~The Book of Ezra ~

1. Introduction to Ezra

   a. Ezra is a continuation of the book of Chronicles

   b. Ezra 1:1-2; 2 Chr 36:22-23 are very similar and gives the indication that Ezra is the author of both books

> *Ezr 1:1 ¶ Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, 2 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.*
>
> *2Ch 36:22 ¶ Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, 23 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The LORD his God be with him, and let him go up.*

   c. This book was writing somewhere around 430b.c.

   d. Purposes of the Book:

      A) It shows that God keeps His promises

         1) God fulfilled His promise to restore his exiled people to their land and how He did it.

         2) The rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem

         3) The restoring of the Temple worship according to the law of Moses

         4) The perseverance of the restored people.

            a) Ezra is trying to keep the people from lapsing back into Heathenism & Idolatry

            b) He does this through forbidding them to inter-marry

            c) Marrying right is essential for strong spirituality

            d) Deu 7:1-6

De 7:1 ¶ When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; 2 And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: 3 Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. 4 For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. 5 But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire. 6 For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. 14:2; 1 Peter 2:9

B) God accomplishes this through 3 Heathen monarchs

1) Cyrus

2) Darius I

3) Artaxerxes I

C) God also used 3 chosen men among the Israelites

1) Ezra

2) Zerubbabel

3) Jeshua

e. Background of the Book

A) Ezra means "Help, aide" – Comes from a verb meaning to surround or enclose; to protect, as a wall

B) Jewish tradition says that Ezra assembled the books of the Old Testament which were written before his time to comprise the Hebrew Canon of the Scriptures.

C) His name is linked by tradition to the Pharisees, particularly to the group of them called Scribes

1) Ezra was a Scribe and a Priest

2) The scribe, in the Old Testament times, were the back to the bible conservatives

D) The title of the book comes obviously from the main character's name: Ezra

E) 3 Carrying away into captivity

1) 606 B.C. – Daniel

2) 596 B.C. – Ezekiel

3) 586 B.C.

F) 3 Returns from captivity

1) 538 B.C. – Zerubbabel returns with 50,000 to rebuild the temple (Ezra 2:64-65)

2) 458 B.C. – Ezra returns to reestablish the law and temple worship

3) 444 B.C. – Nehemiah and the final return to rebuild the walls of the City

f. FROM DAD'S MATERIAL

A) Change in language:

1) Most of the book is written in Hebrew, but some of the book (4:8-6:18) were written in Aramaic (the language of the Persians)

B) Archeological support for the book

1) Scholars in the early 20th century denied the section of Ezra 4

g. Keys to the Book of Ezra

A) Key Words: Restoration; The house of the Lord

B) Key Chapter: Ezra 6 – The completion of the Temple

C) Key Verse: Ezra 7:9-10

> *Ezr 7:9 For upon the first day of the first month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him. 10 For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.*

D) Key Phrase: The Word of the Lord (1:1; 9:4)

h. The message of the book:

A) For all men always to accept the power of the Word of God in their lives and in the nation as well

B) His message covered the: Religious, Social, & Civil lives of the people who returned from exile

i. Ezra, The Man (6 things)

A) Man of Faith

1) Psa 66:18

Ps 66:18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:

2) Pro 28:13

Pr 28:13 ¶ He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

3) Isa 59:1-2

Isa 59:1 ¶ Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: 2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

B) Man of Prayer

1) He confessed the sins of the people and saught God's help (Ezra 9:5)

Ezr 9:5 ¶ And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the LORD my God,

2) Ezra 10:1

Ezr 10:1 ¶ Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore.

C) Man that was Trustworthy

1) Scene in the treasures granted him by Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:13-26)

Ezr 7:13 I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and of his priests and Levites, in my realm, which are minded of their own freewill to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee. 14 Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king, and of his seven counsellors, to enquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which is in thine hand; 15 And to carry the silver and gold, which the king and his counsellors have freely offered unto the God of Israel, whose habitation is in Jerusalem, 16 And all the silver and gold that thou canst find in all the province of Babylon, with the freewill offering of the people, and of the priests, offering willingly for the house of their God which is in Jerusalem: 17 That thou mayest buy speedily with this money bullocks, rams, lambs, with their meat offerings and their drink offerings, and offer them upon

the altar of the house of your God which is in Jerusalem. 18 And whatsoever shall seem good to thee, and to thy brethren, to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, that do after the will of your God. 19 The vessels also that are given thee for the service of the house of thy God, those deliver thou before the God of Jerusalem. 20 And whatsoever more shall be needful for the house of thy God, which thou shalt have occasion to bestow, bestow it out of the king's treasure house. 21 And I, even I Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the treasurers which are beyond the river, that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, it be done speedily, 22 Unto an hundred talents of silver, and to an hundred measures of wheat, and to an hundred baths of wine, and to an hundred baths of oil, and salt without prescribing how much. 23 Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven: for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons? 24 Also we certify you, that touching any of the priests and Levites, singers, porters, Nethinims, or ministers of this house of God, it shall not be lawful to impose toll, tribute, or custom, upon them. 25 And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that is in thine hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know them not. 26 And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment.

D) Man of Moral Courage

1) He had the courage to make those who had married foreign wives put them away (Ezra 10:5, 16)

Ezr 10:5 Then arose Ezra, and made the chief priests, the Levites, and all Israel, to swear that they should do according to this word. And they sware.

Ezr 10:16 And the children of the captivity did so. And Ezra the priest, with certain chief of the fathers, after the house of their fathers, and all of them by their names, were separated, and sat down in the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter.

E) Man with Respect for God's Word

1) Honored it by studying and obeying it (Ezra 7:10; Nehemiah 8:2-8)

Ne 8:2 And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. 3 And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law. 4 And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, on his right

hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam. 5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up: 6 And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground. 7 Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place. 8 So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.

F) His greatest work was to restore the Word of God to the hearts and Lives of the People

1) Psa 119:11

Ps 119:11 ¶ Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

2) Nehemiah rebuilt the wall with perishable materials to pretect the people from the heathen.

Ezra built them up spiritually from within, with the eternal word of God, to protect them from sin

.. Outline of the Book

a. The Return under Zerubbabel (Ezra 1-6)

A) The Decree of Cyrus (1:1-4)

Dedicated

B) The Determination of the Jews to carry out the decree (1:5-11)

C) The Departure of the Jews to fulfill the decree (2:1-70)

D) The Determination of the Jews to carry out the decree (3:1-13)

E) The Disruption of the Work of the Decree (4:1-5:17)

F) The Discovery of the Decree of Cyrus (6:1-22)

b. The Return under Ezra (Ezra 7-10)

A) Ezra's Commission by Artaxerxes (7:1-28)

B) Ezra's Company (8:1-36)

C) Ezra's Communication with God (9:1-15)

D) Ezra's Commitment to God (10:1-44)

3. Lessons Learned From the Book

a. *God is the God of the 2nd Chance*

b. *Rejecting God's Laws Carry Consequences*

A) The children of Israel went into Captivity because of their rejection and the law of God and Idolatry (Jer. 8:9)

> *Jer 8:9 The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them?*

B) Blessings from Captivity

1) Eliminate Idolatry

2) Increase Zeal for God

3) Increase Zeal for the land of Judah

4) Increase Zeal for the Temple

5) Instill within them a determination to Serve God faithfully

c. *It Matters Whom You Marry*

A) Counseling points on Marriage

1) It is better not to marry than to burn (Joshua Day)

B) During Ezra 6 and 7, 58 years transpire (essentially the time that Esther takes place)

C) During this time, many of the Jews married non-Jewish people against God's approval

d. *God expects obedience regardless of the consequences*

A) Situations were sometimes bad for the offspring of the sinful marriages

B) You don't ignore God's word because of the consequences

e. *The sorrow that sin always brings (Ezra 9:13-14)*

> *Ezr 9:13 And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou* ***our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve****, and hast given us such deliverance as this; 14 Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldest not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?*

A) **SERMON**: Our God Has Punished Us Less Than Our Iniquities Deserve

1) Define "Deserve

f. *Divine Providence in the book*

A) *Jer 25:12*

Jer 25:12 And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations.

B) *Jer 29:10*

Jer 29:10 For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.

C) *Isa 44:8; 45:1*

Isa 44:8 Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any

Isa 45:1 ¶ Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut;.

D) *See Clayton Winters – Ezra, Nehemiah & Esther (Pg. 22) [Chronology of Ezra]*

4. The Story of the Captivity & Restoration in 10 R's

a. Retribution

b. Remembrance

c. Repentance

d. Return

e. Resettlement

f. Rebuilding

g. Regression

h. Revival

i. Reformation

j. Relief

j. The book of Ezra covers approximately 78 years without the 58 year break between Ezra 6 & 7, but 136 years total.

I. Ezra 1

A. The Return under Zerubbabel (Ezra 1-6)

1. (1:1-4)

Ezr 1:1 ¶ Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, 2 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. 3 Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. 4 And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.

a. "and put it also in writing" – This will come to play later on

b. What about the argument of the Calvinist?

A) Their argument takes away the Omniscience of God

B) God said concerning Judas Iscariot that it was better than he had never been born, why then did he allow it to take place?

C) Any person who lives a sinful life and defies God, it would be better that they had never been born

D) You only have two choices: Either you have God making our decisions for us, or you have God giving us free moral agencies.

E) For God to give us the <u>*choice*</u> of going to Heaven, God had to give us the <u>*choice*</u> of going to Hell

2. Concerning Cyrus (See Winters, pg. 2)

3. "Proclamation" – From Hebrew word "Abar" – Meaning to pass over, pass through, or pass along. 1. It is used of captors walking over the bodies of their prisoners (Isa 51:23). 2. The Flood waters covering the Earth (Isa 54:9). 3. Something passing back and forth (Eze. 35:7; Zec. 7:14). Thus the word of Freedom from the Word of God flowed back and forth through the land, but furthermore, it was put into writing, a fact that would later come very important when the legality of their work on the temple was challenged.

Isa 51:23 But I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee; which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over: and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over.

Isa 54:9 For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee.

Eze 35:7 Thus will I make mount Seir most desolate, and cut off from it him that passeth out and him that returneth.

Zec 7:14 But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate.

The Book of Ezra

. Ezra 1 - The Decree of Cyrus

A. Eze 35:7; Zec 7:14

B. (1:1-4) - The Decree of Cyrus

> *Ezr 1:1 ¶ Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, 2 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. 3 Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. 4 And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.*

1. Isaiah had prophesied concerning Cyrus 200 years before he was born
   44.28 - 45.1

C. (1:5-6)

> *Ezr 1:5 ¶ Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem. 6 And all they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered.*

1. Chief - Hebrew rosh - This Word is Used:
   a. Mountain Peaks - Gen 5
   b. Tops of towers - Gen 11:4
   c. Heights of stars - Job 22:12
   d. Leaders of families - Exo 6:14
   e. Chief Priests - 2 Kings 25:18
   f. Here - Men of High standing and influence (1 Kings 24:14)
2. Levites - Exo 13:2; Num 3:13; Num 8:13, 23
3. How did God move the spirits of the Levites?

a. Through His word

b. 3 Prophets concerning the return

A) Jer 29:1-10 - Jeremiah's letter to the captives concerning their captivity

B) Ezekiel - Ezek 14:1; 37:1-14

C) Daniel

D. (1:7-11) - The Vessels of the House of the Lord

Ezr 1:7 Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods; 8 Even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah. 9 And this is the number of them: thirty chargers of gold, a thousand chargers of silver, nine and twenty knives, 10 Thirty basons of gold, silver basons of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand. 11 All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Sheshbazzar bring up with them of the captivity that were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem.

1. There is an apparent discrepancy between the numbers in Ezra and Nehemiah (*See Clayton Winters on Ezra, Nehemiah & Esther for ideas and thoughts concerning this*)

2. As long as other valid explanations are possible, it is solved in regards to a discrepancy

II. Ezra 2 - The Departure of the Jews to Carry out the Decree

A. (2:1-63) - The List of Returning Captives

Ezr 2:1 ¶ Now these are the children of the province that went up out of the captivity, of those which had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon, and came again unto Jerusalem and Judah, every one unto his city; 2 Which came with Zerubbabel: Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel: 3 The children of Parosh, two thousand an hundred seventy and two. 4 The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two. 5 The children of Arah, seven hundred seventy and five. 6 The children of Pahathmoab, of the children of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred and twelve. 7 The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. 8 The children of Zattu, nine hundred forty and five. 9 The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and threescore. 10 The children of Bani, six hundred forty and two. 11 The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty and three. 12 The children of Azgad, a thousand two hundred twenty and two. 13 The children of Adonikam, six hundred sixty and six. 14 The children of Bigvai, two thousand fifty and six. 15 The children of Adin, four hundred fifty and four. 16 The children of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety and eight. 17 The children of Bezai, three hundred twenty and three. 18 The children of Jorah, an hundred and twelve. 19 The children of Hashum, two hundred twenty

and three. 20 The children of Gibbar, ninety and five. 21 The children of Bethlehem, an hundred twenty and three. 22 The men of Netophah, fifty and six. 23 The men of Anathoth, an hundred twenty and eight. 24 The children of Azmaveth, forty and two. 25 The children of Kirjatharim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty and three. 26 The children of Ramah and Gaba, six hundred twenty and one. 27 The men of Michmas, an hundred twenty and two. 28 The men of Bethel and Ai, two hundred twenty and three. 29 The children of Nebo, fifty and two. 30 The children of Magbish, an hundred fifty and six. 31 The children of the other Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. 32 The children of Harim, three hundred and twenty. 33 The children of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred twenty and five. 34 The children of Jericho, three hundred forty and five. 35 The children of Senaah, three thousand and six hundred and thirty. 36 ¶ The priests: the children of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred seventy and three. 37 The children of Immer, a thousand fifty and two. 38 The children of Pashur, a thousand two hundred forty and seven. 39 The children of Harim, a thousand and seventeen. 40 The Levites: the children of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the children of Hodaviah, seventy and four. 41 The singers: the children of Asaph, an hundred twenty and eight. 42 The children of the porters: the children of Shallum, the children of Ater, the children of Talmon, the children of Akkub, the children of Hatita, the children of Shobai, in all an hundred thirty and nine. 43 The Nethinims: the children of Ziha, the children of Hasupha, the children of Tabbaoth, 44 The children of Keros, the children of Siaha, the children of Padon, 45 The children of Lebanah, the children of Hagabah, the children of Akkub, 46 The children of Hagab, the children of Shalmai, the children of Hanan, 47 The children of Giddel, the children of Gahar, the children of Reaiah, 48 The children of Rezin, the children of Nekoda, the children of Gazzam, 49 The children of Uzza, the children of Paseah, the children of Besai, 50 The children of Asnah, the children of Mehunim, the children of Nephusim, 51 The children of Bakbuk, the children of Hakupha, the children of Harhur, 52 The children of Bazluth, the children of Mehida, the children of Harsha, 53 The children of Barkos, the children of Sisera, the children of Thamah, 54 The children of Neziah, the children of Hatipha. 55 The children of Solomon's servants: the children of Sotai, the children of Sophereth, the children of Peruda, 56 The children of Jaalah, the children of Darkon, the children of Giddel, 57 The children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattil, the children of Pochereth of Zebaim, the children of Ami. 58 All the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon's servants, were three hundred ninety and two. 59 And these were they which went up from Telmelah, Telharsa, Cherub, Addan, and Immer: but they could not shew their father's house, and their seed, whether they were of Israel: 60 The children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred fifty and two. 61 And of the children of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai; which took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called after their name: 62 These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood. 63 And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim.

1. Vs. 3-19 - By Family

2. Vs. 20-35 - By Locality

3. Vs. 36-39 - The Priests

4. Vs. 40-42 - The Levites

5. Vs. 43-54 - Nethinims

   a. Transliterated Hebrew term meaning "the ones given"

   b. The Levites were all Nethinims in a general sense (Num 8:19)

   c. Others also were occasionally to this service (Num 31:40, 41, 47; Jos 9:23)

   d. Those mentioned here had descended from those appointed by David (Erza 8:20)

6. Vs. 55-58 - The Sons of Solomon's servants

   a. 1 Kings 9:20-21 - Conquered Canaanite population

   b. It appears these people had remained a distinct group even in captivity

7. Vs. 59-63 - Those unable to establish their genealogy

   a. Vs. 62 - There is a need to *purge* the church through Church Discipline

   b. We are afraid to withdraw from those who are unfaithful in order to keep the Word of the Lord

   c. **SERMON**: THE PURGING OF GOD

      A) (1 Cor 5; 2 The 3)

      B) The Priesthood of God must be pure and therefore you cannot be born in any other "tribe" than the priestly tribe of God

B. (2:64-70)

> *Ezr 2:64 ¶ The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore, 65 Beside their servants and their maids, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and there were among them two hundred singing men and singing women. 66 Their horses were seven hundred thirty and six; their mules, two hundred forty and five; 67 Their camels, four hundred thirty and five; their asses, six thousand seven hundred and twenty. 68 And some of the chief of the fathers, when they came to the house of the LORD which is at Jerusalem, offered freely for the house of God to set it up in his place: 69 They gave after their ability unto the treasure of the work threescore and one thousand drams of gold, and five thousand pound of silver, and one hundred priests' garments. 70 So the priests, and the Levites, and some of the people, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, dwelt in their cities, and all Israel in their cities.*

1. Urim & Thummim - Lights & Perfections = Placed on the garment of the High Priest for

judgments.

2. Vs. 64-67 - Emphasis on Unity (Whole congregation together)

3. Reason for differences in numbering

   a. Represent numbering from different times

   b. The original documents damaged

   c. Copyist error

   d. Some method of counting that, if fully understood, would harmonize the accounts

III. Ezra 3 - The Determination of the Jews to Carry out the Decree

A. (3:1-7)

> *Ezr 3:1 ¶ And when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem. 2 Then stood up Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God. 3 And they set the altar upon his bases; for fear was upon them because of the people of those countries: and they offered burnt offerings thereon unto the LORD, even burnt offerings morning and evening. 4 They kept also the feast of tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required; 5 And afterward offered the continual burnt offering, both of the new moons, and of all the set feasts of the LORD that were consecrated, and of every one that willingly offered a freewill offering unto the LORD. 6 From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt offerings unto the LORD. But the foundation of the temple of the LORD was not yet laid. 7 They gave money also unto the masons, and to the carpenters; and meat, and drink, and oil, unto them of Zidon, and to them of Tyre, to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea of Joppa, according to the grant that they had of Cyrus king of Persia.*

1. They offered sacrifices according to that which was written

2. It takes about 4 months to travel from Babylon to Jerusalem (Ezra 4:9)

3. They kept the feast of the Tabernacle *as it was written*

4. There can be no restoration without "It is written"

5. Emphasis of Divine Revelation

6. We need to give according to as God has prospered us

7. Vs. 3

   a. Though fear had come upon them, they set the alter on bases

   b. They were attempting to set it back on the original *foundation* where it was in Solomon's Temple

B. (3:8-13)

> *Ezr 3:8 ¶ Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, began Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the remnant of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all they that were come out of the captivity unto Jerusalem; and appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to set forward the work of the house of the LORD. 9 Then stood Jeshua with his sons and his brethren, Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together, to set forward the workmen in the house of God: the sons of Henadad, with their sons and their brethren the Levites. 10 And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the LORD, after the ordinance of David king of Israel. 11 And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. 12 But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy: 13 So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.*

1. Vs. 10-ff - An appreciation toward God

2. Many of the people who had seen the first temple wept when the foundations of the Temple was laid.

3. The foundation of this temple was laid in the same month as the first one that Solomon built (1 Kings 6:1)

4. What the people didn't realize was that this temple would be blessed with the most glorious presence of all, God in the Flesh (John 1:1-2; Mark 11:1-11; Eph 2:21-22)

5. The mistake was that they were thinking purely physical instead of the spiritual

IV. Ezra 4 – **The Disruption of the Work of the Decree**

A. Seriousness of this: ***If the Devil can disrupt this, he can destroy God's ultimate plan of Redemption***!

B. (4:1-5) – The Adversaries appear

> *Ezr 4:1 ¶ Now when the* ***adversaries*** *of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the LORD God of Israel; 2 Then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither. 3 But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the LORD God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us. 4 Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, 5 And hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.*

1. Vs. 1-2
   a. They do not appear, at first, to be adversaries
   b. Adversary = Those who hold us back, tie us up, keep us from the work of God that we must be doing
   c. SEEK – What did Isaiah say about seeking the Lord while he may be found
   d. How many members of the body of Christ would have just invited them to come right on in.
2. Vs. 3 - The people responded with "No"
   a. Now they have a fight on their hands
   b. Wouldn't it be better to just go along to get along?
3. Vs. 4-6
   a. The problems begin
   b. They kept seeking to cause problems all the way through the reign of Cyrus, Darius and into the reign of Ahasuerus
   c. During the reign of Ahasuerus, they even wrote an accusation against them
   d. Focus: **REMAIN STRONG WHEN THE FORCES GATHER AGAINST YOU**

e. Sometimes, the adversary outworks the people they're working against

f. Never let the Devil's children out-work the children of God

I. Ezra 4 – Disruption of the Work of the Decree

A. (4:1-6) – Continued

1. Vs. 2 – These people were polytheistic
2. If they believed at this time that the God of the Israelites was the "God in charge" at this time, then that is who they would have sought.
3. Vs. 5 – They wanted to help until they were rejected and then they wanted to hinder.
4. SERMON: How Do You React When Your Help Is Turned Down [Your View of God is Important]
5. They actually paid "counselors" (lawyers) to do anything they could to slow down and stop the work of God
6. You don't have this problem if the people had been driven out of the land to begin with (Jud. 2)
7. Rom 1:28

> *Ro 1:28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;*

8. When your concept is false, then your attitude of God will be wrong, your truth (morals) will be wrong and then your living will be wrong.
9. There is not a point to which you cannot go if you are being deceived by sin and are hardening your heart (Heb 3:12-13)

> *Heb 3:12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. 13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

B. (4:7-16)

> *Ezr 4:7 And in the days of Artaxerxes wrote Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of their companions, unto Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the writing of the letter was written in the Syrian tongue, and interpreted in the Syrian tongue. 8 Rehum the chancellor and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king in this sort: 9 Then wrote Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their companions; the*

Dinaites, the Apharsathchites, the Tarpelites, the Apharsites, the Archevites, the Babylonians, the Susanchites, the Dehavites, and the Elamites, 10 And the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Asnappar brought over, and set in the cities of Samaria, and the rest that are on this side the river, and at such a time. 11 This is the copy of the letter that they sent unto him, even unto Artaxerxes the king; Thy servants the men on this side the river, and at such a time. 12 Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came up from thee to us are come unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and the bad city, and have set up the walls thereof, and joined the foundations. 13 Be it known now unto the king, that, if this city be builded, and the walls set up again, then will they not pay toll, tribute, and custom, and so thou shalt endamage the revenue of the kings. 14 Now because we have maintenance from the king's palace, and it was not meet for us to see the king's dishonour, therefore have we sent and certified the king; 15 That search may be made in the book of the records of thy fathers: so shalt thou find in the book of the records, and know that this city is a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces, and that they have moved sedition within the same of old time: for which cause was this city destroyed. 16 We certify the king that, if this city be builded again, and the walls thereof set up, by this means thou shalt have no portion on this side the river.

