Eliashib was connected through marriage with both Tobiah and Sanballat! Cp. 6:17-19.

therefore I chased him from me: Nehemiah banished him from Jerusalem. Josephus says that this man was Manasseh, and that he fled to Samaria, where Sanballat built the Samaritan Temple at Gerizim, and made Manasseh the high priest!

V29: A REWARD FOR THE FAITHFUL PRIESTS!

V29 Remember them: Whilst Nehemiah and his associates will be remembered for their faithfulness (V31) these false brethren will be remembered for their rejection of the Truth, and for their opposition to Nehemiah. Cp. 6:14; 2 Tim. 4:14.

they have defiled: Heb. gâal. Almost identical to the Hebrew word for "redeem". Here, the word means "to free, to repudiate". Thus Nehemiah is saying that these brethren refused to be bound by God's way; they repudiated the path of truth, and "hardened their necks" (9:17). Cp. Mal. 2:1-8.

Vv.30-31: EFFECTIVE REFORMATION, AND FINAL WORD!

V30 thus cleansed I them: Not those of V29, who were unrepentant reprobates. (2 Tim. 3:8-9, cp. V14-17; Tit.1:16). This verse is most significant, because it is the last recorded act in the Old Testament. The Temple was cleansed; true worship restored; the priests and people separated and dedicated; rebellious priests expelled from Jerusalem. A great foreshadowing of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

appointed the wards: I arranged the duties of the priests and Levites" (Moff.).

V31 the wood offering: See notes 10: 34-35. A vital Law; without it the Temple services could not continue.

Remember me, O my God, for good: A characteristic conclusion. The final note in Nehemiah's diary is a brief prayer to Yahweh, expressing his faith, and pleading for divine mercy. Eleven of his prayers are recorded in this diary: 1:4-11; 2:4; 4:4, 9; 5:19; 6:9, 14; 13:14, 22, 29, 31. His mind, as he penned these final words, was characteristically upon Yahweh, the Great and Mighty God of Israel, in whom he trusted.

CONCLUSION:

Nehemiah had lived in ease, luxury, and affluence in the Court of Persia - and he left it all to serve Yahweh and his people. Like Moses, he chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt : for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward." (Heb. 11:25-26)

His great principle of faith was "pray for the peace of Jerusalem - they shall prosper that love thee" (Ps. 122:6). Nehemiah so loved - and will so prosper, in the Age to come! Together with other worthies of the Faith, he will sing the other words of that glorious Psalm: "Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem!" (V2). Nehemiah sacrificed everything for the grand ideal in which he so earnestly believed - and Yahweh looked upon the desire of his heart, and granted him his prayers.
May it be so with each one of us!

Thus, for manifesting qualities of selfless dedication, faithful action, and prayerful humility before Yahweh, Nehemiah stands as one of the finest examples in all history.

Ps. 106: 1-5; 2 Tim. 4: 7-8; 2 Cor. 4:17,18,15.