1. Vs. 12 – The contradiction between their original statements and their actions

C. (4:17-24)

Ezr 4:17 ¶ Then sent the king an answer unto Rehum the chancellor, and to Shimshai the scribe, and to the rest of their companions that dwell in Samaria, and unto the rest beyond the river, Peace, and at such a time. 18 The letter which ye sent unto us hath been plainly read before me. 19 And I commanded, and search hath been made, and it is found that this city of old time hath made insurrection against kings, and that rebellion and sedition have been made therein. 20 There have been mighty kings also over Jerusalem, which have ruled over all countries beyond the river; and toll, tribute, and custom, was paid unto them. 21 Give ye now commandment to cause these men to cease, and that this city be not builded, until another commandment shall be given from me. 22 Take heed now that ye fail not to do this: why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings? 23 Now when the copy of king Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum, and Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews, and made them to cease by force and power. 24 Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

II. Ezra 5 – **Disruption of the Work of the Decree (continued)**

A. (5:1-2) – The Divine Catalyst

Ezr 5:1 ¶ Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them. 2 Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of

Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem: and with them were the prophets of God helping them.

1. Aug 29, 520 B.C. – Haggai and Zechariah step up to the plate

2. Sep 21, 520 B.C. – Resumes work

3. Haggai's Sermon (Hag 1:1-11)

Hag 1:1 ¶ In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying, 2 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD'S house should be built. 3 Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, 4 Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste? 5 Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. 6 Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. 7 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. 8 Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD. 9 Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house. 10 Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. 11 And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands.

a. You have houses, and God's house lies desolate

b. How many people today are spending more time and money on their physical house but think nothing of the house of the Lord?

c. Zerubbabel & Jeshua rose up and began to build, and the prophets (preachers) helped them!

   A) Paul an example

   B) Jesus (Acts 1:1 – "both to *do* and to *teach*")

B. (5:3-17) – The Official Challenge

Ezr 5:3 ¶ At the same time came to them Tatnai, governor on this side the river, and Shetharboznai, and their companions, and said thus unto them, Who hath commanded you to build this house, and to make up this wall? 4 Then said we unto them after this manner, What are the names of the men that make this building? 5 But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that

they could not cause them to cease, till the matter came to Darius: and then they returned answer by letter concerning this matter. 6 The copy of the letter that Tatnai, governor on this side the river, and Shetharboznai, and his companions the Apharsachites, which were on this side the river, sent unto Darius the king: 7 They sent a letter unto him, wherein was written thus; Unto Darius the king, all peace. 8 Be it known unto the king, that we went into the province of Judea, to the house of the great God, which is builded with great stones, and timber is laid in the walls, and this work goeth fast on, and prospereth in their hands. 9 Then asked we those elders, and said unto them thus, Who commanded you to build this house, and to make up these walls? 10 We asked their names also, to certify thee, that we might write the names of the men that were the chief of them. 11 And thus they returned us answer, saying, We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and build the house that was builded these many years ago, which a great king of Israel builded and set up. 12 But after that our fathers had provoked the God of heaven unto wrath, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house, and carried the people away into Babylon. 13 But in the first year of Cyrus the king of Babylon the same king Cyrus made a decree to build this house of God. 14 And the vessels also of gold and silver of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple that was in Jerusalem, and brought them into the temple of Babylon, those did Cyrus the king take out of the temple of Babylon, and they were delivered unto one, whose name was Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor; 15 And said unto him, Take these vessels, go, carry them into the temple that is in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be builded in his place. 16 Then came the same Sheshbazzar, and laid the foundation of the house of God which is in Jerusalem: and since that time even until now hath it been in building, and yet it is not finished. 17 Now therefore, if it seem good to the king, let there be search made in the king's treasure house, which is there at Babylon, whether it be so, that a decree was made of Cyrus the king to build this house of God at Jerusalem, and let the king send his pleasure to us concerning this matter.

1. Vs. 8 – "fast on" = Diligent – Those who were on the outside looking in could see their diligent work and desire to do the work of God

2. The answer of the Israelites

   a. Vs. 11 – Servants of God building the Temple; Told to return and rebuild

   b. Vs. 12 – The fate of their fathers and the Temple because of Nebuchadnezzar

   c. Vs. 13 – Cyrus issued decree to build this house again

   d. Vs. 14 – Vessels of the Temple brought back

   e. Vs. 16 – Construction continues, but it is not finished

   f. Vs. 17 – The plea for the decree of Cyrus to be searched out

g. The value of written documents

II. Ezra 6 – **The Discovery of the Decree of Cyrus**

A. (6:1-12)

Ezr 6:1 ¶ Then Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in the house of the rolls, where the treasures were laid up in Babylon. 2 And there was found at Achmetha, in the palace that is in the province of the Medes, a roll, and therein was a record thus written: 3 In the first year of Cyrus the king the same Cyrus the king made a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, Let the house be builded, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid; the height thereof threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof threescore cubits; 4 With three rows of ***great*** *stones, and a row of new timber: and* ***let the expenses be given out of the king's house****: 5 And also let the golden and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took forth out of the temple which is at Jerusalem, and brought unto Babylon, be restored, and brought again unto the temple which is at Jerusalem, every one to his place, and place them in the house of God. 6 Now therefore, Tatnai, governor beyond the river, Shetharboznai, and your companions the Apharsachites (Persians – NKJV), which are beyond the river, be ye far from thence: 7 Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his place. 8 Moreover I make a decree what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews for the building of this house of God:* ***that of the king's goods, even of the tribute beyond the river, forthwith expenses be given unto these men, that they be not hindered****. 9 And that which they have need of, both young bullocks, and rams, and lambs, for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the appointment of the priests which are at Jerusalem, let it be given them day by day without fail: 10 That they may offer sacrifices of sweet savours unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons. 11 Also I have made a decree, that whosoever shall alter this word, let timber be pulled down from his house, and being set up, let him be hanged thereon; and let his house be made a dunghill for this. 12 And the God that hath caused his name to dwell there destroy all kings and people, that shall put to their hand to alter and to destroy this house of God which is at Jerusalem. I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with speed. 13 ¶ Then Tatnai, governor on this side the river, Shetharboznai, and their companions, according to that which Darius the king had sent, so they did speedily.*

1. (6:1-5) – Cyrus' Memorandum

   a. Vs. 3-5 – Cyrus' Original Decree

2. (6:6-13) – The Edict of Darius

   a. Darius tells his governors to leave God's people alone

   b. The obedience of Tatnai was <u>*immediate*</u>

c. Vs. 8 – Darius made provision for the building of the house through the taxes of the region

d. (6:11) – Do not alter the decree of the King

e. (6:13) – The Immediacy of obedience

B. (6:14-15) – The Work is Completed

Ezr 6:14 And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia. 15 And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.

1. Assets to carrying out God's work: Cyrus, Darius, Artaxerxes

2. Mar 12, 515 BC – Work Completed

C. (6:16-18) – The Temple is Dedicated

Ezr 6:16 And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy, 17 And offered at the dedication of this house of God an hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and for a sin offering for all Israel, twelve he goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel. 18 And they set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God, which is at Jerusalem; as it is written in the book of Moses.

1. Importance of the sin offering for the Israelites

2. Cleansing of the Temple (Naos) John 2; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19-20

D. (6:19-22) – Victory Celebrated

Ezr 6:19 And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month. 20 For the priests and the Levites were purified together, all of them were pure, and killed the passover for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves. 21 And the children of Israel, which were come again out of captivity, and all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the LORD God of Israel, did eat, 22 And kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the LORD had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

1. Vs. 19 – The Passover observed correctly

2. Vs, 22 - Keeping of the feast of the unleavened bread

3. 2 Cor 6:17

> *2Co 6:17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, 18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*

4. There is a time break in the book of Ezra at this point

BREAKTHROUGH INTO ESTHER

1. Introduction to Esther

   a. Keys to the book of Esther – Frank Dunn

      A) Phrase – "For Such a Time as This"

      B) Chapter – Est. 8 (Give information)

      C) Words – Protection, Providence

      D) Verse – (4:14, 16; 8:17)

      E) Message: The only biblical portrait of the Jews that decided to remain in Persia instead of going to Palestine

      F) "If the name of God is not here, His finger is" - Matthew Henry

      G) 1 Tim 2:9-12; 1 Pet 3:4

      H) Queen Vashti an example of modesty to all women

   b. The *Megilloth* is a group of writings which are used in the Jewish liturgical year

      A) Song of Solomon

      B) Ruth

      C) Lamentations

      D) Ecclesiastes

      E) Esther

   c. What does the name Esther mean? *Persian – A Star; Hebrew (Hadassah) – myrtle*

   d. The Law of the Medes & Persians – once a law was written, it could not be changed

e. Lessons from each chapter (yours – From each chapter and book)

f. Know the 3 feasts ("another outline centers around the feasts")

2. Author & Date of writing:

a. Unknown, possibly Ezra or Nehemiah

b. Date: unknown

c. Story: the events of a jewish woman who became the queen of Persia

d. Emphasis: The Preservation of the Jewish nation

e. Covers: 484-465 BC (approximately)

Outline by 3 Feasts – Ahasuerus, Esther, & Purim

(Est 1 & 2 – The Feast of Ahasuerus; 3 & 4 – Feast of Esther; 5-10 – Feast of Purim)

~ Esther ~

I. Esther 1

A. (1:1-9)

Es 1:1 ¶ Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, (this is Ahasuerus which reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces:) 2 That in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace, 3 In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him: 4 When he shewed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty many days, even an hundred and fourscore days. 5 And when these days were expired, the king made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, seven days, in the court of the garden of the king's palace; 6 Where were white, green, and blue, hangings, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble: the beds were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black, marble. 7 And they gave them drink in vessels of gold, (the vessels being diverse one from another,) and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king. 8 And the drinking was according to the law; none did compel: for so the king had appointed to all the officers of his house, that they should do according to every man's pleasure. 9 Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women in the royal house which belonged to king Ahasuerus.

1. Vs. 1 – Ahasuerus was reigning over 127 provinces of the Medo-Persian empire
2. Vs. 3 – Vashti banished from the kingdom in the 3rd year
3. Vs. 4 – The feast was to display the glories & powers of Ahasuerus
4. Vs. 5-9 – A banquet for the citizens
   a. Vs. 5 – Feast = '*mishteh*' in Hebrew meant a drinking feast
   b. Vs. 9 – The Queen was having a feast (drinking feast) for the women as well

B. (1:10-12) – The invitation of the king and refusal of the queen

Es 1:10 ¶ On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king, 11 To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to

shew the people and the princes her beauty: for she was fair to look on. 12 But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by his chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him.

1. Implication was that he wanted her to come wearing the crown only

C. (1:13-22) – Dealing with the influence of Vashti

Es 1:13 Then the king said to the wise men, which knew the times, (for so was the king's manner toward all that knew law and judgment: 14 And the next unto him was Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, which saw the king's face, and which sat the first in the kingdom;) 15 What shall we do unto the queen Vashti according to law, because she hath not performed the commandment of the king Ahasuerus by the chamberlains? 16 And Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the people that are in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus. 17 ***For this deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it shall be reported, The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not.*** *18 Likewise shall the ladies of Persia and Media say this day unto all the king's princes, which have heard of the deed of the queen. Thus shall there arise too much contempt and wrath. 19 If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, That Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she. 20 And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire, (for it is great,) all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small. 21 And the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did according to the word of Memucan: 22 For he sent letters into all the king's provinces, into every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language, that every man should bear rule in his own house, and that it should be published according to the language of every people.*

1. Vs. 16 – Memucan – the one who suggested the response to the Vashti situation

2. Vs. 17 – A little leaven leavens the whole lump
   Jn 11:48; Acts 5:34-39
3. Principle needs to be applied in the church

4. Vs. 19-22 – The Decree of Ahasuerus

   a. "better than she" – more *obedient*

II. Esther 2 – **A Queen Appointed**

A. (2:1-7) – The Queen sought

Es 2:1 ¶ After these things, when the wrath of king Ahasuerus was appeased, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her. 2 Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king: 3 And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, unto the custody of Hege the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women; and let their things for purification be given them: 4 And let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king; and he did so. 5 Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite; 6 Who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away. 7 And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter. Vs. 1-4 – The suggestion to the King

1. Vs. 5 – Mordecai = Son of Jair, Shimei, Kish the Benjamite

   a. Research – who are these people

   b. ACC – Shimei & Kish (descendant and father of Saul)

   1Sa 9:1 ¶ Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power.

   2Sa 16:5 ¶ And when king David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came.

2. Vs. 6 - Jeconiah (Jehoiachin - 2 Kings 24:14-15)

   2Ki 24:14 And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land. 15 And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, and the king's mother, and the king's wives, and his officers, and the mighty of the land, those carried he into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon.

3. Vs. 7 – Proper actions towards orphans (James 1:27)

B. (2:8-11)

Est. 2:8 So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women. 9 And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her her things for

purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens, which were meet to be given her, out of the king's house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women. 10 Esther had not shewed her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not shew it. 11 And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her.

1. Esther brought into the house of the king

2. Vs. 9 – Comparison to the situation of Joseph

3. Mordecai remained daily at the gate to hear concerning what was happening with Esther

   a. It is obvious that he cared a great deal for her

C. (2:12-14)

Est 2:12 Now when every maid's turn was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women, (for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, to wit, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, and with other things for the purifying of the women;) 13 Then thus came every maiden unto the king; whatsoever she desired was given her to go with her out of the house of the women unto the king's house. 14 In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's chamberlain, which kept the concubines: she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she were called by name.

1. (2:15-20)

Est. 2:15 Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her. 16 So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. 17 And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti. 18 Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, even Esther's feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the state of the king. 19 And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai sat in the king's gate. 20 Esther had not yet shewed her kindred nor her people; as Mordecai had charged her: for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him.

2. Vs. 17 – The King chooses Esther as Queen

D. (2:21-23) – The Traitorous Chamberlains

Es 2:21 ¶ In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, ***Bigthan*** *and* ***Teresh****, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus. 22 And the thing was known to Mordecai, who told it unto Esther the queen; and Esther certified the king thereof in Mordecai's name. 23 And when inquisition was made of the matter, it was found out; therefore they were both hanged on a tree: and it was written in the book of the chronicles before the king.*

1. Bigthan & Teresh were chamberlains that sought to kill Ahasuerus

2. "*sitting at the king's gate*" – appointment as a royal officer (judgeship) - Smith

III. Esther 3 (3:1-4:17 – The Plot of Haman)

A. (3:1-6) – Haman made furious

1. (3:1-6) – The Reason for the Plot

Es 3:1 ¶ After these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him. 2 And all the king's servants, that were in the king's gate, bowed, and reverenced Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence. 3 Then the king's servants, which were in the king's gate, said unto Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the king's commandment? 4 Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand: for he had told them that he was a Jew. 5 And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath. 6 And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai.

2. This seems to not be simply honor for the position

But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence --*The obsequious homage of prostration not entirely foreign to the manners of the East, had not been claimed by former viziers; but this minion required that all subordinate officers of the court should bow before him with their faces to the earth. But to Mordecai, it seemed that such an attitude of profound reverence was due only to God. Haman being an Amalekite, one of a doomed and accursed race, was, doubtless, another element in the refusal; and on learning that the recusant was a Jew, whose nonconformity was grounded on religious scruples, the magnitude of the affront appeared so much the greater, as the example of Mordecai would be imitated by all his compatriots. Had the homage been a simple token of civil respect, Mordecai would not have refused it; but the Persian kings demanded a sort of adoration, which, it is well known, even the Greeks reckoned it degradation to express. - (JFB)*

3. Haman was somewhat a prideful person

4. Haman didn't get mad because of the King's law being broken, but instead because his pride was injured
5. We must be obedient to the laws of the land, but we cannot transgress the laws of God.
6. Appearance of doing something to a man that should only be done to God (violation of conscience)

B. (3:7-15) - The Plot of Haman

1. (3:7-11) – The Authority for the Plot

> *Es 3:7 ¶ In the first month, that is, the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar. 8 And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them. 9 If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring it into the king's treasuries. 10 And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews' enemy. 11 And the king said unto Haman, The silver is given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee.*

a. Vs. 8 – the laws of the Jews were significantly different from all the peoples around them
b. Truth mixed with lies is how Haman sought to dissuade the King

2. (3:12-15) – The Implementation of the Plot

> *Est 3:12 Then were the king's scribes called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors that were over every province, and to the rulers of every people of every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language; in the name of king Ahasuerus was it written, and sealed with the king's ring. 13 And the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey. 14 The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, that they should be ready against that day. 15 The posts went out, being hastened by the king's commandment, and the decree was given in Shushan the palace. And the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed.*

a. The death verdict of the Jews signed by Ahasuerus and sent out to all the land.

b. Everything done according to the laws of Medes & Persians

c. Vs. 13 – "sent by posts" – postal system of the Persians was far superior to any other nation in any other time

d. "but the city Shushan was perplexed"

e. Search + Destroy Mission

15. the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed--The completeness of the word-painting in this verse is exquisite. The historian, by a simple stroke, has drawn a graphic picture of an Oriental despot, wallowing with his favorite in sensual enjoyments, while his tyrannical cruelties were rending the hearts and homes of thousands of his subjects. - JFB

The city Shushan was perplexed.] They saw that in a short time, by this wicked measure the whole city would be thrown into confusion; for, although the Jews were the only objects of this decree, yet, as it armed the populace against them, even the Persians could not hope to escape without being spoiled, when a desperate mob had begun to taste of human blood, and enrich themselves with the property of the murdered. Besides, many Persian families had, no doubt, become united by intermarriages with Jewish families, and in such a massacre they would necessarily share the same fate with the Jews. A more impolitic, disgraceful, and cruel measure was never formed by any government; and one would suppose that the king who ordered it must have been an idiot, and the counsellors who advised it must have been madmen. But a despotic government is ever capable of extravagance and cruelty; for as it is the bane of popular freedom and happiness, so is it the disgrace of political wisdom and of all civil institutions. Despotism and tyranny in the state are the most direct curses which insulted justice can well inflict upon a sinful nation. - ACC

IV. Esther 4

A. (4:1-8) – The Reaction to the Plot

Es 4:1 ¶ When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry; 2 And came even before the king's gate: for none might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. 3 And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes. 4 So Esther's maids and her chamberlains came and told it her. Then was the queen exceedingly grieved; and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him: but he received it not. 5 ¶ Then called Esther for Hatach, one of the king's chamberlains, whom he had appointed to attend upon her, and gave him a commandment to Mordecai, to know what it was, and why it was. 6 So Hatach went forth to Mordecai unto the street of the city, which was before the king's

gate. 7 And Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him, and of the sum of the money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the Jews, to destroy them. 8 Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was given at Shushan to destroy them, to shew it unto Esther, and to declare it unto her, and to charge her that she should go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him, and to make request before him for her people.

1. Vs. 1-3 – The situation of the people

   a. Vs. 1 – Mordecai cried out and told all that was going on to the whole city

   b. Vs. 3 – a great mourning of the people . Can good Come from Evil ?

2. Vs. 4 – Esther sends raiment to Mordecai

3. Vs. 5-6 – Esther sends to Mordecai to find out why he is in sackcloth & ashes

4. Vs. 7 – Mordecai sends to Esther (through Hatach) the information concerning this situation that is going on

5. Vs. 8 – Mordecai sends to Esther to go to the king on the Jews behalf

B. (4:9-17) – Counterplot

Es 4:9 And Hatach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai. 10 Again Esther spake unto Hatach, and gave him commandment unto Mordecai; 11 All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days. 12 And they told to Mordecai Esther's words. 13 Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. 14 For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this? 15 Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer, 16 Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish. 17 So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.

1. Vs. 11 – The law of the Persians concerning coming to the King

   a. SERMON: The Blessedness of Prayer (thought: We don't have a King that is unapproachable – Heb 12:18-ff)

2. "***who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?***" – God's providence
   a. The light seems to come on in Mordecai's mind
   b. If one fails to do the service of God, you sin
   c. God will take care of His people one way or another, but if you fail to do it, it will be held accountable to you
3. Sermon: "If I perish, I perish" (4:16) – rev 2:10; Give me liberty or give me death; - We need to have convictions that are this strong, but they need to be convictions for God

I. Esther 5 – The Plan of Esther

A. (5:1-8)

Es 5:1 ¶ Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house. 2 And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre. 3 Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom. 4 And Esther answered, If it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him. 5 Then the king said, Cause Haman to make haste, that he may do as Esther hath said. So the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared. 6 And the king said unto Esther at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed. 7 Then answered Esther, and said, My petition and my request is; 8 If I have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to perform my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them, and I will do to morrow as the king hath said.

1. Vs. 1-3 – The promise by the king

   a. These promises were very open-ended (up to ½ of the kingdom)

   b. She found favor in his sight

2. Vs. 4-8 – The Plot of Esther

   a. Why did she do this? Haman had ordered the execution of all the Jews

   b. See Winters pg 185

B. (5:9-14)

Es 5:9 ¶ Then went Haman forth that day joyful and with a glad heart: but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai. 10 Nevertheless Haman refrained himself: and when he came home, he sent and called for his friends, and Zeresh his wife. 11 And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king. 12 Haman said moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but myself; and to morrow am I invited unto her also with the king. 13 Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate. 14 Then said Zeresh his wife and all his friends unto him, Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high, and to morrow speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged

thereon: then go thou in merrily with the king unto the banquet. And the thing pleased Haman; and he caused the gallows to be made.

1. Vs. 9-10 The Pride

   a. Mordecai angers Haman by not bowing down to him

   b. Pride – Pro 16:18; Song of Solomon 8:6
      16:16, 17, 19

2. Vs. 11-13 – The Price

   a. With everything going right, the only thing he can think of is the one thing he doesn't have

3. Vs. 14 – The Pleasure of being pleased. Gallows 50 cubits. 70 ft or more. (1) To show his utter contempt for the irreverent Mordecai (2) make his execution visible to all.

   a. They just simply told him what he wanted to hear

   b. In his hate, he signed his death warrant

   c. He was simply doing what would bring him the most pleasure

II. Esther 6 – The Pronouncement of the King (through 8:2)

A. (6:1-3) – Providence and an act of the Past

Es 6:1 ¶ On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king. 2 And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus. 3 And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him.

1. Lesson: Mordecai didn't do what he did for what he could get out of it

2. We may do something good for someone and it may take a very long time before they show their gratitude, or it may never happen

3. Power of the written word – Cyrus (Ezra 1; 6)

4. God doesn't Forget

5. What do you do when you can't sleep at night?

B. (6:4-11)

Es 6:4 ¶ And the king said, Who is in the court? Now Haman was come into the outward court of the king's house, to speak unto the king to hang Mordecai

on the gallows that he had prepared for him. 5 And the king's servants said unto him, Behold, Haman standeth in the court. And the king said, Let him come in. 6 So Haman came in. And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? Now Haman thought in his heart, ***To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself****? 7 And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delighteth to honour, 8 Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head: 9 And let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour. 10 Then the king said to Haman, Make haste, and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate: let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken. 11 Then took Haman the apparel and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and brought him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour.*

1. Vs. 4-9 – The Parade

   a. Haman may have had a slightly inflated ego ☺

   b. Pride destroys us

   c. If Haman couldn't be settled in his mind before, this is going to tear him up

2. Vs. 10 – The Precision

   a. Everything you've said Haman, go and do to Mordecai

3. Vs. 11 The Proclaimation:

   a. There may be times when God commands us to do things that we don't want to do

   b. Haman appears to be very much a coward

C. (6:12-14) – Haman will not Prevail

Es 6:12 ¶ And Mordecai came again to the king's gate. But Haman hasted to his house mourning, and having his head covered. 13 And Haman told Zeresh his wife and all his friends every thing that had befallen him. Then said his wise men and Zeresh his wife unto him, If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him. 14 And while they were yet talking with him, came the king's chamberlains, and hasted to bring Haman unto the banquet that Esther had prepared.

1. Haman's wife and friends tell him "you will never prevail"

2. The wind of popular opinion changes directions often

III. Esther 7

A. (7:1-8) – The 2nd Banquet

Es 7:1 ¶ So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen. 2 And the king said again unto Esther on the second day at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition, queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? and it shall be performed, even to the half of the kingdom. 3 Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request: 4 For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage. 5 Then the king Ahasuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so? 6 And Esther said, The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman. Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen. 7 ¶ And the king arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath went into the palace garden: and Haman stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen; for he saw that there was evil determined against him by the king. 8 Then the king returned out of the palace garden into the place of the banquet of wine; and Haman was fallen upon the bed whereon Esther was. Then said the king, Will he force the queen also before me in the house? As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face.

1. Vs. 1-4 The Petition:

   a. Esther did not reveal her nationality until this time

   b. Lesson: Timing is Everything

   c. When to Speak + When to listen.

2. Vs. 5-8 – Pleading for his life:

   a. Vs. 7 – The king goes out and calms down before he does anything (in Persian law, when its done, it's done)

   b. Haman is desperate

   c. The king will not view this in a favorable light at all

   d. One was not even supposed to come near a Persian queen

B. (7:9-10) The Prepared Gallows were used:

Es 7:9 And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who

had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. Then the king said, Hang him thereon. 10 So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified.

1. While this was being prepared by much pleasure by Haman, would now be his downfall
2. The Kings Wrath was Now Be Pacified.

IV. Esther 8 – The Protection of the Jews (8:2-9:19)

A. (8:1-2) - Promotion

Es 8:1 ¶ On that day did the king Ahasuerus give the house of Haman the Jews' enemy unto Esther the queen. And Mordecai came before the king; for Esther had told what he was unto her. 2 And the king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.

B. (8:3-14)

Es 8:3 ¶ And Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews. 4 Then the king held out the golden sceptre toward Esther. So Esther arose, and stood before the king, 5 And said, If it please the king, and if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing seem right before the king, and I be pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews which are in all the king's provinces: 6 For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred? 7 Then the king Ahasuerus said unto Esther the queen and to Mordecai the Jew, Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hand upon the Jews. 8 Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring: for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse. 9 Then were the king's scribes called at that time in the third month, that is, the month Sivan, on the three and twentieth day thereof; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded unto the Jews, and to the lieutenants, and the deputies and rulers of the provinces which are from India unto Ethiopia, an hundred twenty and seven provinces, unto every province according to the writing thereof, and unto every people after their language, and to the Jews according to their writing, and according to their language. 10 And he wrote in the king Ahasuerus' name, and sealed it with the king's ring, and sent letters by posts on horseback, and riders on mules, camels, and young dromedaries: 11 Wherein the king granted the Jews which were in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them, both little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey, 12 Upon one day in all the provinces of king Ahasuerus, namely, upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar. 13 The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, and that the Jews should be ready against that day to avenge

themselves on their enemies. 14 So the posts that rode upon mules and camels went out, being hastened and pressed on by the king's commandment. And the decree was given at Shushan the palace.

1. Vs. 3-6 – Persistence

   a. Esther rehashes the situation the Jews are in before the king

2. Vs. 7-8 – The Payoff

   a. In Esther doing the right thing, it paid off

   b. God's providence will prevail

3. Vs. 9-14 – The Published Decree

   a. The kings ring – a sign of acceptance by the king

C. (8:15-17) – Position

Es 8:15 ¶ And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad. 16 The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour. 17 And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.

1. Many proselytes were made because of the glory of the Jews

2. Fear – respect, reverence

3. The plans of the Enemies of God

   a. Haman's plan to be exalted = Mordecai was instead

   b. Haman's plan to kill Mordecai = He swung instead

   c. Haman's plan to kill the Jews = The Jews became recognized and exalted by all the people

V. Esther 9

A. (9:1-4) – The Power

Es 9:1 ¶ Now in the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king's commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them, (though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them;) 2 The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities

throughout all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such as sought their hurt: and no man could withstand them; for the fear of them fell upon all people. 3 And all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the deputies, and officers of the king, helped the Jews; because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them. 4 For Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame went out throughout all the provinces: for this man Mordecai waxed greater and greater.

1. The Jews grew stronger and Mordecai become more powerful as both served God

B. (9:5-10) – The punishment

Es 9:5 Thus the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and slaughter, and destruction, and did what they would unto those that hated them. 6 And in Shushan the palace the Jews slew and destroyed five hundred men. 7 And Parshandatha, and Dalphon, and Aspatha, 8 And Poratha, and Adalia, and Aridatha, 9 And Parmashta, and Arisai, and Aridai, and Vajezatha, 10 The ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews, slew they; but on the spoil laid they not their hand.

C. (9:11-15) – The Posterity of Haman

Es 9:11 On that day the number of those that were slain in Shushan the palace was brought before the king. 12 And the king said unto Esther the queen, The Jews have slain and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the palace, and the ten sons of Haman; what have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? now what is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: or what is thy request further? and it shall be done. 13 Then said Esther, If it please the king, let it be granted to the Jews which are in Shushan to do to morrow also according unto this day's decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged upon the gallows. 14 And the king commanded it so to be done: and the decree was given at Shushan; and they hanged Haman's ten sons. 15 For the Jews that were in Shushan gathered themselves together on the fourteenth day also of the month Adar, and slew three hundred men at Shushan; but on the prey they laid not their hand.

1. "*if it pleases the king*" – Esther is always careful to make sure it is always in accordance with the will of the king
2. Children often have to suffer for their parents mistakes.
3. Importance: "*on the prey they laid not their hand*" – This is important to show that the Jews were not just on a vengeance binge because they're not just plundering people at random

D. (9:16-19) – The Presents

Es 9:16 But the other Jews that were in the king's provinces gathered themselves together, and stood for their lives, and had rest from their enemies,

and slew of their foes seventy and five thousand, but they laid not their hands on the prey, 17 On the thirteenth day of the month Adar; and on the fourteenth day of the same rested they, and made it a day of feasting and gladness. 18 But the Jews that were at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth day thereof, and on the fourteenth thereof; and on the fifteenth day of the same they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness. 19 Therefore the Jews of the villages, that dwelt in the unwalled towns, made the fourteenth day of the month Adar a day of gladness and feasting, and a good day, and of sending portions one to another.

1. A holiday was created to remember the deliverance of God

2. Remember this is taking place mid-way through the book of Ezra

E. (9:20-28) – Purim

Es 9:20 ¶ And Mordecai wrote these things, and sent letters unto all the Jews that were in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, both nigh and far, 21 To stablish this among them, that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same, yearly, 22 As the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day: that they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor. 23 And the Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written unto them; 24 Because Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, that is, the lot, to consume them, and to destroy them; 25 But when Esther came before the king, he commanded by letters that his wicked device, which he devised against the Jews, should return upon his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. 26 Wherefore they called these days Purim after the name of Pur. Therefore for all the words of this letter, and of that which they had seen concerning this matter, and which had come unto them, 27 The Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as joined themselves unto them, so as it should not fail, that they would keep these two days according to their writing, and according to their appointed time every year; 28 And that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; and that these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their seed.

1. "sorrow turning to joy" – (remission of sins) – We should think of this everyday

F. (9:29-32) – Peace

Es 9:29 Then Esther the queen, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew, wrote with all authority, to confirm this second letter of Purim. 30 And he sent the letters unto all the Jews, to the hundred twenty and seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, with words of peace and truth, 31 To confirm these days of Purim in their times appointed, according as Mordecai the Jew and Esther the queen had enjoined them, and as they had decreed for themselves

and for their seed, the matters of the fastings and their cry. 32 And the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim; and it was written in the book.

VI. Esther 10 – Prominence

Es 10:1 ¶ And the king Ahasuerus laid a tribute upon the land, and upon the isles of the sea. 2 And all the acts of his power and of his might, and the declaration of the greatness of Mordecai, whereunto the king advanced him, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia? 3 For Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed.

A. Mordecai, when he received power, used it for the people.

B. He humbled himself, and was exalted

C. Dan 3:30 – Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego – Parallel principle

D. Haman on the other hand, exalted himself and was brought low

NEHEMIAH CHPATER 5

1. Rebuke and Restore.
2. What was the great cry?
3. Who was the cry against and by whom?
4. What was the attitude of Nehemiah about their cry?
5. Is it wrong to be angry?
6. Who was rebuked?
7. What was their answer?
8. How were they to walk and why?
9. What did Nehemiah ask them to leave off?
10. What else did he tell them to do?
11. What was their response?
12. What does the statement "I shook my lap" mean?
13. What did all the congregation say?
14. What had Nehemiah done for 12yrs that preceding governors had not done?
15. Why were the servants of Nehemiah gathered together?
16. How many were at the table of Nehemiah?
17. Nehemiah wanted God to think how upon him?

NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 6

1. Refuses.
2. What did Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem want Nehemiah to do?
3. What did Nehemiah do and say?
4. How many times did the enemies send to Nehemiah?
5. How did the enemies respond?
6. Where did Nehemiah say the false report came from?
7. What were the enemies trying to do?
8. What did Nehemiah ask God for?
9. What was the request of Shemaiah?
10. What was Nehemiah's answer?
11. What New Testament passage is taught from verse 11?
12. Why did Shemaiah make this request?
13. If followed what could be said about Nehemiah?
14. What was Nehemiah's request to God about the ones responsible?
15. Who was the prophetess?
16. What was finished and when?
17. In whose eyes were Nehemiah's enemies cast down?
18. What had they perceived?
19. Who did the nobles send many letters to and why?
20. Tobiah sent letters to Nehemiah in _____.

NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 7

REGISTER FOUND:

1. Who were appointed?

2. Who had charge over Jerusalem?

3. Why?

4. When were the gates of Jerusalem to be opened?

5. The city was large and great but the people were _____ and the houses were not_____.

6. What did God put in Nehemiah's heart?

7. Whose names were in the register?

8. What was the purpose for the register?

9. What happened if they could not find their names in the register?

10. What did the priest stand up with?

11. What did some of the chief of the fathers give to the treasurer?

NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 8

READING:

1. The people gathered as what?
2. What did the people want Ezra to bring?
3. How long did Ezra read?
4. To whom did he read?
5. What did he stand on?
6. What did the people do?
7. Whom did he bless?
8. What did the people do?
9. What was done for the people?
10. What did they say about this day?
11. What were they to do?
12. The people were not to do what?
13. The children of Israel had not done so sense the days of _____.
14. What was the outcome?

NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 9

REVIVAL:

1. Why did the children of assemble?
2. What did the seed of Israel do?
3. What happened upon the stairs of the Levites?
4. What did they say about God?
5. How did the people react?
6. What did they make?
7. How long did God sustain them?
8. What did God do about his promise?
9. What did God's people delight in?
10. What did they do to the prophets?
11. Into whose hands were they delivered?
12. What did they do to them?
13. What did God do about their cry?
14. What did they do after they had rested?
15. How often will God forgive?
16. Why did God testify against them?
17. Because of God's great mercies He did not _____ them.

NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 10

RESOLUTION:

1. Who were separated?
2. What were they to walk in?
3. What were they not to give their daughters to?
4. When were they not to buy victuals?
5. What ordinance did they make for themselves?
6. What did the signatures place the whole nation under?
7. How many put their seal on the covenant?
8. Why did they separate themselves from the Gentiles?
9. What about the expression "and entered into a curse?"
10. How many times is the expression "House of God" used in this chapter?
11. What does it have reference to?
12. Their promised support was specific and involved how many different ways?

NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 11

RESETTLING OF THE CITIES:

1. Where did the rulers dwell?

2. What did the rest of the people do?

3. Why?

4. What was the reaction to the people that offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem?

NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 12

RETURNING OF THE PRIEST AND LEVITES:

1. Who went up with Zerubbalel?
2. What happened at the dedication?
3. Who purified themselves?
4. The joy of Jerusalem was heard_____.
5. Why did Judah rejoice for the priest?

NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 13

THE REFORMS OF NEHEMIAH:

1. What did the law teach about the Ammonites and Moabites?
2. Why?
3. What did they do when they heard the Law?
4. Who was allied unto Tobiah?
5. What had he prepared for Tobiah?
6. Where was the chamber to be located?
7. What did this do to Nehemiah?
8. What did he do with Tobiah's stuff?
9. What did he do to the chamber?
10. What was the condition of the people?
11. What did Nehemiah do?
12. What had been forsaken?
13. What did Nehemiah do with the people?
14. What di Nehemiah ask the Lord to do to him?
15. What did Nehemiah do with the Nobles?
16. What had God done to their fathers because of sin?
17. What had they profaned?
18. Who had the Jews married?
19. What did Nehemiah do to them?
20. Why bring up Solomon?

I. Ezra 7 – **Ezra's Commission by Artaxerxes**

A. (7:1-10) – The Preparation Work-finished by 3-12-515 The work of Malachi

Ezr 7:1 ¶ Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra the son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah, 2 The son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub, 3 The son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth, 4 The son of Zerahiah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki, 5 The son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest: 6 This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him. 7 And there went up some of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, unto Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king. 8 And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. 9 For upon the first day of the first month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him. 10 For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

1. Ezra and the line of Aaron (vs. 1-5)
2. Ezra and the law of the Lord (vs. 6-10) The Work of a Scribe? (Winter pg 37)

   a. Seek = 5 Times – (4:2); (6:21); (7:10); (8:21-22);

   Ezr 4:2 Then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither.

   Ezr 6:21 And the children of Israel, which were come again out of captivity, and all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the LORD God of Israel, did eat,

   Ezr 7:10 For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

   Ezr 8:21 ¶ Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.

   Ezr 8:22 For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him.

   b. "do"

   A) You have the Seeking of the law and the *doing* it!

B) Some people seek only some of it, some seek it and do nothing with it.

C) Luke 12:47-48

Lu 12:47 And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. 48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

D) Acts 1:1

Ac 1:1 ¶ The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

E) Mat 7:27-37 – Wise and foolish builders

F) Jam 4:17

Jas 4:17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

c. "Teach" 1 Peter 3:15 Sanctification, Preparation, Explanation, all Nations, Salvation, Consideration

A) It is not enough to just do the will of God, but one needs to teach it as well

d. The qualifications

A) The Lineage of Ezra = Physical qualification

B) The Preparation and Work of Ezra = Spiritual qualification

e. "prepared heart"

A) Those who preach Christ out of pretense, Paul wasn't commending them, but saying that God was using it for Good

B) Parable of the Sower

C) Giving - 1 Cor 16:1-2; 2 Cor 9:6-7

f. Deu 4:10 – Learn, Do, Teach

B. (7:11-28) – The Cooperation

1. Vs. 11-24 – The King's Edict concerning Ezra

Ezr 7:11 ¶ Now this is the copy of the letter that the king Artaxerxes gave unto Ezra the priest, the scribe, even a scribe of the words of the commandments of the LORD, and of his statutes to Israel. 12 Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect peace, and at such a time. 13 I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and of his priests and Levites, in my realm, which are minded of their own freewill to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee. 14 Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king, and of his seven counsellors, to enquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which is in thine hand; 15 And to carry the silver and gold, which the king and his counsellors have freely offered unto the God of Israel, whose habitation is in Jerusalem, 16 And all the silver and gold that thou canst find in all the province of Babylon, with the freewill offering of the people, and of the priests, offering willingly for the house of their God which is in Jerusalem: 17 That thou mayest buy speedily with this money bullocks, rams, lambs, with their meat offerings and their drink offerings, and offer them upon the altar of the house of your God which is in Jerusalem. 18 And whatsoever shall seem good to thee, and to thy brethren, to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, that do after the will of your God. 19 The vessels also that are given thee for the service of the house of thy God, those deliver thou before the God of Jerusalem. 20 And whatsoever more shall be needful for the house of thy God, which thou shalt have occasion to bestow, bestow it out of the king's treasure house. 21 And I, even I Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the treasurers which are beyond the river, that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, it be done speedily, 22 Unto an hundred talents of silver, and to an hundred measures of wheat, and to an hundred baths of wine, and to an hundred baths of oil, and salt without prescribing how much. 23 Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven: for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons? 24 Also we certify you, that touching any of the priests and Levites, singers, porters, Nethinims, or ministers of this house of God, it shall not be lawful to impose toll, tribute, or custom, upon them.

a. Why would the King make the commandment for all of Ezra's expenses to be paid?

   (Vs. 14-23)

   A) The End of the book of Esther shows the power that the Jews had pooled because of the events in Esther

   B) Whatever that is needed, it will be provided

b. The King shows honor to those who are serving God to keep them from be taxed (Vs. 24)

2. Vs. 25-28 - The King's Exhortation to Ezra

25 And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that is in thine hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know them not. 26 And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment. 27 ¶ Blessed be the LORD God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem: 28 And hath extended mercy unto me before the

king, and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes. And I was strengthened as the hand of the LORD my God was upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me.

a. Ezra's Task (vs. 25-26)

A) This was not going to be easy for Ezra to carry out

B) He was to execute those who would not obey

C) He was to purify the house of the Lord

D) You cannot purify something without something ***being destroyed***

E) This is need for Church Discipline

b. Ezra's Thanksgiving (vs. 27-28)

II. Ezra 8 – **Ezra's Company**

A. (8:1-20) – The participation

1. Vs. 1-14 – The Exiles that Came Out

Ezr 8:1 ¶ These are now the chief of their fathers, and this is the genealogy of them that went up with me from Babylon, in the reign of Artaxerxes the king. 2 Of the sons of Phinehas; Gershom: of the sons of Ithamar; Daniel: of the sons of David; Hattush. 3 Of the sons of Shechaniah, of the sons of Pharosh; Zechariah: and with him were reckoned by genealogy of the males an hundred and fifty. 4 Of the sons of Pahathmoab; Elihoenai the son of Zerahiah, and with him two hundred males. 5 Of the sons of Shechaniah; the son of Jahaziel, and with him three hundred males. 6 Of the sons also of Adin; Ebed the son of Jonathan, and with him fifty males. 7 And of the sons of Elam; Jeshaiah the son of Athaliah, and with him seventy males. 8 And of the sons of Shephatiah; Zebadiah the son of Michael, and with him fourscore males. 9 Of the sons of Joab; Obadiah the son of Jehiel, and with him two hundred and eighteen males. 10 And of the sons of Shelomith; the son of Josiphiah, and with him an hundred and threescore males. 11 And of the sons of Bebai; Zechariah the son of Bebai, and with him twenty and eight males. 12 And of the sons of Azgad; Johanan the son of Hakkatan, and with him an hundred and ten males. 13 And of the last sons of Adonikam, whose names are these, Eliphelet, Jeiel, and Shemaiah, and with them threescore males. 14 Of the sons also of Bigvai; Uthai, and Zabbud, and with them seventy males.

a. Ezra lists the families that returned to Jerusalem with Him

2. Vs. 15-20 – The Extras that Came Out

Ezra 8:15 And I gathered them together to the river that runneth to Ahava; and there abode we in tents three days: and I viewed the people, and the priests, and found there none of the sons of Levi. 16 Then sent I for Eliezer, for Ariel, for Shemaiah, and for Elnathan, and for Jarib, and for Elnathan, and for Nathan, and for Zechariah, and for Meshullam, chief men; also for Joiarib, and for Elnathan, men of understanding. 17 And I sent them with commandment unto Iddo the chief at the place Casiphia, and I told them what they should say unto Iddo, and to his brethren the Nethinims, at the place Casiphia, that they should bring unto us ministers for the house of our God. 18 And by the good hand of our God upon us they brought us a man of understanding, of the sons of Mahli, the son of Levi, the son of Israel; and Sherebiah, with his sons and his brethren, eighteen; 19 And Hashabiah, and with him Jeshaiah of the sons of Merari, his brethren and their sons, twenty; 20 Also of the Nethinims, whom David and the princes had appointed for the service of the Levites, two hundred and twenty Nethinims: all of them were expressed by name.

a. Vs. 15-17 – The Absence of Levites

b. Vs. 18-20 – The Arrival of Levites

A) Vs. 18 – They were following God's law and dictates

B. (8:21-23) - The Supplication

Ezr 8:21 ¶ Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. 22 For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him. 23 So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us.

1. Before making any important decision, pray and seek God's wisdom

2. Notice the prayer life of the 1st century Christians in Acts

3. Rom 11:22

Ro 11:22 Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

4. They were looking for the right path; Jesus said "I am the way the truth and the life" – John 14:6

5. Deu 4 – The Value of training their children

C. (8:24-30) - The Authorization

Ezr 8:24 ¶ Then I separated twelve of the chief of the priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them, 25 And weighed unto them the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, even the offering of the house of our God, which the king, and his counsellors, and his lords, and all Israel there present, had offered: 26 I even weighed unto their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, and silver vessels an hundred talents, and of gold an hundred talents; 27 Also twenty basons of gold, of a thousand drams; and two vessels of fine copper, precious as gold. 28 And I said unto them, Ye are holy unto the LORD; the vessels are holy also; and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering unto the LORD God of your fathers. 29 Watch ye, and keep them, until ye weigh them before the chief of the priests and the Levites, and chief of the fathers of Israel, at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of the LORD. 30 So took the priests and the Levites the weight of the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, to bring them to Jerusalem unto the house of our God.

1. Ezra set apart priests to take the money to Jerusalem

2. Vs. 28-29 – Holy = Set apart for the work of the Lord / Peter's vision (Acts 10:14, 28)

3. Giving – What you have set apart for the Lord; if you don't give it, you profane that which is holy

D. (8:31-32) - The Destination

Ezr 8:31 ¶ Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way. 32 And we came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days.

1. God delivered them through the land during the four month journey to Jerusalem

E. (8:33-36) – The Presentation

Ezr 8:33 Now on the fourth day was the silver and the gold and the vessels weighed in the house of our God by the hand of Meremoth the son of Uriah the priest; and with him was Eleazar the son of Phinehas; and with them was Jozabad the son of Jeshua, and Noadiah the son of Binnui, Levites; 34 By number and by weight of every one: and all the weight was written at that time. 35 Also the children of those that had been carried away, which were come out of the captivity, offered burnt offerings unto the God of Israel, twelve bullocks for all Israel, ninety and six rams, seventy and seven lambs, twelve he goats for a sin offering: all this was a burnt offering unto the LORD. 36 And they delivered the king's commissions unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors on this side the river: and they furthered the people, and the house of God.

1. The King's decrees are given to the officials that fully cooperate

III. Ezra 9 – Ezra's Communication with God/The Transgression of the People

A. (9:1-4) – Ezra's Pain

Ezr 9:1 ¶ Now when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, doing according to their abominations, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. 2 For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass. 3 And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonied. 4 Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat astonied until the evening sacrifice.

1. The People had intermarried

2. The chief of the People were the worst of all

3. We should be those who are disgusted by sinfulness as much as God is

B. (9:5-15) – Ezra's Prayer

Ezr 9:5 ¶ And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the LORD my God, 6 And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens. 7 Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as it is this day. 8 And now for a little space grace hath been shewed from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage. 9 For we were bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem. 10 And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy commandments, 11 Which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying, The land, unto which ye go to possess it, is an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness. 12 Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever: that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children for ever. 13 And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this; 14 Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations?

wouldest not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping? 15 O LORD God of Israel, thou art righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day: behold, we are before thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before thee because of this.

1. Ezra confesses the faithlessness of the people and the faithfulness of God
2. Vs. 5-7 – Past sins
3. Vs. 10-15 – Present Sins & Faithfulness of the Lord
4. The prophets were God's servants
5. Vs. 8 – "a nail in his holy place" = A permanent place, don't be moved away from it (drive a peg there) [SERMON]
   a. Give us a little reviving in our bondage [SERMON – Made alive in Christ]
6. Vs. 9 – God gives us mercy bountifully
7. Vs. 12 – Neh 2:10

   *Ne 2:10 When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to **seek** the welfare of the children of Israel.*

   a. We must not find our peace and prosperity in accordance with false doctrines and humanism
8. Vs. 13 – We can all say that God has punished us less than we deserve

IV. Ezra 10 – The Confession By the People

A. Vs. 1-2 – The Repentance

Ezr 10:1 ¶ Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore. 2 And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing.

1. Preaching Pays Off! Because of Ezra's preaching, the people returned and repented of their sins
2. Repentance = A turning away from path of Sin
3. Repentance was brought about because of the hearing of a public prayer

B. Vs. 3-12 – The Resolve

Ezr 10:3 Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law. 4 Arise; for this matter belongeth unto thee: we also will be with thee: be of good courage, and do it. 5 Then arose Ezra, and made the chief priests, the Levites, and all Israel, to swear that they should do according to this word. And they sware. 6 ¶ Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib: and when he came thither, he did eat no bread, nor drink water: for he mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away. 7 And they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem unto all the children of the captivity, that they should gather themselves together unto Jerusalem; 8 And that whosoever would not come within three days, according to the counsel of the princes and the elders, all his substance should be forfeited, and himself separated from the congregation of those that had been carried away. 9 Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered themselves together unto Jerusalem within three days. It was the ninth month, on the twentieth day of the month; and all the people sat in the street of the house of God, trembling because of this matter, and for the great rain. 10 And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives, to increase the trespass of Israel. 11 Now therefore make confession unto the LORD God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives. 12 Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, As thou hast said, so must we do.

1. Vs. 3 – The desire to make a covenant

   a. Ecc 5:1-5

   Ec 5:1 ¶ Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. 2 Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. 3 For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words. 4 ¶ When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. 5 Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.

2. Vs. 8 – Any who refused to repent would be put out of the congregation (discipline)

3. Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage – You *cannot* stay in a sinful marriage "*for the children's sake*"!

C. Vs. 13-44 – The Record

Ezr 10:13 But the people are many, and it is a time of much rain, and we are not able to stand without, neither is this a work of one day or two: for we are many that have transgressed in

this thing. 14 Let now our rulers of all the congregation stand, and let all them which have taken strange wives in our cities come at appointed times, and with them the elders of every city, and the judges thereof, until the fierce wrath of our God for this matter be turned from us. 15 ¶ Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah were employed about this matter: and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite helped them. 16 And the children of the captivity did so. And Ezra the priest, with certain chief of the fathers, after the house of their fathers, and all of them by their names, were separated, and sat down in the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter. 17 And they made an end with all the men that had taken strange wives by the first day of the first month. 18 And among the sons of the priests there were found that had taken strange wives: namely, of the sons of Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren; Maaseiah, and Eliezer, and Jarib, and Gedaliah. 19 And they gave their hands that they would put away their wives; and being guilty, they offered a ram of the flock for their trespass. 20 And of the sons of Immer; Hanani, and Zebadiah. 21 And of the sons of Harim; Maaseiah, and Elijah, and Shemaiah, and Jehiel, and Uzziah. 22 And of the sons of Pashur; Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethaneel, Jozabad, and Elasah. 23 Also of the Levites; Jozabad, and Shimei, and Kelaiah, (the same is Kelita,) Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer. 24 Of the singers also; Eliashib: and of the porters; Shallum, and Telem, and Uri. 25 Moreover of Israel: of the sons of Parosh; Ramiah, and Jeziah, and Malchiah, and Miamin, and Eleazar, and Malchijah, and Benaiah. 26 And of the sons of Elam; Mattaniah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, and Abdi, and Jeremoth, and Eliah. 27 And of the sons of Zattu; Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, and Jeremoth, and Zabad, and Aziza. 28 Of the sons also of Bebai; Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, and Athlai. 29 And of the sons of Bani; Meshullam, Malluch, and Adaiah, Jashub, and Sheal, and Ramoth. 30 And of the sons of Pahathmoab; Adna, and Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezaleel, and Binnui, and Manasseh. 31 And of the sons of Harim; Eliezer, Ishijah, Malchiah, Shemaiah, Shimeon, 32 Benjamin, Malluch, and Shemariah. 33 Of the sons of Hashum; Mattenai, Mattathah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, and Shimei. 34 Of the sons of Bani; Maadai, Amram, and Uel, 35 Benaiah, Bedeiah, Chelluh, 36 Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib, 37 Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasau, 38 And Bani, and Binnui, Shimei, 39 And Shelemiah, and Nathan, and Adaiah, 40 Machnadebai, Shashai, Sharai, 41 Azareel, and Shelemiah, Shemariah, 42 Shallum, Amariah, and Joseph. 43 Of the sons of Nebo; Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jadau, and Joel, Benaiah. 44 All these had taken strange wives: and some of them had wives by whom they had children.

1. Vs. 18-19 – The sons of the priests = Leadership by Example!

   a. You cannot be a good leader if you are not willing to be an example and go first in the ***good and the bad***!

   b. Peter - Lu 22:31 *And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you **(plural)**, that he may sift you **(plural)** as wheat: 32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou **(singular)** art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*

   c. Satan desired all of them, but Jesus told Peter himself to be a leader and an example.

E C

NEHEMIAH INTRODUCTION:
CLAYTON WINTERS
PAGES 68-70

NEHEMIAH INSTITUDED REFORMS WITH FARREACHING RAMIFICATIONS:

1. He relieved those oppressed by abject poverty (5:1-11).

2. He educated the people in the law of God (8:1-9)

3. He corrected the foreign marriages problem that had again developed among the Holy People (13:23-25) Winters page 73.

A REBELLIOUS HOUSE:

Near the end of their nationalism,

1. Ezekiel labeled them as impudent and stiff hearted children-a rebellious house (Ezk 3:3-8).

2. Amos saw them as: a people who would sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes; so selfish in fact that they would run until their tongues lolled out to scrape the dust from the poor man's neck just so they could add it back to their land (Amos 2:6-7). They stored violence and robbery in their palaces (3:10), perverted justice for bribes (5:12), and multiplied their idolatrous transgressions at Bethel and Gilgal (4:4). Moral standards had eroded to the point that a man and his son would both go I to the same maid (2:7), and worship was such sham that God would not even smell in their solemn assemblies (5:21-26).

3. Hosea: scored them as traitors to their Creator (6:7), defiling the land with swearing, lying, killing, stealing, and sexual immorality (4:2). They were a half baked cake-a mixed breed whose strength had been sapped by alien contamination (7:8-9). In a statement very definitive of their basic nature that prophet declare "my people are bent to backsliding for me" (11:7).

4. ISAIAH: Isaiah 1:4 "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward" Isaiah 1:6 "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment" Isaiah 3:15 "What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor? saith the Lord God of hosts" Isaiah 10:2 "To turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless" Isaiah 5:20 "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter" Isaiah 30:8-9 "Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever: [9] That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord."

5. JEREMIANH AND EZEKIEL PREEXCILE PROPHETS: Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Ezekiel 3:5-7 "For thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech and of an hard language, but to the house of Israel; [6] Not to many people of a strange speech and of an hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee. [7] But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are impudent and hardhearted." (Winters pages 68-69).

A SHORT-LIVED REFORMATION:

Seventy years in the captivity of Babylon caused the covenant people to do some real soul searching. Their sins had reached to heaven and brought them into bondage (Ezra 9:6-7). Confusion and shame covered their faces, anmd the curse of the law hung heavily over them (Daniel 9:8, 11). Bitter tears of repentance flowed down their cheeks, and longing eyes turned toward Jerusalem-the City of God. Psalm 137:1 "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion." (Daniel 9:15-19).

"And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly. [16] O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us. [17] Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. [18] O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. [19] O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name."

In 538B.C. King Cyrus issued his decree of freedom; and despite the dangers and hardships. Zerubbabel and Joshua led a faithful remnant back to the hill of Zion. Haggai 1:2-6 "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built. [3] Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, [4] Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste? [5] Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways. [6] Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes."

When Ezra arrived at Jerusalem in 465 B.C. he found a shocking state of affairs. Ezra 9:1-2 " Now when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, doing according to their abominations, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. [2] For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass." Ezra 9:3 "And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonied." Ezra 10:5 "Then arose Ezra, and made the chief priests, the

Levites, and all Israel, to swear that they should do according to this word. And they sware."

When Nehemiah assumed the governorship of the land thirteen years later, he also found cause for rage-Israel's backslidings had not been healed (Jeremiah 3:22; Nehemiah 13:234-25).

JERUSALEM DURING THE TIME OF NEHEMIAH:

Commercialization had replaced religious dedication. Neh. 13:15-16 " In those days saw I in Judah some treading winepresses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day: and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals. [16] There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem." The holy lineage had been so polluted that it was in danger of becoming extinct.

NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 1

1. What was the date that the word of the Lord came to Nehemiah?

2. What was the question that Nehemiah asked Hanani and certain brethren from Judah?

3. What was there answer?

4. What did Nehemiah Do?

5. Who did Nehemiah pray for?

6. Explain verse 6-7?

7. What did Nehemiah ask God to remember?

8. What does the phrase mean "the place that I have chosen to set my name there?"

9. How had God redeemed His people?

10. Nehemiah asked the Lord to be attentive to his pray and grant him what?

NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 2

1. What had Nehemiah not previously done?

2. What was the king's question about Nehemiah's countenance?

3. What was Nehemiah's answer?

4. What made Nehemiah heart sad?

5. Why did Nehemiah pray to God?

6. What did the king want to know about the journey?

7. Who was Asaph?

8. Explain verse 8.

9. Why was Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the servant grieved?

10. What had Nehemiah not told to any man?
    Lk 2:19

11. What did Nehemiah find in Jerusalem?

12. Whose hands and words was with Nehemiah?

13. What did Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem do?

14. What did Nehemiah tell them?

CLASS SCHEDULE: EZRA-NEHEMIAH-ESTHER

1. EZRA-INTRODUCTION AND CHAPTERS 1-3.

2. CHAPTERS 4-6.

BREAK

3. ESTHER INTRODUCTION AND CHAPTERS 1-3.

4. CHAPTERS 4-6.

5. CHAPTERS 7-10. <u>MID-TERM</u>

6. EZRA CHAPTERS 7-10.

BREAK

7. NEHEMIAH INTRODUCTION AND CHAPTERS 1-2.

8. NEHEMIAH CHAPTERS 3-5.

9. CHAPTERS 6-10.

10. CHAPTERS 11-13. <u>FINAL.</u>

Homelet outline of each Chapter!

NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 3

LESSONS FOR THE CHURCH TODAY:

1. Follow a well-devised plan (2:12-20).
    1. Each group had its assigned section of labor.
    2. Each individual labored in the craft best suited to his ability.

2. They worked as a determined body (4:2-6, 14). Neither:
    1. Mockery, intimidation, or violence,
    2. could force them to turn back from their appointed task.

3. They worked as a unified body:
    1. Men working with their hands.
    2. Guards who placed their lives between them and the enemy.
    3. The Rulers backing the work in everyway-to achieve a common goal (4:15-21).

4. They looked on the work:
    1. Not as menial task.
    2. Project of the governor.
    3. But as the servant of God.

QUESTIONS NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 3

1. What are some lessons taught in this chapter?

2. Is this chapter boring and dull and monotonous reading?

3. How were the people of God able to accomplish so much in such a short time?

4. What can the Church learn from the example set forth in this chapter?

QUESTIONS NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 4

1. Who was wroth?
2. What did he allow his anger to do?
3. What did he call the Jews?
4. Who was by him?
5. What did he say?
6. What did Nehemiah do?
7. What did he say?
8. What had the anger of God's enemies done?
9. What kind of mind set did God's people have here?
10. What Sanballat and others do?
11. God's people set a watch _____ and _____.
12. What did Judah say?
13. How many times did enemies say?
14. Explain verse 13.
15. Who the Jews not to fear?
16. Who were they to remember?
17. What had the people of God learned that changed things?
18. What did half of the people do while the others held weapons of armor?
19. What was the purpose of sounding the trumpet?
20. Who was going to fight for Israel?

INTRODUCTION TO NEHEMIAH

INTRODUCTION:

1. There are many great leaders w/in Sacred Script (Joseph, Moses, David, etc.)
2. I believe Nehemiah gives us the best depiction of what a good leader is.
   a. The book of Nehemiah is a manual on competent, compassionate, committed, & courageous leadership.
   b. It reads like an autobiography & reveals how Nehemiah accomplished the seemingly impossible task of rebuilding Jerusalem's walls in 52 days.
   c. It also gives us the last historical glimpse into the activities of God's people before almost 400 years of Biblical silence.
3. Define the word leader/leadership:
   a. Leaders are people who are influential. You lead someone to the degree you influence him or her.
   b. *"Leaders are people who can get others to do what they don't want to do- & get them to enjoy doing it!"* **-President Harry Truman**
   c. A leader is a servant!
      <u>Mark 9:35</u>: If anyone would be first, he must be last of all & servant of all.
   d. A leader is: *"A person who influences a group of people towards the achievement of a goal."*
4. This last definition, I believe, sums up all of what a leader is. It is especially depictive of Nehemiah & the challenge he was confronted with.

5. What Nehemiah had to say concerning leadership speaks to the very same issues we face today. For example, from his book we learn...
   a. ...how to relate to a touchy boss.
   b. ...how to balance faith in God & the need for personal planning.
   c. ...how to handle discouragement at the executive level.
   d. ...how to respond to unwarranted criticism.
6. In this biblical manual for leaders we find timeless & reliable guidelines that work. They enable us to know how to build quality characteristics in ourselves & others- the kind that are rarely seen today.
7. The story begins with an unassuming servant & follows his personal journey to become the official governor of Israel during its reconstruction, which incidentally points us to our 1st lesson:
   "Good leaders are made, not born; they are built, shaped, & tested by God- brick by brick- over time."
8. I believe that to be the purpose of this ancient book; to equip us & to build us into the kind of leader God desires- a true leader!

I. HISTORICAL PANORAMA

A. Before moving forward, I believe it appropriate to look backward in time; thus, providing a better perspective as to the dismal condition Nehemiah was initially confronted with.

B. REVIEW TIME LINE
   1. 2000 B.C.- Jewish history begins with Abraham.
   2. 1000 B.C. Israel took on world significance as a nation under Saul, David, & Solomon.
      a. In the successive reigns of these three kings, Israel's flag flew proudly over the nation (1043-931 BC).
      b. They were finally recognized as a major military power under King David's 40-year command.
      c. Solomon had compromised their integrity by allowing in idol worship **(1 Kings 11:11)**.
   3. When Solomon died, there was a split in the nation's military ranks. Israel became a divided kingdom.
      a. 10 tribes migrated to the north & settled in Samaria (Israel).

b. The other two went south & settled in Jerusalem & the surrounding areas (Judah).

4. Israel, northern kingdom, was taken into Assyrian Captivity in 722 B.C. Those 10 tribes @ that point ceased to exist; however, some of those people fled to the south to escape Assyrian control.

5. Judah, southern kingdom, taken captive by Babylonians beginning in 606 B.C. They were led captive in three waves.

   a. 606-605 B.C.- During reign of Jehoiakim, Daniel & others of the seed royal were carried away, along with temple vessels **(2 Kings 24:1-6)**.

   b. 598-597 B.C.- In the reign of Jehoiachin, Ezekiel was carried away **(2 Kings 24:10-13)**.

   c. 586 B.C.- In the reign of Zedekiah, all the rest, except the poorest & weakest were carried away, & city was burned.

   d. **cf. 2 Chr. 36:18-20; Psa. 137**

6. 586 B.C.- Jerusalem totally destroyed. The magnificent place where God's glory was once displayed was destroyed. The wall lay in ruins, & wild dogs fed upon any edible remains.

7. 539 B.C.- Medo-Persians defeat Babylonians, & Cyrus issues decree for the Jews return home.

8. As prophesied, following 70 years of Captivity, the Jewish exiles begin to return home **(cf. Jer. 25:8-12)**.

9. 536 B.C.- 1st wave that returned were led by Zerubbabel. He organized the rebuilding of a Temple.

10. 490 B.C.- 2nd wave returned under the leadership of Ezra. He proclaimed the centrality of God's Word. The "*house of God*" is the primary subject of Ezra.

11. 445 B.C.- 3rd wave led home by Nehemiah. He completed the walls around the city. The "*wall around Jerusalem*" is the primary focus of Nehemiah's book.

C. Why were the walls important?

1. Jerusalem's walls were spiritually, economically, & militarily important.

2. Spiritually, they were the final symbol of God's promise to restore Jerusalem **(Zec. 8:7-8; 10:6)**. The walls were a vital part of

Jerusalem's identity as God's chosen people.

3. Economically, walls were essential to an ancient cities survival.
4. Militarily, walls were very important, especially in that day. They provided much need protection from the enemy. Although Jerusalem's walls were only about a mile in circumference, 15-20 feet high, & 3-4 feet thick, they protected Jerusalem from powerful armies, raiding bands, & prowling thieves.
5. As long as a city had its walls, it had a spiritual purpose, an economic lifeblood, & a military defense.

II. WHO WAS NEHEMIAH?

A. Nehemiah was a leader. He held a number of important positions to include cupbearer, builder, & governor.
   1. His name means, *"The Lord has comforted."*
   2. His occupation before returning to rebuild, was cupbearer to the king of Persia, Artaxerxes Longimanus (464-423 B.C.).
      a. A cupbearer was much more than our modern "butler."
      b. **cf. Gen. 40:1ff**
      c. It was a position of great responsibility & privilege.
      d. At each meal he tested the king's food & drink to make sure it wasn't poisoned.

B. While serving the king of the most powerful nation on earth he learned that the first two returns of the Jewish remnant to Israel had failed to rebuild Jerusalem's walls.

C. Upon his return, Nehemiah found a discouraged nation, severe opposition, & a wall that was little more than burned ruins.

D. Using incredible leadership skills, he evaluated the challenge, rebuilt the walls, & encouraged the nation to persevere.

CONCLUSION:

1. It will be my objective in this series of lessons to challenge & motivate all of us to become the type of leader God would have us be!
2. Again, good leaders are made, not born; thus, let's begin to build & shape our lives as leaders, one brick @ a time!

NEHEMIAH 1

A LEADERS RESPONSE TO A PROBLEM

INTRODUCTION:

1. Why do you believe God thought it vitally important to have good leaders?
2. What are some things that you believe keep people from becoming leaders?
3. One of the main reasons why people keep from becoming leaders is *problems*!
   a. The higher you climb the corporate ladder, the more problems you face.
   b. While $ may be better, potential for *problems* & harder work increases.
   c. But how will problems ever be resolved & work ever get done if individuals will not step up to the plate & assume leadership?
4. The 1st chapter of Nehemiah introduces us to a man with a problem. His response to the problem is truly remarkable.
5. Let's begin by analyzing the chapter, & then make application for us today.

I. ANALYSIS OF NEHEMIAH CHAPTER ONE

A. *NEHEMIAH'S POSITION* **(1:1, 11)**

1. Nehemiah 1 opens in December 445 B.C. w/in the palace of the most powerful & prosperous nation on earth- Persia.
   a. 90 years had elapsed since Zerubbabel led 1st wave home.
   b. Nehemiah was in the city of Shushan (Susa), one of the three capital cities of Persia, & 800 miles from Jerusalem.
      (1) Babylon & Ecbatana were the other two capital cities.
      (2) Shushan (Susa) was located on the banks of the Choaspes River. It was of mild climate, & the kings of Persia often stayed there during the winter months.
      (3) Susa compares to our Florida- a place where all the snow birds went in the winter!
2. Nehemiah held a position of authority; i.e., cupbearer to the king.
   a. This was a powerful position of intimacy & trust.
   b. He was the kings right hand man!

3. HIS SECULAR POSITION DID NOT AFFECT HIS SPIRITUAL POSITION.
   a. Though he possessed a high-ranking position in the world, he had a heart that was very tender toward God.
   b. We need to guard ourselves against the dangers of secular dominance; that is, God must be 1st in our life!
   c. Too many times God's people begin to prosper physically & in the process become bankrupt spiritually!
   d. **cf. Mat. 6:19-24, 33; Col. 3:1-2; 1 John 2:15-17**

B. *NEHEMIAH'S PROBLEM* **(1:2-3)**
1. Hanani, Nehemiah's brother, had made a visit to Judah &had returned with a firsthand report of the sad plight of the returned captives.
2. It is at this point that Nehemiah is confronted with a problem- God's people were afflicted & the walls of city lie in ruin.
3. It was a sad report that Hanani had for his brother.
   a. The city of Jerusalem was very sparsely populated **(7:4)**.
   b. Those remaining there were victims of abject poverty & subjected to greedy landlords & covetous politicians **(5:1ff)**.
   c. They were woefully ignorant of the law of God **(8:6-8)**, & the holy seed was polluted by strangers **(13:23-26)**.
4. Scorn & ridicule were heaped on by the nations about them, & the Holy People were utterly shorn of their glorious origin & illustrious history.
   a. **Great affliction-** *"misery & calamity."*
   b. **Reproach-** *"disgrace, contempt, or scorn."*
   c. The picture painted here of the Jewish remnant portrays a group of individuals who were suffering the lacerations of cutting words. They were severely criticized & slandered by people who were enemies of the faith.
   d. A congregation that has become non-active & is dis-array is a reproach & often scorned.
5. In add to the insults, the walls of the city lie in ruin.

a. Whatever progress Zerubbabel & Ezra had made in restoring the city of God had been reversed in the intervening years.

b. Its streets were practically deserted & its walls & gates lay in shambles, & afforded no protection for its inhabitants.

6. It was a very disturbing message that Hanani had brought Nehemiah. It would drive him to depression, despair, & finally to determination to sacrifice all if necessary to rebuild the Holy City.

C. *NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER* **(1:4-11)**

1. Notice how Nehemiah responded to this most disturbing report.

a. He did not finger point.

b. He took time to reflect upon the situation at hand.

c. He took his problem to God! He did not attempt to handle it alone!

2. The similarity between the prayer of Nehemiah & that of Daniel is striking **(cf. Dan. 9:3-19)**.

a. Both prayers were strong entreaties, indicating the deep need for Divine intervention.

b. They were prayers of self-examination & forgiveness; i.e., both men recognized they were not without fault/sin.

(1) The confession was not on behalf of someone else's failure.

(2) The confession had to do with Nehemiah's part in the problem **(cf. Isa. 6:5)**.

(3) Nehemiah was not only wanting to be part of the answer, he too was confessing himself to being part of the problem.

(4) You may find yourself at odds with someone else. As you go before God in prayer concerning any unresolved personal conflicts, take the attitude of Nehemiah!

c. They were prayers of confidence, knowing that if they turned back to God, He would keep His covenant.

3. Nehemiah 1 is a blend of prayer & action. All who lead must place

a high priority on prayer.

4. Why is prayer so important?
   a. Prayer makes us wait.
      (1) I cannot pray & work at the same time.
      (2) Prayer forces me to leave the situation with God; it makes me wait.
   b. Prayer clears our vision.
      (1) Some areas deal with fog problem early in morning.
      (2) But as the sun burns through, fog dissipates.
      (3) When you first face a situation, is it foggy? Prayer will "burn through." Your vision will clear so you can see through God's eyes.
   c. Prayer quiets our hearts.
      (1) Prayer is the best channel for removing my worries.
      (2) When I turn my anxiety into prayer, my spirit grows quiet.
      (3) Knees don't knock when we kneel on them!
   d. Prayer activates our faith.
      (1) After praying I'm more prone to trust God **(cf. Isa. 6:6-8)**.
      (2) Prayer sets faith on fire!
5. *Got any rivers you think are uncrossable?*
   Got any mountains you cannot tunnel through?
   God specializes in things thought impossible;
   He does the things others cannot do.

II. APPLICATION FOR LEADERS TODAY

A. LEADERS ARE *CONCERNED* ABOUT PEOPLE.

1. Nehemiah was concerned about the well-being of God's people.
2. We too should be concerned for God's people!
   a. Concerned for their physical well-being **(Jam. 1:27; 1 The. 5:14; Pro. 3:27-28)**.
   b. Concerned for their spiritual well-being **(Rom. 15:1-2; Gal.**

6:1-2; Mat. 18:15-20; Heb. 13:17).

c. Concerned about the purity of the church **(1 Cor. 5:1ff).**

Concerned about the progress of the church (**1 The. 1:3**).

cf. Phi. 2:3-4

B. LEADERS ARE *CONTRITE.*

1. Nehemiah's prayer was one of contrition; i.e., genuine & sincere.
2. Problem today: Society has forgotten how to blush & church has forgotten how to cry!
3. *"...Yea, all of you be subject one to another, & be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, & giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he might exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for your soul"* (**1 Pet. 5:5-7**).

C. LEADERS ARE WILLING TO *CONFESS* THEIR FAULTS.

1. We need leaders who will admit that they too are part of the problem- they too make mistakes (**cf. 1 John 1:7-10**)!
2. We're quick to cast judgment & point the finger, forgetting that in so doing, there's 4 pointing back at us!

   Mat. 7:1-5: Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: & with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; & behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; & then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

D. LEADERS ARE *CONFIDENT* IN THE TRUTH OF GOD'S WORD.

1. Nehemiah was confident that God was a keeper of His promises **(1:8-9).**
2. We, as God's people, should have confidence in His Word!
   a. Confident that His Word is inspired **(2 Tim. 3:16-17).**
   b. Confident that His Word will judge men in the last day **(John 12:48).**
   c. Confident that His blood will cleanse us from sin as we walk in the light of His Word **(1 John 1:7; 2:1-3).**
   d. Confident that He'll never forsake us **(Heb. 13:5-6).**
   e. Confident in that He's the anchor of our soul **(Heb. 6:19).**

f. Confident in that he'll not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able **(1 Cor. 10:13)**.

g. Confident in that He will come again **(John 14:1-3; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 The. 4:13ff)**.

h. Confident in that He'll reward the faithful & punish the unfaithful **(Mat. 13:41ff; John 5:28-29; 2 The. 1:5-10)**.

3. Godly leaders understand that real prayer is rooted in the firm & precious promises of God; therefore, "*Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we might find grace & mercy to help in time of need*" **(Heb. 4:16)**.

E. LEADERS ARE *COMMITTED* TO SUCCEED.

1. Nehemiah wants to get involved- he's committed- he's ready to work! He's ready to leave his comfortable & familiar surroundings & begin the difficult task of rebuilding.

2. True leaders are not afraid of commitment! They're not afraid of getting involved in a difficult task!

Pro. 16:3: Commit to the Lord whatever you do, & your plans will succeed.
Psa. 37:5: Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, & he will act.

F. LEADERS ARE *CAREFUL* IN HOW THEY APPROACH A DELICATE SITUATION.

1. Nehemiah trusted in God & knew that he'd need His help in dealing with king Artaxerxes. It was a delicate situation!

2. Good leaders are careful in handling delicate & or presumably difficult situations.

3. They are wise in their decision making. They know what to say & how to say it.

Col. 4:5-6: Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

G. LEADERS ARE *COURAGEOUS*.

1. It took great courage to be a cupbearer, & it too took great courage to approach the king with a personal request.

2. Nehemiah's faith in God gave him the courage to do what he did!

3. We need courageous leaders today; leaders who trust in God;

leaders who're not afraid to do what's right; leaders who're not weak kneed; leaders who'll not compromise God's Word; leaders who're not afraid to stand in the gap; leaders who're not afraid to approach the unapproachable!

4. **cf. Num. 13:30-31**

CONCLUSION:

1. There's not a person present that's not had to face some difficult situation.
2. Nehemiah teaches us that the best position for handling a problem is the kneeling position!
3. Nehemiah also teaches us that a problem is nothing more than a possiiblity!
4. *"A Christian leader is not one who sees a difficulty in every opportunity; rather, a Christian leader is one who sees an opportunity in every difficulty!"*

NEHEMIAH 2

A LEADERS REPLY TO HIGHER AUTHORITY & THE FORESIGHT NEEDED TO ASSURE SUCCESS (2:1-8).

INTRODUCTION:

1. Chapter One concludes with Nehemiah's prayer to God.
   a. In December, 445 B.C., Nehemiah was given the grim report of the deplorable conditions in Jerusalem.
   b. Nehemiah was in Susa, serving as Artaxerxes' cup-bearer.
   c. Having heard the report, Nehemiah takes his problem before God.
2. As we identify challenges in our lives we should follow Nehemiah's example & approach God in prayer.
   a. This clear & concise prayer is an excellent model for leaders today.
   b. Remember the acronym FACTS.
      (1) **F**ocus on God.
      (2) **A**cknowledge God.
      (3) **C**onfess sins to God.
      (4) **T**hank God.
      (5) Present **S**upplications to God.
3. Four months would pass before Nehemiah's prayer is answered **(2:1ff)**.
4. The 2nd chapter of Nehemiah gives us some additional insight into what it takes to be a great leader.

I. ANALYSIS OF NEHEMIAH 2:1-8

A. *NEHEMIAH'S ANGUISH* **(2:1)**.
   1. It had been four months since Nehemiah had prayed for success.
   2. **1:1-** Chislev/December; **2:1-** Nisan/April
   3. All this time he had not been sad in the king's presence, even though his heart longed for Jerusalem.

   4. Why show his anguish now?

a. This would begin the dry season in Palestine; that is, a time more conducive to the work he hoped to accomplish.

b. Too, he undoubtedly prayed continually to God, but for four months there was no answer. Maybe he was growing impatient.

B. *ARTAXERXES' AWARENESS OF NEHEMIAH'S ANGUISH* **(2:2)**.

1. As cupbearer, it was his job to prove & pour the contents prepared for the king.

2. Nearly four months of anxiety, prayer, & fasting had taken its toll on Nehemiah.

   a. Although he was expected to be at his best before the king, he could no longer conceal his disturbed state of mind.

   b. His personality change was noted by the king, leading him to inquire more specifically about the problem.

   c. King Artaxerxes' concluded from observation that the change in his cupbearer was a matter of depression, not a physical malady.

3. It was at this point that Nehemiah became afraid.

   a. It would appear from **1:11** that Nehemiah had prepared himself to face the king with his request.

   b. But standing now in his presence, & challenged by the king for an extraordinary poor countenance, his courage apparently failed him momentarily.

   c. You have to appreciate his honesty here! Many leaders refuse to admit their own human weaknesses!

C. *JERUSALEM'S AFFLICTION* **(2:3)**.

1. With the king desiring to know what was wrong with Nehemiah, the prophet responds by revealing the heart of the problem-Jerusalem's affliction.

2. The answer to Nehemiah's prayer had now come.

   a. This was not a time for weakness or hesitation.

b. If he was to help his people, it had to be now or never; so with all the reverence he could muster, he immediately addressed the Persian monarch.

3. Consider Nehemiah's respectful reply to the king: *"Let the king live forever!"*

   a. This was a common approach to loyalty **(1 Kings 1:31; Dan. 2:4; 3:9)**.

   b. This showed both subjection to the king, as well as a wish for his continued well-being & prosperity.

4. Nehemiah then reveals to the king the heart of his problem.

   a. Nehemiah has a personal connection to this problem.

   b. Once he had established his own personal reasons for wanting to restore the city, there would be less likelihood of the king's considering his motives as politically motivated or dangerous to the empire.

   c. Nehemiah had planned his approach well!

D. *NEHEMIAH'S AGENDA* **(2:4-8)**.

1. By this time the king recognized that Nehemiah had some petition to put before him concerning the city of his ancestry, so he urged his cupbearer to proceed with his request.

2. If it pleased the king, Nehemiah requested that he be given permission to rebuild the city walls.

3. The king responded by asking Nehemiah how much time would be needed for this undertaking.

   a. No set length of time for a leave was specified in the text.

   b. Nehemiah spent 12 years as governor of Judah **(5:14)**, but it would seem unlikely that such a long furlough was granted by the king. I would think it more in keeping with the king's desire for his return that a shorter period of time was agreed upon, & that extensions of the leave were granted as the need dictated.

4. A point to consider is that the king obviously did not want his trusted official to stay away.

a. He was obviously doing a good job as cupbearer.

b. Despite his concern for Jerusalem, Nehemiah's attitude at work was positive.

c. When your heart is somewhere else, it is really difficult to perform the task at hand.

d. But for four months, Nehemiah had faithfully done his job.

5. In the midst of this unusual confrontation with his boss, Nehemiah prays for immediate strength. He then gives clear & concise answers to the king on his mission & the time it would take to accomplish it. He had not only been praying during these four months, he too was planning!

   a. Here we're given a glimpse of the faith of Nehemiah.

   b. He was so sure God would let him go that he even drew up an agenda in case the king asked him how much leave of absence he would need!

      Pro. 16:9: The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.

   c. Going out by faith doesn't mean you're going out in a disorderly or haphazard manner. You think through a project & count the cost financially.

6. *Nehemiah never prayed without acting or acted without praying!*

   a. After praying he had developed a detailed plan that included a concise mission statement, a time-line, a travel route, in-transit security forces, & needed building materials.

   b. Nehemiah had been very busy during the four months he was waiting for success.

7. Traveling the route between Babylon & Palestine could be very hazardous **(Ezra 8:21ff)**.

   a. Nehemiah therefore needed some guarantee of safe passage through the Persian provinces beyond the Euphrates.

   b. For this purpose he requested an official document

certifying him as an emissary of the king, & instructing the governors of these provinces to assist him on his journey.

8. In addition, Nehemiah knew he'd need materials for the project; thus, he requested of the king that an official letter be written to Asaph, keeper of king's forest, stating that timber be given him.

9. What remarkable foresight!

   a. The old Revolutionary War soldiers used to say, "*Trust in God, but keep your powder dry!*"

   b. Pray to God, but make your plans, set your sights, think through the obstacles.

   c. Many people in God's work are shortsighted. Not Neh...

II. APPLICATION FOR LEADERS TODAY

A. LEADERS MUST EXERCISE *PATIENCE*.

1. True faith in God brings a calmness to the heart that keeps us from rushing about & trying to do in our own strength what only God can do.

2. We must know not only how to *weep & pray*, but also how to *wait & pray*.

   Isa. 28:16: ...Whoever believes will not be in haste.
   Psa. 46:10: Be still, & know that I am God...

B. LEADERS UNDERSTAND THEIR *PLACE & POSITION*.

1. Nehemiah understood his role & position. While he served as the official cupbearer, he still had to answer to king Artaxerxes.

2. Many leaders become dictators & view everyone as beneath them.

   Gal. 6:3-5: For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one test his own work, & then his reason to boast will be in himself alone & not in his neighbor. For each will have to bear his own load.

3. Tragically, there are many 21st Century *Diotrephes* w/in church!

   3 John 9-10: I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. So if I come, I

will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, & also stops those who want to & puts them out of the church.

4. We must remember that God has all authority!
5. Leaders must never allow their position of authority bring about self-glorification. Leaders will have the interest of others at heart **(cf. Phi. 2:3-11)**.

C. LEADERS ARE *PRECISE*.

1. When asked a question, Nehemiah was clear & precise in his answer. He did not sugar coat, nor beat 'round the bush!- He did not hesitate, & he chose well his words!
2. Many leaders are not as clear & precise as they should be. Many are wishy-washy *(weaker than pond water)*. They'll say what people want to hear instead of what they need to hear!
3. All of us would do well to be more precise in our answers!

   Jam. 5:12: Let your yea be yea; & your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.
4. Leaders know when & how to respond, & they can get their point across without belittling.

   Eph. 4:29:Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

   Col. 4:5-6: Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

D. LEADERS UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF *PRAYER*.

1. Nehemiah, when asked by the king what was wrong, prayed! When confronted with a difficult situation, he prayed!
2. Good leaders never attempt to take on something without first asking for God's help & guidance in the matter.

   Phi. 4:4-6: Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer & supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

E. LEADERS *PURSUE PEACE*.

1. Notice Nehemiah's responses to the king: "*Let the king live forever....If it please the king...*" **(2:3, 5, 7)**.

2. Not only does this show that Nehemiah recognized his place & position, it too reveals his peaceful nature.
3. Good leaders pursue peace!

   Rom. 14:19: So then let us pursue what makes for peace & for mutual up-building.

   Heb. 12:14: Strive for peace with everyone, & for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

   Jam. 3:18: And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

   Mat. 5:9: Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

F. LEADERS ARE THOROUGHLY *PREPARED*.

1. Nehemiah didn't spend those four months just praying- he was planning! Thus, when the time came, he was prepared!
2. Leaders must be thoroughly prepared. Before implementing a project, they must be thoroughly prepared- things must be carefully thought out & organized.
3. Military has a plan A & a plan B.
4. Jesus taught on the subject of preparedness.

   Luke 14:28: For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, & counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?

   Pro. 24:27: Prepare your work outside; get everything ready for yourself in the field, & after that build your house.

   cf. Mat. 25:1ff- Parable of The 10 Virgins

CONCLUSION:

1. The first 8 verses of Nehemiah 2 teaches us a great lesson on foresight!
2. Nehemiah did not rush into this project haphazardly; rather, he approached it with much prayer & planning!
3. There are many things that need our attention & focus! Let's resolve to get those things done, but do so with constant prayer & careful planning.

NEHEMIAH 2

THE LEADERS BLUEPRINT FOR PROGRESS (2:9-20).

INTRODUCTION:

1. Once given the O.K. to journey to Jerusalem for the purpose of rebuilding the walls, life for this prophet would be forever changed!
2. God answered Nehemiah's prayer by giving him success. But success would bring substantial change to Nehemiah's life.
   a. First, God would give him a new mission that would forever change his relationship with the people closest to him.
   b. Second, God would change every aspect of Nehemiah's life to accomplish this new mission.
   c. Third, God would give him significant new responsibilities that would severely test his competence as leader.
   d. Fourth, Nehemiah's success would produce new enemies.
3. The first part of Nehemiah 2 gives us great insight into how a good leader approaches & handles a difficult situation.
4. The second part of Nehemiah 2 gives us the blueprint for progress & success.
   a. Nehemiah arrives in Jerusalem to find the situation is exactly like his brother had explained it to him.
   b. The people are discouraged & disgraced because they failed.
   c. Nehemiah needs to turn failure into success, but first he must motivate the people.
   d. Our competent leader motivates them by leading the way, sharing his vision, & rebuking their critics.

I. NEHEMIAH WAS THE *FIRST TO MOVE FORWARD* (cf. 2:9-11).

A. The greatest leaders are those who're not afraid to lead the way! *"I'll be the 1st to step on the battle field, & the last to step off."*

B. Upon arriving in Jerusalem, Nehemiah could have summoned the people to his quarters & ordered them to start work. But he doesn't. The people know what to do. They just don't have the desire to do it.

C. But notice from *verse 11* that Nehemiah, as he took the initiative by

moving forward, did not do so without first stopping to hear God- *"So I went to Jerusalem & was there three days."*

1. Many would think that Nehemiah, having reached his destination, would be driven by an inner burning compulsion to pull out the trowel, hire subcontractors, & hang the plumb line to get someone started on the wall- fast!
2. Why didn't he immediately go to work?
   a. Long journey (2+ month journey).
      (1) He needed time to unpack-unwind.
      (2) Good leaders must take care of themselves if they are going to be able to serve the Lord **(cf. Mark 6:31)**.
   b. He also would have taken time to get a lay out of the land/situation without arousing the concern of the enemy.
      (1) A good leader doesn't rush into his work but patiently gathers the facts firsthand & then plans his strategy **(Pro. 18:13)**.
      (2) We must be "wise as serpents" because the enemy is always watching.
      (3) Example: When I go on vacation, I take time to unpack, unwind, & figure out our plans.
   c. I also believe he waited on God.
      (1) He knew he would lead the people, but effective leadership w/in the church begins with first hearing-listening to God (study His Word).
      (2) **cf. 1 Kings 19:13ff**

D. Good leaders are not only the first to move forward, they too are faithful behind the scenes. They listen to the Lord.

II. NEHEMIAH *FIXED HIS FOCUS* (cf. 2:12).

A. Nehemiah knew what he was going to do. God commissioned him to build, & build he would do- He fixed his focus!

B. There comes a point when rest must be replaced by work; talking must be replaced by doing! He had spent much time behind closed door

praying & preparing- it was not time to proceed- to move forward!

C. Nehemiah fixes his focus & begins by surveying the situation.

D. Good leaders know how to fix their focus; that is, when the rubber meets the road, they focus in on the task at hand & get it done!

III. NEHEMIAH *FOUND* THE *FACTS* (cf. 2:13-15).

A. In these verses we find Nehemaih personally inspecting. He was getting a first hand look at the situation- he was gathering information- He was not going into the work blinded!

1. Moses sent forth 12 spies **(Num. 13:1ff)**.
2. Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica **(Acts 16-17)**.

B. After a short rest, Nehemiah began a reconnaissance or survey of the walls, & he did so @ night. Why the initial inspection @ night?

1. Nehemiah did not want the enemy to know what he was doing, so he investigated the ruins by night.
2. By keeping his counsel to himself, he prevented Tobiah's friends from getting information they could pass along to Sanballat.
3. Wise leaders know when to plan, speak, & work.
4. Good leaders are often awake when others are asleep, & working when others are resting.

C. Nehemiah probably added more detail to his plan as he secretly led a few trusted men on an inspection of the walls.

1. He probably also planned what he was going to say to the people to motivate them.
2. He knew they had to trust his commitment to God, his competence as a builder, his compassion for the people, & his courage before they would abandon their lives & start the project.

D. This is exactly the right thing for a leader to do. You cannot effectively lead from behind a desk. You have to be where the action is. People need to see leaders out front leading the charge! Members will rally around a leadership that is moving forward with a plan & a purpose!

IV. NEHEMIAH *FORMED A FELLOWSHIP* (cf. 2:16-17).

A. Nehemiah got people together- he got people working.

1. He understood that there's strength in number & power in unity.
2. *It's better to get 10 men working than it is to do work of 10 men.*

B. Notice that Nehemiah identified himself with the need. Imagine the kind of response he would have received if he had said, "*You folks have gotten yourselves into a bad mess. You know what you need to do? You need to rebuild that wall. If you need me, I'll be in my office. After all, I wasn't part of the problem.*"

1. When you cast blame & criticism, you squelch motivation.
2. When you identify with the problem, you encourage motivation.
3. When one person suffers, we all suffer **(1 Cor. 12:26)**.

C. Leaders must motivate people to work together! They include everyone in the work!

Psa. 133:1: Behold, how good & how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.

1 Cor. 3:9: For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

Gen. 13:8: And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me & thee, & between my herdmen & thy herdmen; for we be brethren.

Luke 11:17: Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, & a divided household falls.

D. ILLUSTRATION: *Canadian Geese*

Canadian geese fly in a 'V.' Engineers have studied this formation & have concluded that geese flying in this formation can fly 72% further than geese flying alone.

E. Nehemiah understood that by uniting the people together, more could be accomplished. We can do more together than we can alone!

1. "*Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; thinking together is unity; working together is success!*" **-H. Ford**
2. Early church **(Acts 2)**.

V. NEHEMIAH *FORTIFIED THEIR FAITH* (cf. 2:18).

A. Nehemiah has mentioned the walls but his central theme is the sufficiency of God.

B. They must relate well to one another as fellow-workers, but their greatest need is to be united in the things which matter most- their confidence in, dependence on, & love for God.

1. Earlier Nehemiah took care to include a reference in his memoirs to the source of his success: "*And because the gracious hand of my God was upon me, the king granted my requests*" **(2:9)**.
2. He was convinced that he had not reached Jerusalem merely because he had been a skillful persuader **(2:3-5)**, or because the queen was possibly a complaint helper **(2:6)**, or the king a generous benefactor **(2:7-8)**, but because God had been a sovereign provider.
3. Furthermore, because the Lord had done that for Nehemiah he knew it might help others if he talked about it.
   a. He understood that human nature fears new endeavors.
   b. They'd been in captivity; they had few resources; they had enemies; perhaps they felt they couldn't do it.
4. The psalmist, after celebrating God's mighty acts in history, gave verbal testimony of what God had done, inspiring the confidence in others **(cf. Psa. 66:5-6, 16)**.
5. The entire 2nd chapter of Nehemiah is a testimony, a written & vocal affirmation of confidence in a God who hears **(2:4)**, guides **(2:5)**, instructs **(2:12)**, & sustains His people **(2:20)**.

C. We need to know that the good hand of God is upon us! We can accomplish any task we set out to do **(cf. Phi. 4:13)**.
1. God has great things for us! The God of yesterday is the God of today & tomorrow! He will bless the work of His people.
2. I believe the greatest days of the church are ahead of us.
   a. Sometimes we look in the past & think that the greatest days have come & gone. But who said so?
   b. Isn't the work of God still before us?
   c. **cf. Rev. 3:7-8**- has God set before His church an open door?

      (1) Have you ever wondered why some churches grow & others don't?
      (2) If God opens a door & a congregation stands still, that

church is destined to stagnation & decline!

(3) Congregations grow when members walk through doors God has opened!

C. Notice also from this verse that following Nehemiah's affirmation that God was with them in this work, the people said, *Let us rise up & build!*

1. Someone once suggested, *"If you really want to check the leadership of an individual, just see if anybody's following."*
2. It was at this point that Nehemiah emerged as a leader.

D. Leaders w/in the church need to inspire confidence in those they lead!

VI. NEHEMIAH *FACED THE FOE* (cf. 2:19-20).

A. Sanballat, Tobiah, & Geshem were long time enemies of God's people. These men mocked Nehemiah & the rest of the Jews who were engaged in this good work.

B. But notice that Nehemiah did not back down; he faced the foe!

C. Leaders will face opposition, especially leaders w/in the church!

1. When God's people rise & build, Satan will rise & blast!
2. The door of opportunity swings on the hinges of opposition.

D. Good leaders understand that they'll face criticism, & they know how to handle & address it when it strikes **(cf. Mat. 5:11-12)**.

VII. NEHEMIAH *FULFILLED HIS FUNCTION* (cf. 3:1ff).

A. The 3rd chapter of Nehemiah is a comprehensive list of the many individuals who took an active part in the rebuilding project.

B. Every member found their place along the wall! They did what they could for the overall good of the whole!

C. They fulfilled their function! We must do likewise **(cf. 1 Cor. 15:58)**!

D. Good leaders know their people & will put them in positions where they'll most likely succeed.

CONCLUSION:

1. Success breeds success. With just a few words nehemiah motivated the people to begin this seemingly impossible task. How did he do it? He shared his vision

with the people & they accepted it as theirs.

2. The 2nd chapter of Nehemiah teaches us some great lessons relative to effective leadership.
   a. Good leaders are always the first to move forward.
   b. Good leaders have a fixed focus.
   c. Good leaders will find the facts before embarking on a project.
   d. Good leaders will form a fellowship; that is, they get everybody working together.
   e. Good leaders will fortify the faith of those they're leading.
   f. Good leaders are not afraid to face their foe.
   g. Good leaders always fulfill their function.

NEHEMIAH 3

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP BEGINS BY PUTTING PEOPLE IN THE RIGHT POSITIONS TO SUCCEED (3:1ff).

INTRODUCTION:

1. Clayton Winters writes, "*God has ever honored those who are willing to go against all odds, or render an extraordinary service. The name of Moses is a household word for millions still today, but the name of the Pharaoh who opposed him is a matter of much speculation, even among scholars (Exo. 5:1-2). We know intimately Elijah who stood against the 450 prophets of Baal, but we know not a single name from among that band of false prophets (1 Kings 18:20-40). A woman broke an expensive alabaster box of ointment to anoint Jesus' head: wherever the gospel is preached, her story is still told (Mark 14:3-9). Hebrews chapter 11 has been called God's Hall of Fame; it pays distinct tribute to those of whom the world was not worthy. Nehemiah chapter three may seem dull or monotonous reading for us, but we must remember, it is a tribute to those sincere souls who braved hardships & the sword to restore & fortify the City of God.*"
2. British humorist Jerome K. Jerome said, "*I like work, it fascinates me. I can sit & look at it for hours.*"
3. When it comes to the work of the Lord, there is no place for spectators or self-appointed advisers & critics; but there is always room for workers.
4. As one studies Nehemiah 3, they soon discover principles that apply to all human labor, especially the work of building the church.

I. THE PURPOSE OF THE WORK.

A. Nehemiah was concerned about one thing, the glory of God **(cf. 1:3; 2:17)**. God's people had become a reproach- a laughing stock to the Gentiles. Nehemiah set out to restore Jerusalem & the name of God!

B. The purpose of any spiritual endeavor should be for the glory of God.

1. The words of Jesus in His high priestly prayer ought to be the motivating force in all Christian ministry: "*I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do*" **(John 17:4)**.
2. God has a special task for each of His children **(Eph. 2:10)**; & in the humble, faithful doing of that task, we glorify His name.

C. Another purpose of the work of rebuilding the walls was to provide protection & security for the people.

1. Jerusalem was surrounded by enemies, & it seemed foolish for the residents to improve their property when nothing was safe from invasion & plunder.
2. Over the years, the citizens had become accustomed to their plight.
3. Like many within the church today, they were content to live with the status quo.
4. Then Nehemiah arrived on the scene & challenged them to rebuild the city to the glory of God.

II. THE PATTERN OF THE WORK.

A. Nehemiah was a leader who planned his work & worked his plan.

1. 38 individual workers are named in this chapter. & 42 different groups are identified.
2. There were also many workers whom Nehemiah did not name whose labors were important; & each worker- named & anonymous- was assigned a place & a task.

B. Notice that Nehemiah delegated authority; that is, he got others working, & he put people in the right positions for success.

1. A good leader knows the people's strengths & weaknesses & will put them in positions where they're sure to succeed.
2. In addition, people will not hesitate to work under strong, organized & effective leadership.
   a. Being a member of the body of Christ & serving under an eldership does not entitle us to a life of ease & no work!
   b. **1 Cor. 12 & 14-** Paul compared individual Christians to

members of the human body: Each member is important, & each has a special function to perform.

C. Words of interest:

1. The word ***built*** is used 6 times in this chapter, and it literally means, ***"rebuilt."***

   a. George Morrison writes, "*For this restoration no new material was needed. In the debris of the ruined masonry lay all the material required... & it seems to me that is always so when the walls of Zion are rebuilt.*"

   b. It is not by inventing clever new things that we take away the church's reproach, but by going back to the old truths that made the church great in ages past.

2. The word ***repair*** is used 35 times; it literally means, "*to make strong & firm.*"

   a. Nehemiah wasn't interested in a quick-fix, a whitewashed wall that would soon crumble.

   b. They were building to the glory of God, & therefore they did their best.

3. ***Locks & bars*** are mentioned 5 times.

   a. ***Locks*** refer to the sockets into which the bars were fitted, thus making it difficult for anyone outside to open gates.

   b. It isn't enough that we simply do work of God; we must also make sure that what we do is protected from enemy.

   2 John 8: Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward.

III. THE PEOPLE IN THE WORK.

A. God uses all kinds of people.

1. This chapter mentions rulers & priests **(3:1, 12-19)**, men & women **(3:12)**, professional craftsmen **(3:8, 32)**, & even people from outside the city **(3:2, 5, 7)**.

2. There was a place for everyone, & a job for everyone to do.

B. Leaders must set the example **(cf. 3:1)**.

1. If anybody in the city should have been busy in the work, it was

the priests, for the glory of the Lord was involve din the project.

2. Eliashib enlisted the other priests to work at the sheep gate in the northeast sector of the city. Since the sacrifices came into the city that way, the priests would be especially interested in that part of the project.

3. Side Note: Eliashib did not remain true to his claling; for later he allied with the enemy & created serious problems for Nehemiah **(cf. 13:4-9)**.

   a. Some people who enthusiastically begin their work may drop out or turn against if for one reason or another.

   b. Eliashib's grandson married a daughter of Sanballat **(13:28)**, & his alliance no doubt influenced the high priest.

C. Some people will not work **(cf. 3:5)**.

1. Tekoa was a town about 11 miles from Jerusalem, & some of their people traveled to Jerusalem to assist in the work.

2. What a contrast between these people & their nobles! The working Tekoites built in two places on the wall **(3:5, 27)**, while their nobles refused to bend the neck & work in even one place.

D. Some people do more work than others **(cf. 3:11, 19, 21, 24, 27, 30)**.

1. Most people are glad to lay down their tools when their job is finished, but these people asked for additional assignments.

2. We must do all we can. Can the Lord say of us as He did to the woman who had anointed His body for burial, "*She hath done what she could*" **(Mark 14:8)**.

3. **cf. John 9:4; Gal. 6:9-10; 1 Cor. 15:58**

E. Some do their work at home **(cf. 13:10, 23, 28-30)**.

1. At least 6 different workers, plus an unknown number of priests, repaired the portions of the wall that were nearest to their own houses.

2. If all of us would follow this example, our neighborhoods & cities would be in much better shape!

3. Spiritually, Christian service begins at home!

4. A Chinese proverb says, "*Better to be kind at home than to burn*

incense in a far place"; & Paul wrote, "*Let them first show piety at home*" **(1 Tim. 5:4)**.

F. Some people work harder than others **(cf. 3:20)**.

1. Baruch is the only worker of whom it is said that the work was done ***"earnestly"*** *(zealously)*.
2. The Hebrew word means "*to burn or glow,*" & it suggests that Baruch burned a lot of energy.
3. "*Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might*" **(Eccl. 9:10)**.

IV. THE PLACES OF THE WORK.

A. Nehemiah began his list of the "work stations" with the Sheep Gate in the N.E. corner of the city **(3:1)**. Then he moved counterclockwise around the walls to the Muster Gate, which was adjacent to the Sheep Gate & just above the East Gate.

B. In his record, he names 10 gates & several towers & other landmarks.

1. He describes the work on the north wall first **(3:1-7)**.
2. He then describes the work on the western wall **(3:8-13)**, then the southern point of the city **(3:14)**, & finally the eastern wall **(3:15-32)**.

C. A list of the gates & their spiritual significance.

1. *The Sheep Gate* **(cf. 3:1, 32)**.

   a. This was the gate through which the animals were brought into the city, including the temple sacrifices.

   b. This is the only gate of which it is recorded that it was "sanctified;" that is, dedicated to God in a special way.

   c. This gate reminds of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who died for the sins of the world **(John 1:29; 5:2)**.

   d. Nehemiah could have begun his record with any of the gates, but he chose to start & end the report with the Sheep Gate.

   e. Jesus is the "Alpha & Omega, the beginning & the ending" **(Rev. 1:8)**.

   f. Nothing is said about the gate's *"locks & bars,"* for the way is never closed to the lost sinner who wants to come to the Savior.

2. *The Fish Gate* **(cf. 3:3)**.

   a. This was located to the west of the Sheep Gate, & between the two stood the Tower of Hammeah ("the hundred") & the Tower of Hananeel.

      (1) These two towers were a part of the city's defense system & were close to the citadel, where the soldiers guarded the temple & protected the northern approach to the city which was especially vulnerable.

      (2) Merchants used this gate when they brought fish from the Mediterranean Sea, & there may have been a fish market near the gate.

      (3) It was a key entrance to the city.

   b. As Christians, we're to be fishers of men **(Mat. 4:19; Mark 16:15-16)**. The fish (people) are scattered throughout the sea (world). The only way to catch them is to "GO" where they are with the Saving Gospel!

3. *The Old Gate* **(cf. 3:6)**.

a. This probably has reference to the *Corner Gate* **(2 Kings 14:13; Jer. 31:38)**, located at the northwest corner of the city.

b. The Hebrew word means "second quarter," or "new quarter" **(Zeph. 1:10)**.

c. In Nehemiah's day, the northwest section of the city was the "mishneh" or "new quarter;" & this gate led into it.

d. What a paradox: the old gate leads into the new quarter! But it is from the old that we derive the new. Compare Old Law & New Law.

4. *The Valley Gate* **(cf. 3:13)**.

a. This is the area Nehemiah began his personal inspection when first arriving **(2:13)**.

b. It was located at the southwest corner of the city walls, about 500 yards from the Dung Gate; & both opened into the Valley of Hinnom.

c. This section of the wall was some 1,700 feet long.

d. Every Christian needs a "valley gate," for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble **(1 Pet. 5:5-6)**. It is only as we yield to Christ & serve others that we can truly enter into the fulness of the life He has for us **(Phi. 2:1ff)**.

5. *The Dung Gate* **(cf. 3:14)**.

a. This Gate was located at the southernmost tip of the city, near the Pool of Siloam **(John 9:1ff)**.

b. It was a main exit to the Valley of Hinnom, where the city disposed of its garbage.

(1) The word *gehenna* means "valley of Hinnom" & identified this area that Jesus used as a picture of hell **(Mark 9:44)**.

(2) King Manasseh had sacrificed children to idols in this valley **(2 Chr. 33:6)**, & King Josiah had desecrated the place by turning it into a rubbish heap **(2 Kings 23:10)**.

c. The sanitary disposal of waste materials is essential to the

health of a city.

d. This gate did not have a beautiful name, but it did perform an important service.

e. It reminds us that, like the city, each of us individually must get rid of whatever defiles us, or it may destroy us **(2 Cor. 7:1; 1 John 1:9)**.

6. *The Fountain Gate* **(cf. 3:15)**.

a. This Gate was located on the east wall, just north of the Dung Gate, in a very strategic location near the Pool of Siloam. King Hezekiah had built a water tunnel to help supply the city with ample water **(2 Kings 20:20)**.

b. The Gihom spring that fed the water system was an important source of water in the city.

c. Water is a necessary element for survival. Spiritually, Jesus offers us water of life **(John 4:13ff)**.

7. *The Ophel* **(cf. 3:26-27)**.

a. This was a hill south of the temple area, between the Horse Gate & the Water Gate.

b. It was well fortified & housed a tower.

c. The temple servants lived in that area because it was close to the water supply.

d. Elders, spiritual watchmen, guard the church from error! They stand along the walls keeping the flock safe & secure.

8. *The Horse Gate* **(cf. 3:28)**.

a. This Gate stood north of the Water Gate, adjacent to the temple area.

b. It was here that wicked Athaliah was executed **(2 Chr. 23:15)**.

c. God warned His people not to trust in horses & chariots **(Deut. 17:14-20)**, but Solomon imported them from Egypt **(1 Kings 10:26-29)**, & they became an important part of the nation's defense system **(Isa. 2:7)**.

d. Spiritually, the Horse Gate reminds us that there is warfare

in the Christian life **(2 Tim. 2:1-4)** & that we must always be ready to do battle **(Eph. 6:10-18)**.

9. *The East Gate* **(cf. 3:29)**.
   a. This Gate led directly to the temple & is probably what we know today as the Golden Gate.
   b. Tradition says that Jesus entered the temple through this gate just prior to His crucifixion.
   c. Ezekiel saw the glory of the Lord depart from the temple at the East Gate **(Ezek. 10:16-22; 11:22-25)**, as well as filling it **(Ezek. 43:1-5)**.
   d. Now, in Christ, God dwells in us- His people/the church **(1 John 3:24)**.
10. *The Gate Hammiphkad* **(cf. 3:31)**.
   a. This Gate was located at the northeast corner of the city.
   b. The Hebrew word has a military connotation & refers to the mustering of the troops for numbering & inspection.
   c. The NIV & NASB both translate it "*the Inspection Gate.*"
   d. This is where the army was reviewed & registered.
   e. The north side of Jerusalem was the most vulnerable to attack, so this was a logical place to locate the army.
   f. When our Lord returns, He will gather His people together & review their works in preparation for giving out rewards for faithful service **(1 Cor. 3:10-15; 2 Cor. 5:9-10; Rom. 14:10-12)**.

CONCLUSION:

1. At first glance, Nehemiah 3 may appear monotonous, with little to no application. However, the more we study, the more lessons we learn.
2. Nehemiah teaches us that effective leadership begins by putting people into the right positions where they're sure to work & succeed.

C. Consider the tactics employed by the enemies of God's people.

1. They ridiculed the *feebleness* of God's people **(4:1-2a)**.

   a. Sanballat mocked them by sarcastically referring to their weakness.

   b. World will ridicule us for our size. We're feeble when compared to world's standards.

   c. Don't measure Christianity by size of people **(1 Sam. 17)**.

   d. We may be feeble folk, but we serve an awesome God!

   1 Cor. 1:27: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; & God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.

2. They ridiculed the *futility* of their task **(4:2b)**.

   a. One of the mistakes Sanballat & Tobiah made was stating that the work Nehemiah was undergoing was "his/their" work." But it wasn't his work- it was God's work!

   b. **cf. Acts 5:38-39**

   c. It may appear at times that we have a futile task, but we're going to prevail!

   Rom. 8:37: Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors...

   Heb. 13:5-6: Let your conversation be w/out covetousness & be content with such things as ye have; for He hath said, I'll never leave thee nor forsake thee, so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, I'll not fear what man shall do unto me.

   1 Cor. 15:57-58: But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, ...

   d. *"I'd rather temporarily fail in a cause that will ultimately succeed, than to temporarily succeed in a cause that will ultimately fail!"* ***-Woodrow Wilson***

   e. Like Nehemiah, we're involved in a Cause that going to succeed!

3. They ridiculed the *foolishness* of their faith **(4:2c)**.

   a. They mocked the Jews religion. World will mock our faith.

   1 Cor. 1:18: For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

   b. Many laugh @ the message I, & others preach.

(1) Sophisticated intellects laugh @ simplicity of Gospel. Festus told Paul, "*Much learning hath made thee mad*" **(Acts 26:24)**. Paul's response, "*I'm not mad, but am speaking true & rational words.*"

(2) Liberal theologians laugh @ message of simple faith.

(3) World thinks we're fools & they're right to some degree.

<u>1 Cor. 4:10</u>: We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong...

4. They ridiculed the *frailty* of their work **(4:3)**.

a. Tobiah is saying, "*It's not going to last- it's too flimsy!*"

b. World mocks us the same way! To new convert they say, "*They'll never make it- they'll soon quit & buckle under pressure!*"

II. NEHEMIAH'S RESPONSE TO THE RESISTANCE (cf. 4:4-23).

A. Nehemiah's first response was to *pray to God* **(4:4-5, 9)**.

1. Nehemiah always prayed before acting.

a. **2 Kings 19:14-37-** Sennacherib, king of Assyria, blasphemed the God of heaven in a letter sent to Hezekiah, king of Judah. When Hezekiah went into the Lord's house & prayed with the letter opened before God, God took note of that blasphemy & the prayer of His servant. The next morning 165,000 Assyrians lay dead in their camp. A short time later Sennacherib's life was taken by his sons.

b. With such a precedent before him, Nehemiah opened his heart to God in prayer, requesting that the reproach heaped on God's people be turned on the Samaritans who initiated it.

c. **"For they have provoked thee to anger..."**

(1) Jesus said, "*Insomuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me*" **(Mat. 25:40).**

(2) Saul of Tarsus persecuted the church of God & wasted it **(Gal. 1:13)**; but our Lord responded, "*Saul, Saul, why persecuteth thou me?*" **(Acts 9:5)**

d. The blasphemy of the Samaritans was against God & His cause, not just simply a reproach against His people; & Nehemiah was perfectly willing for the Lord to handle it.

e. All the while, the walls continued to rise from the rubbish.

2. When responding to critics, begin with prayer, then give a response only as the situation compels it **(cf. Pro. 15:1, 28-29)**.

3. Before Nehemiah said a word to his critics, he talked with his God. He did not retaliate; rather, he took it to God!

4. Needed today w/in church are not weak-kneed leaders, but bended-kneed leaders!

B. Nehemiah's second response was to *pursue the goal* **(4:6-8)**.

1. That goal/mission- to rebuild the walls! As leader, Nehemiah kept the people focused on the task at hand!

2. Despite the onslaught of criticism, Nehemiah continued onward!

3. Critics demoralize- leaders encourage!

4. Nothing excites the adversary or the critic more than for his negativism to hinder the progress of something good. And nothing frustrates him more than when we find renewed strength in the Lord to persist.

5. But notice that this did not stop the opposition; in fact, it only intensified it **(4:7-8)**.

a. Not only did the critics expand their troops, but they added intensity to the opposition.

b. They planned a conspiracy & arranged to cause a disturbance.

c. What did Nehemiah do? Again, he went to God in prayer!

d. Intensified opposition against the will of God calls for an intensified response.

e. Nehemiah not only heard the opposition, but he also analyzed available data, prayed, & took decisive, practical action.

f. Occasionally persistence in the form of common sense must prevail. Examples:

(1) Do you fear that someone is going to break into your home? Certainly you should trust in God, but don't forget to lock the doors.

(2) Out of a job? Pray! But pound the pavement too. Send out the resume. Make contacts. The Lord doesn't have any trouble guiding a moving target. In fact, it's easier to steer a moving vehicle than one that is immobile.

C. Nehemiah's final response was to *post a guard* **(4:10-23)**.

1. Nehemiah had an established formula: follow fervent prayer with decisive action.
2. Guards were stationed at the partially finished wall around the clock.
3. It's at this point three distinct problems developed from w/in- perhaps greatest threat to date to Nehemiah's work **(cf. 4:10-12)**.
   a. The labor was of such demanding nature that the workers were near exhaustion. Would they be physically able to continue at such a driving pace?
   b. The walls were far from completion. Massive piles of rubbish lay in the paths of the builders; & bruised hands, sore muscles, & aching backs just did not seem up to the challenge.
   c. The ridicule, the hard work, & the threat of war had taken its toll. Ten times the Jews from outside the city had reported to Nehemiah the imminent threat of war. Evidently they thought tired workers would make poor soldiers, & that their wisest course of action would be either compromise or surrender.
4. But despite discouragement from w/in, Nehemiah once again responds in a positive, effective manner **(cf. 4:13-23)**.

   a. Nehemiah set armed guards at the lower parts of the wall, the sections most likely to be attacked, but in elevated positions so their presence could serve as a warning to the

approaching enemy.

b. He also assigned family groups certain positions of defense. This gave the weary workers a double incentive to defend the cause. They were indeed fighting for their great & awesome God, but also in defense of their wives, sons, daughters, & homes- everything that was of value to them.

5. Nehemiah's plan worked; that is, the enemy discovered that their plot to attack had been exposed; thus, they retreated **(cf. 4:15)**.

6. But despite this victory, if you will, Nehemiah recognized that the enemy was still a liable threat & that it was not time for them to let down their guard **(cf. 4:16-18)**.

   a. Half of Nehemiah's servants labored in the construction, while the other half stood armed & ready for defense.

   b. Furthermore, every workman on the wall was armed.

   c. As Christians, we can learn a valuable lesson from this example.

      (1) On the one hand, we must constantly be engaged in building the kingdom of God **(1 Cor. 9:16-22)**.

      (2) On the other our deadly engagement with the rulers of the darkness of this world demands that we constantly wear the armor of God & always have the sword of the Spirit at the ready **(Eph. 6:11-18)**.

7. Jerusalem for its size was very sparsely populated **(Neh. 7:4)**, so the available workers had to be widely distributed along the length of the wall. This seriously weakened their defenses. To overcome this, a plan for unified action was devised. The sound of the trumpet would quickly rally all to the point of attack, greatly increasing their strength to repel any enemy invasion **(cf. 4:19-23)**.

   a. What a lesson for us today!

   b. We need to assemble together regularly- to work together **(Heb. 10:24-25)**.

   c. We assemble for information, inspiration, & exhortation!

d. Illustration:

A young man courted a young lady for 2 years. He sent her love letters via mail every day. Do you know what happened? She married the mail man.

CONCLUSION:

1. There's not a one of us exempt from criticism-opposition, especially those in leadership positions!
2. How do we respond to our critics? Nehemiah teaches us how we should respond:
   a. Pray to God.
   b. Pursue your goal.
   c. Post a guard.

NEHEMIAH 5

A LEADERS RESPONSE TO EXPLOITATION (5:1-19).

INTRODUCTION:

1. Nehemiah & his workers were making tremendous progress on rebuilding the wall but all was not well in Jerusalem. Clayton Winters writes:
   "The exiles had escaped one kind of captivity only to be overwhelmed by another. Most of them who had chosen to return to Jerusalem no doubt had done so on the proverbial shoestring. Nor had they fared well in the intervening years. Drought stalked the land, & their money bags had holes in them ***(Hag. 1:6-11)****. Expected blessings had been turned into curses* ***(Mal. 2:3)****, & withheld tithes closed the windows of heavenly prosperity* ***(Mal. 3:8-11)****. Beyond that, a bad situation was made worse by heartless rulers who enriched themselves at the expense of the poor. Walls were a poor defense when there was nothing to defend; & that was the situation that was presently called to the attention of Governor Nehemiah."*
2. Outside resistance was now being met with internal exploitation, & the workers were ready to go on strike!
3. Nehemiah's response to this corruption teaches us how leaders should respond to any & all strife that may arise from within.

I. CRY OF THE PEOPLE (5:1-5)

A. In the midst of a *"great work"* **(4:19)** for a *"great God"* **(1:5)**, a *"great cry"* **(5:1)** was heard among the Jews.

1. They were not crying out against the Samaritans, the Ammonites, or the Arabs, but against their own people!
2. Jew was exploiting Jew, & the economic situation had become desperate.

B. The workers had four overwhelming problems.

1. They were hungry **(5:2)**.
   a. Their families had increased in size, but food production had not increased accordingly.
   b. Famine-drought had taken a toll on the land.

2. They were deeply in debt **(5:3)**.
   a. With all financial resources exhausted, there was but one recourse open to them if they were to continue to eat- mortgaged homes & farms.
   b. Apparently inflation was on the rise, & prices were going higher.
   c. The combination of debt & inflation is enough to wipe out a person's equity very quickly.
3. They were overburdened with taxes **(5:4)**.
   a. Despite the abject poverty of the common people, taxes levied by the Persian king had to be paid.
   b. With no money to meet these obligations, more & more mortgages were issued on property; & family inheritances were being lost by default with ever-increasing speed.
4. They were being exploited by their own people **(5:5)**.
   a. The loss of a child causes as much grief to the poor as it does the rich; yet, poverty was robbing them of their own flesh & blood. Already, some of their own daughters had been made slaves due to unpaid obligations.
   b. Wealthy Jews exploited their own brethren by loaning them money & taking their lands & children for collateral.
      (1) It was not unlawful for Jews to loan money to one another, but they were not to act like money lenders & charge interest **(cf. Deut. 23:19-20)**.
      (2) They were to treat one another with love even in the matter of taking security or making a brother a servant **(cf. Exo. 22:25-27; Lev. 25:35-36; Deut. 24:10-13)**.
      (3) Both the people & the land belonged to the Lord, & He would not have anybody using either one for personal gain.

C. Internal corruption threatened the success of the project, but Nehemiah would ultimately solve the challenge.

II. CARE FOR THE WORKERS (5:6)

A. Nehemiah was angry.

1. He had failed at balancing the completion of his mission with the welfare of his workers.
2. He had been focused on the execution of his plan to rebuild the walls, & he probably thought all of his leaders were focused on that same mission.
3. But he was wrong. His nobles & officials were focused on the pursuit of prosperity. They wanted to make money off of the people's hard work. This made our compassionate leader angry!

B. His loving care & concern for the people is seen in that he heard their cry & responded accordingly.

C. Should that not be characteristic of spiritual leaders today?

1. Good leaders listen to the cries of those they're leading. They're genuinely concerned for their well-being **(Psa. 23:1-3; Luke 15:4-10)**.

   <u>Heb. 13:17</u>: Obey them that have the rule over you, & submit yourselves: for they *watch* for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, & not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

2. Good leaders, because of the care & concern they have for both God & His people, will respond accordingly to those who would oppose such. Righteous indignation is not wrong!
3. Are there things that should anger spiritual leaders today?
   a. Complete disrespect for God's Word (false teachers; gullible members).
   b. Divisive spirit & dissension w/in the Lord's body.

III. CONFRONT THE ACCUSED (5:7-9)

A. Once hearing the complaints of the workers, Nehemiah immediately confronted those guilty of the exploitation.

B. Notice that though quick to anger, Nehemiah did not act presumptuously; rather, he gave the matter intense thought, & then acted on logical conclusions.

1. He didn't just immediately lash-out; rather, he got control of his feelings & his thoughts so that he could give constructive leadership to the people.
2. *"He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, & he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city"* **(Pro. 16:32)**.
3. If a leader can't control himself, he'll never be successful in controlling others.

C. Once Nehemiah considered the issue & isolated the root cause, he wasted no time addressing it. Those who were in the wrong were assembled & then rebuked.

1. Nehemiah points out that they were robbing their own brethren & were in direct violation of Scripture **(Deut. 23:19-20)**.
2. The word *"brother"* is used 4 times in this speech.
   a. He's emphasizing their relationship- they should be one; they were God's people- God's family of old!
   b. Scripture to consider:

      Psa. 133:1: Behold, how good & how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.

      Gen. 13:8: Abram said to Lot, We be brethren.
3. Their actions were no different than heathen world around them.
   a. God called Israel to be a *"light to the Gentiles"* **(Isa. 42:6; 49:6)**, but their conduct was certainly anything but a witness to their pagan neighbors.
   b. How could some of the Jewish citizens build the wall on the one hand but enslave their neighbors on the other?
   c. **Mat. 5:16; Tit. 2:14**

D. Leaders today must take action when such issues arise- especially issues relating to sin!

1. Careful thought & fervent prayer before acting is crucial.
2. Quick & decisive action will generally bring such issues to a stop!
3. When dealing with a faction within the body of Christ, the best thing to do is get them together & address them privately- keeping the innocent party out.
4. Be sure to have all your facts in order before rebuking those who

are in the wrong.

5. Let the guilty party know that their actions not only hurt themselves, but they also have a negative affect on the whole.

IV. CORRECT THE WRONG (5:10-13)

A. Nehemiah didn't just demand that they stop. He also demanded that they give back what they had taken. They had to correct their wrong.

B. The principle of collecting just & appropriate wages for one's service is valid & right **(1 Cor. 9:1-14; Jam. 5:1-4)**; & as governor Nehemiah certainly had the right **(5:10)**.

1. Furthermore, his position of authority would enable him to exact usury from the poor, even to the point of exploitation.

2. But like Moses **(Heb. 11:25)**, he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than to take advantage of a lucrative opportunity for self-enrichment.

3. So he not only castigated the rulers for unscriptural usury, but paved the way for challenging them to sacrifice for the suffering servants of God.

4. In short, he had been lending money to the needy, but was not charging interest or robbing them of their security **(Exo. 22:25)**.

C. Note that he, Nehemiah, asked that the exploiters restore at once that which they had taken **(5:11)**.

1. All real property was to be returned to its rightful owners, effectively canceling all debts; & all unlawful gains made through usury were to be refunded.

2. "*Hundreth part of the money...*" has reference to the interest these exploiters had been charging (12 % annual interest). It too was to be returned.

D. Once establishing what was needed to correct wrong, Nehemiah had them take an oath in the presence of the priests & the other city officials.

1. This meant that their promise was not only between them & their neighbors, but between them & the Lord; & this was a serious thing.

2. "*When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He*

has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow. It is better not to vow than to make a vow & not fulfill it" **(Eccl. 5:4-5)**.

E. Nehemiah concluded this assembly with three actions that emphasized the seriousness of the occasion.

1. First, he shook out the folds of his robe, symbolic of what God would do with the money lenders if they didn't keep their vow. This act of shaking your robe or the dust off your feet was a typical Jewish act of condemnation **(Acts 13:51; 18:6)**.
2. Second, the congregation responded with a collective "*Amen,*" which was much more than Jewish ritual. It was their solemn assent to what had been said & done at the assembly. Hebrew word means, "*So be it.*"
3. Third, the congregation unitedly praised the Lord.

V. CHECK OUT YOUR OWN CHARACTER (5:14-19)

A. Nehemiah caught the corruption of his leaders before it endangered the mission of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

1. His compassion for the men & women doing the work had triggered his anger toward his corrupt leaders.
2. His courage motivated him to confront his leaders head-on.
3. His competence enabled him to realize the importance of correcting his leader's wrongs.

B. But Nehemiah knew there was one more thing he must do. He had to consider his own leadership to make sure he was not profiting from the people's work.

1. For 12 years, 445-443, Nehemiah served as governor of Judah.
2. During that time he took nothing for either his own services of that of his staff **(5:14)**.
3. His position in Babylon must have been most lucrative for him to have borne his own expenses for so long a period of time.
4. Nehemiah's generosity stood out in stark contrast to those he preceded **(5:15)**.
5. In addition to his governmental administrative responsibilities Nehemiah labored on the wall, both as a personal overseer &

manual worker **(5:16)**.

6. Because of the economic conditions of that time, land was undoubtedly cheap; however, he never purchased any. He did not want to take advantage of God's people in anyway **(5:16)**!
7. Not only had Nehemiah taken his own household expenses upon himself, but he too extended table privileges to rulers of lesser rank & means **(5:17-19)**.
   a. These officials would have certainly been dependent upon the support of the people had it not been for his generosity.
   b. Beyond that, foreign dignitaries were not entertained by state funds, but rather at the personal expenses of the governor.

C. Although Nehemiah loved Jerusalem & his fellow countrymen dearly, he had an even higher motivating power for his labor & sacrifice- he wanted above all for his good works to be memorialized before God.

CONCLUSION:

1. Nehemiah 5 teaches us many important & relevant lessons; namely, how leaders should respond to internal corruption & exploitation.
   a. Hear the *cry* of the people; listen to their needs & concerns.
   b. Have genuine *concern* for all people, especially those in need.
   c. *Confront* the accused, but not before *careful* thought & prayer.
   d. *Correct* the wrong; i.e., device a plan to rid any & all wrong-doing.
   e. Constantly examine self & make sure your *character* is good.
2. Lessons for all of us:
   a. Wise handling of our savings, our investing, our spending, & our giving pleases Him & benefits everyone, including us.
   b. Prolonged personal sin takes a heavy toll on God's work in your life.
   c. Correcting any problem begins by facing it head-on.
   d. Correction is carried out most effectively when we seal it with a promise, & preferably in public.

NEHEMIAH 6

A LEADER NEVER SUCCUMBS TO THE EVIL SCHEMES OF THOSE OPPOSED TO HIM (6:1-19).

INTRODUCTION:

1. Illustration:

   In the early 70's. George Allen moved to Washington DC to become the head coach of the Redskins. He predicted victory & a Super Bowl title within 2 years. That 1st year, the team started out great. But ultimately, they returned to their losing ways. Fans &media alike did not blame coach Allen; rather, they blamed their quarterback, Sonny Jurgenson. One Sunday evening after another defeat, Sonny was getting ready to take a shower & go home. A sportswriter leaned over & asked him, "Say, Sonny, be honest now. Don't all these off-the-wall remarks we write & all this public flak disturb you? Doesn't it make you want to quit when people throw things at you from the stands & when you get those dirty letters?" Sonny just leaned back & said, "Naw...not really. I don't want to quit. I've been in this game long enought to know that every quarterback, every week of the season, spends his time either in the penthouse or in the outhouse."

2. Sonny's comment highlights an important fact; that is, if you're a leader, you spend your time either on top or on the bottom. You're either hero or villain; respected or reviled. Rarely anything between those extremes. People in leadership must live on the yo-yo of public opinion: the target for cheap shots on the bottom, the object of great admiration on the upside.

3. Nehemiah understood this truth all to well! And now, once again, as the walls were nearing completion, those opposed to him would raise their ugly heads!

4. Sanballat & Tobiah, enemies of Nehemiah, understand the spiritual, economical, & military importance of the walls. They know that as soon as the walls are finished, Jerusalem will emerge as a major power in the area. They also understand all of their efforts to stop the rebuilding of the walls have failed. But they're not ready to give up.

   a. They tried *derision* **(4:1-3)**.

   b. They tried *discouragement* **(4:7-10)**.

   c. They tried *danger* **(4:11)**.

   d. They tried *discord* **(5:1ff)**.

   e. They tried *depletion* **(5:1ff)**.

5. Nehemiah Chapter Six gives us a glimpse of the evil schemes that those opposed to God & His people employ & how godly leaders deal with it.

I. DISTRACTION (6:1-4)

A. Up to this point, the efforts of Nehemiah's enemies had not worked; thus, they devise scheme to distract him.

1. They want to meet with Nehemiah at a seemingly neutral location- plain of Ono. Plain of Ono is situated in the coastal area of Joppa, & would have been about an equal distance from both Samaria & Jerusalem- an ideal place to carry out their evil intent.
2. They come across as though the meeting would be some sort of peace agreement; however, their true plan was to distract Nehemiah & lure him away so that they might destroy him.
3. If Devil cannot devour us as a roaring lion, he'll seek to defeat us as an angel of light **(cf. 2 Cor. 11:13-14)**.

B. The attack upon Nehemiah was very significant because it happened at a crucial juncture in his life.

1. *Verse 1* tells us the attack occurred when he was nearly finished with the greatest task that Jerusalem's citizens had seen in their generation.
2. Not very long before they were ready to cut ribbon & enjoy a jubilant celebration, the enemy began to plot Nehemiah's demise.
3. Is this not true today? This must be one of the reasons God says to the proud person to *"take heed lest he fall"* **(1 Cor. 10:12)**.
4. In Scripture, such failures occurred time & again.
   a. When did Bathsheba cross the gaze of David? At a time when he had not known defeat in battle. From the time he took the kingdom until he fell with Bathsheba, David had not known defeat- politically, militarily, or personally.
   b. When did Jonah fall into self-pity? After the greatest revival that had ever swept a city.
   c. When did Jospeh receive that temptation from Mrs. Potiphar? Soon after he had bene promoted under Mr. Potiphar's leadership & given free run of the house.

C. When work of God seems successful, the world wants to get on inside. If world can't whip us, they may try to join us & work from inside.

D. Notice Nehemiah's response- *"I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down."*

1. He did not immediately reveal his knowledge of their plan, evidenced from their persistence in pursuing it.
2. Rather, he needed time to hang the city gates, that this work was too important to leave at this point.
3. Four times they pressured him to change his mind, but each time his answer remained the same.
4. Nehemiah lived a life of discernment. Discernment is a God-given quality a leader must possess.
5. Discernment allows you to read between the lines.

II. DEFAMATION (6:5-7)

A. Efforts to lead Nehemiah to the slaughter at Ono ended in frustration. However, refusing to be outdone, Sanballat went public with a campaign of slander & intimidation.

1. Normally, correspondence to an official of state would have bene sealed, but this letter was open & intended for more than the eyes of the addressee.
2. In fact, it may have been delivered in much the same manner as the letter sent by Sennacherib to Hezekiah **(2 Kings 18:17ff)**.

B. The letter set forth allegations of a rumor spreading among the nations around Judah, & confirmed by no less a figure than Gashum.

1. The rumor was two-fold:
   a. The walls of Jerusalem were being rebuilt & fortified because the Jews planned a rebellion against Artaxerxes.
   b. Nehemiah had appointed prophets to proclaim him as king of Judah.
2. Both were extremely dangerous charges, & Sanballat made it known that he intended to carry them word for word to the very throne of Persia.
3. Two distinctive characteristics of this rumor:

a. A source is never declared (*"It is reported among the nations..."*). Such a statement appears to speak for a majority.

b. Rumors usually involve exaggeration & inaccuracy. A rumor builds upon a kernel of truth, which gives gullible people- or people with a motive- just enough reason to swallow the lie whole. Then it's passed from person to person as the exaggeration compounds itself, almost like magic.

4. Rumors & slander hurt- they're designed to hurt & destroy.

5. **cf. Pro. 6:16-19**

C. Nehemiah once again handled the situation as a good leader will- he simply pointed out the facts, stayed busy in the work, & prayed that God would continue to strengthen him.

D. To gossipers:

1. If you have a loose tongue, God is going to have to deal with it.

2. Gossip is a major reason for disunity in the family of God & a chief contributor to the demise of organizations.

3. *"Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear"* **(Eph. 4:29 ESV)**.

D. Abraham Lincoln once said,

"If I were to try & read, much less answer, every attack mad eon me, this shop might as well be closed for any other business. I do the very best I know how, the very best I can, & I mean to keep on doing that until the end. If the end brings me out alright, what is said against me won't amount to anything. If the end brings me out all wrong, then 10 angels swearing that I was right would make no difference."

III. DISMAY (6:8-9)

A. The enemies of God wanted to weaken the hands of God's people by casting fear into their hearts & minds.

B. Devil is the instigator of fear. Fear will cripple you- it will stop you in your work for God!

C. Did you know that the phrase, *"fear not"* is used 365 times in the Bible-

one for every day of the year!

D. Fear on the part of God's people is an insult to God who said...

I'll never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper & I'll not fear what man shall do to me **(Heb. 13:5-6)**.

IV. DECEPTION (6:10-12)

A. A priest named Shemaiah was among those who sealed the sure covenant of faithfulness **(10:8)**, & also joined other priests in worship at the dedication of the wall **(12:42)**.

1. He was shut up or confined to his house at the time, evidently because of some physical or ceremonial uncleanness **(Lev. 21:16-23; 22:2-9)**.

2. Nevertheless, he wanted to take Nehemiah into the temple on the pretense of protecting his life. But Nehemiah quickly responded that such a man as he could not enter God's holy sanctuary; the Law of the Lord reserved that privilege only for the priests **(Num. 18:7; 2 Chr. 26:16-21)**.

B. Nehemiah's initial response was, "*Should such a man as I flee*" **(6:11)**?

1. Nehemiah served as both leader & example to the people.

2. Could he expect them to lay their lives on the line for the Lord while he sheltered his own in the safety of God's house?

C. Nehemiah also understood that this man had not been sent by God; that is, he was a deceiver working for God's enemies!

1. Many today are speaking in the name of God, but they're nothing more than false teachers- wolves in sheep's clothing **(Mat. 7:15)**!

2. **cf. 1 John 4:1-2; 2 Pet. 2:1-3; 2 Cor. 11:13**

D. How did Nehemiah know that this man was not a man of God?

1. By what this man said- asked Nehemiah into Temple. Nehemiah knew what God's Word said on this particular subject.

2. If we don't know Truth, we'll fall for any error that comes along. The only safe guard we have against error is to know the Truth **(John 8:32)**.

V. DIVISION (6:13-19)

A. Despite all that Nehemiah & his counterparts went through, they persevered & completed their task in just 52 days **(6:15)**.

1. Elul was the 6th month of the Jewish calendar, & corresponds roughly to our September.
2. Comparatively speaking, the labor force on the wall was small; but what they lacked in numbers, they made up in zeal & determination.
3. Contempt had poured from the hearts & lips of Sanballat & Tobiah, but it was now turned on their own heads.
4. God is not mocked **(Gal. 6:7-8)**.
   a. Dogs licked Ahab's blood in the vineyard he had stolen **(1 Kings 21:19; 22:37-38)**.
   b. Haman was hanged on his own gallows **(Est. 7:10)**.
   c. Worms ate the flesh of the blasphemous Herod **(Acts 12:20-23)**.
5. Ultimately, truth will prevail & sin will not go unchecked!

B. Nehemiah's external enemies were demoralized & defeated.

1. Once the walls were finished, Sanballat, Tobiah, & Geshem posed significantly less danger to Jerusalem.
2. Nehemiah had been focused on his external enemies, & he had defeated them at every turn.
3. But the danger is different after the wall is finished. Now the most important danger is internal.
4. Jerusalem's own nobles are in allegiance with Nehemiah's enemies. They are committed to Tobiah instead of to the Lord.

C. Notice as the chapter concludes the divided loyalty of some **(6:17-19)**.

1. Nobles of Judah were corresponding with Tobiah.
2. It appears as though they were hoping to win Tobiah's favor & thus earn a greater reward when Tobiah & his friends took over Jerusalem.
3. These people were nothing more than traitors to the nation & to the Lord.
4. Meshullam was one of the workers on the wall **(Neh. 3:4, 30)**, &

yet his family was undermining the very work he was doing.

5. These traitors repeatedly told Nehemiah what a fine man Tobiah really was.

   Pro. 28:4: They that forsake the law praise the wicked; but such as keep the law contend with them.

6. They had been walking in the "*counsel of the ungodly*" **(Psa. 1:1)**.
7. Tobiah kept sending letters to his informers, & they in turn kept telling people to change their allegiance before Jerusalem was taken by the Gentiles.

CONCLUSION:

1. "*And when all our enemies heard of it, all the nations around us were afraid & fell greatly in their own esteem, for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God*" **(Neh. 6:16).**
2. I want to be part of a church that does things in such a manner that people of the world will perceive that this is the work of God!
3. "*Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen*" **(Eph. 3:20)**.
4. May we never succumb to the evil schemes of those opposed to Christ! May we, like Nehemiah, continue to build!

NEHEMIAH 7

A LEADER KNOWS THAT THEIR WORK IS NEVER OVER, EVEN AFTER A TASK HAS BEEN SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED.

INTRODUCTION:

1. Chapter 7 is a transitional period for our leader Nehemiah; a transition in that he goes from builder to governor.
   a. We've seen Nehemiah as a cupbearer to the king of the most powerful nation on earth & as a builder of God's chosen people.
   b. When wall was completed he could've returned to his prestigious job as cupbearer, or he could have retired to a life of luxury in Jerusalem.
   c. But his work wasn't over, so he transitioned from builder to governor.
   d. **Eph. 6:13: Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, *& having done all, to stand firm.***
   e. Nehemiah had been steadfast in building the walls & in resisting the enemy, & now he had to be steadfast in consolidating & conserving the gains. Remember the words of John...

      "Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward" **(2 John 8)**.
2. He once again shows great leadership & organizational skills.
   a. A city is much more than the walls, gates, & houses; a city is people.
   b. In the first half of this book, the people existed for the walls; but now the walls must exist for the people.
   c. It was time to organize the community so that the citizens could enjoy the quality of life God wanted them to have.
   d. God had great things in store for Jerusalem, for one day His Son would walk the city streets, teach in the temple, & die outside the city walls.
3. This chapter records three important steps that must be taken by any leader in order to protect the people & the work that has been done.

I. ENLISTING LEADERSHIP (7:1-3)

A. With some of the Jewish nobles still courting the friendship & favors of Tobiah, Nehemiah saw a need to stabilize the government of Jerusalem with some trusted leaders.

B. Thus, one of his first official acts as governor was to appoint trusted leaders to be in charge of Jerusalem & its walls; namely, his brother Hanani **(1:2; 7:2)** & Hananiah, who was in charge of the palace **(7:2)**.

C. Next, Nehemiah established some simple rules for protection of the people.

1. First, the gates will not be opened until the day is hot.

a. This would provide protection against thieves & armies.

b. Night was the best time for thieves to ply their trade & early morning was the best time to attack- a time when many would still be in bed.

c. By not opening gates until the heat of the day, all citizens of Jerusalem would be up & about, ready to defend.

2. Second, each gate was to have a gatekeeper in charge.

a. What good are strong new gates if nobody is guarding them & controlling who enters & leaves the city?

(1) What good are walls if the gates are open to every foe who wants to enter the city?

(2) The Great Wall of China was penetrated at least four times due to bribes.

(3) Gates & walls are only as good as the people who guard them.

b. Thus, competent gatekeepers were appointed to oversee the gates. When gatekeeper is not on duty, he will close the gates & reinforce them with bars.

c. It appears that some responsibility for guard duty was assigned to all the male inhabitants, but especially those whose homes were situated near the wall.

3. Third, Nehemiah established a kind of National Guard.

a. He assigned citizens of Jerusalem to specific military responsibilities near their homes.

b. His military commander, Hananiah, was responsible for executing these three rules.

C. With faithful leaders, guards at the gates, watchmen on the walls, & a solid neighborhood watch, the city was safe from outside attack.

D. Application for us today:

1. If God's people don't protect what they have accomplished for the Lord, the enemy will come in & take over.
2. Such solidity begins with the enlistment of faithful & effective leaders who have the ability to organize & secure God's work.
3. We need guards at the gates, faithful men who'll not allow false doctrine to get in & take over!
4. We need watchers on the walls to warn of approaching enemy.
5. Christian parents need to guard their homes lest the enemy gets in & captures their children.
6. In this day when "pluralism" is interpreted by most people to mean "agree with everybody about everything & don't make waves," Christians need to remember that they are different & must test everything by the Word of God **(Gal. 1:6-9)**.

II. ESTABLISHING CITIZENSHIP (7:4-69)

A. Walls were repaired, gates hung, & watches positioned; yet, the real key to defense was the people **(7:4-5)**.

B. They had a city with walls & competent leadership. They now had to be organized & motivated to remain faithful to God.

C. Nehemiah starts by reinforcing the importance of family.

1. But due to the sparse population of the city, Nehemiah discerned this as its weakest link.
2. A register of those returning from Babylon with Zerubbabel was found, & from these families one in ten was chosen by lot to live in Jerusalem **(11:1)**.
3. This organization will reunite many families & reinforce the importance of family to those who'd survived the exile.

D. **Nehemiah 7:4-69** parallels **Ezra 2:1-64**.

1. In comparing the two lists, one will find some differences in names & numbers.
2. This does not suggest that there are either errors or contradictions in the Bible.
3. Errors in spelling names or copying numbers could easily creep in over a century, & none of these differences affects any matter of doctrine or duty.
4. Furthermore, the scribes who kept the public records certainly updated them after the community was established in Jerusalem.
   a. Ezra 2 lists the names of those who set out with Ezra, but it's possible that others joined the group after Zerubbabel's list was completed.
   b. For instance, **Ezra 2:2** lists only 11 leaders, while **Nehemiah 7:7** gives 12 names, adding Nahamani.

E. Reading this long list of difficult names might be boring to some, but these people were God's "bridge" from the defeats of the past to the hopes of the future.

1. These Jews were the "living link" that connected the historic past with the prophetic future & made it possible for Jesus Christ to come into the world.
2. **Ezra 2 & Nehemiah 7** are to the O.T. what **Hebrews 11** is to the N.T.: a listing of the people whose faith & courage made things happen.

F. Application for us today:

1. Ask yourself this question: *"If I had to prove my genealogy in order to get into God's city, could I do it?"*
2. We're heading for one of two destinies- heaven or hell- & only those who belong to God's family can enter heaven.
3. Family is important, & cohesiveness & a sense of belonging is vital to the stability of the church!

III. ENCOURAGING WORSHIP (7:70-73)

A. Leadership & citizenship together make a state, but it takes worship to

make that state into a godly nation.

1. *"The worth of a state, in the long run, is the worth of the individuals composing it."* **-John Stuart Mill**
2. But the worth of the individual depends on their relationship to God, & this involves worship.
3. If individual godliness declines, the morality of the nation declines.

B. Notice from our text that there was a collective effort in the giving to the work of the Lord.

Some of the Jewish leaders gave generously to the temple ministry.

But Nehemiah also informs us that the governor & some of the common people also gave offerings to the Lord.

It was only right that the leaders set the example.

Breakdown of the amount given:

a. 779 pounds of gold.
b. 5,875 pounds of silver.
c. 50 basins.
d. 97 priestly garments.

C. It was now the 7th month (Oct.-Nov.), when Israel was expected to celebrate the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, & the Feast of Tabernacles **(Lev. 23:23-44)**.

1. There could have been no better time for Nehemiah to call the people together to honor the Word of God, confess their sins, & dedicate themselves & their work to the Lord.
2. What began with *concern* **(Neh. 1)** led to *construction* **(Neh. 2-3)** & *conflict* **(Neh. 4-7)**; & now it was time for *consecration* **(Neh. 8-12)**.

CONCLUSION:

1. Nehemiah was a leader who understood that his work was never over, even after the walls had been rebuilt.
2. A faithful leader will solidify God's work from within by...
   a. *Enlisting* additional leadership.
   b. *Establishing* an accountable citizenship.
   c. *Encouraging* active worship & service to God.
3. Lessons Learned:
   a. People are important to God.

(1) God used common people who were willing to risk their futures on the promises of God.

(2) Today, God is still calling people to leave their personal "Babylons" & follow Him by faith.

(3) The church is living in a day of reproach, & there are "ruins" all around us that need to be rebuilt.

Psa. 11:3: If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?

(4) The righteous can rebuild what has been torn down & start over again!

b. God keeps accounts of His servants.

(1) He knows where we came from, what family we belong to, how much we gave, & how much we did for Him.

(2) When we stand before the Lord, we will have to give an accounting of our lives before we can receive our rewards **(Rom. 14:7-12)**; & we want to be able to give a good account.

c. The Lord is able to keep His work going.

d. We must make sure we're in the family of God. Our names should be etched in the Lamb's Book of Life!

NEHEMIAH 8

GODLY LEADERS MAKE IT THEIR TOP PRIORITY TO DIRECT THOSE THEY'RE LEADING TOWARD GOD.

INTRODUCTION:

1. Immediately following the completion of the walls, Nehemiah assembles the people together so as to hear God's Word read from Ezra the scribe **(Neh. 8)**.
   a. The walls were now finished & the gates were hung.
   b. The *material* needs of the city had been met; now it was time to focus on the *spiritual* needs of the people in the city.
2. Ezra & Nehemiah put the Word of God first in the life of the city.
3. If God is to work in & through His people, then they must respond positively to His Word.
4. EXAMPLES OF INDIVIDUALS WHO TOOK GOD'S WORD TO HEART:
   a. French author Victor Hugo said over a century ago, "*England has two books, the Bible & Shakespeare. England made Shakespeare but the Bible made England.*"
   b. When they arrived in America, the Pilgrim Fathers brought with them that same reverence for the Word of God.
   c. President Woodrow Wilson said, "*America was born to exemplify that devotion to the elements of righteousness which are derived from the revelations of Holy Scripture.*"
5. Spiritual leaders must make it a priority to direct those they lead toward God.

I. HEARING OF THE WORD (8:1-8)

A. They were all *assembled* together in one place for the purpose of hearing God's Word proclaimed **(8:1)**.
   1. On the 1st day of the 7th month, the people gathered together near the Water Gate & requested that Ezra the scribe read God's Word.
      a. The 7th month was a special time in the Jewish calendar because the Jews celebrated the Feast of Trumpets on the 1st day, the Day of Atonement on the 10th day, & the Feast of Tabernacles from the 15th-21st day **(Lev. 23:23-44)**.

b. It was the perfect time for the nation to get right with the Lord & make a fresh new beginning.

2. Completion of the walls met security & independence, & it set the stage for a religious revival!

a. Years before God had warned through Hosea, "*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children*" **(Hos. 4:6)**.

b. Lest history should repeat itself, the people assemble with unanimous voice to call for a reading & exposition of the law of God.

3. Application for us today:

a. Amidst success, we must never forget God & His Word **(Psa. 1:1-2)**!

b. The fact that they all assembled teaches us an important lesson relative to our coming together **(Heb. 10:24-25)**.

c. When God's people come together, they must come together as one body **(Gal. 3:26ff)**.

d. They weren't forced to assemble- they chose to assemble. The choice is up to us **(Jos. 24:15)**.

e. Their purpose for assembling was to better themselves spiritually & hear what God's Word had to say. It wasn't a *social* gathering, it was a *spiritual* gathering **(Acts 20:7)**.

f. A failure to study the Word will result in a lack of knowledge, which in turn brings destruction **(2 Pet. 3:18)**.

g. Those who read & interpret Scriptures must themselves be good students of the Word **(2 Tim. 2:15)**.

B. They had only one *authoritative* source to choose from- God's Word **(8:2)**.

1. Only one book was requested & brought forth- God's Law!

a. The basic constitution of God's Law, the ten commandments, was written with the finger of God on two tables of stone **(Exo. 31:18)**.

b. These & many other divine precepts Moses preserved in writing in some ancient type of book **(Deut. 28:58-61; Mark 10:4-5; Luke 20:28; 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Chr. 35:12; Luke 24:44-46)**.

c. Each king was commanded to make for himself a written copy of this law, & to regularly read from it all the days of his life **(Deut. 17:18-19)**.

d. When the people departed from God, the book of the law was the guideline for reformation of life, & a restoration of the primitive practices of the nation **(2 Kings 22:8ff)**.

e. The captives who returned with Zerubabbel had access to this law book **(Ezra 6:17-18)**; & Ezra, even while in the captivity of Babylon, had become a ready scribe in that law, preparing himself to teach it **(Ezra 7:6-10)**.

2. Ezra, by bringing forth this book before the people to read, reinforces it as being the only authoritative guide for the reformation of their lives & religion.

3. Ezra's audience not only contained adults of both sexes, but also younger people who had reached a sufficient stage of maturity to be involved in religious matters.

a. It is a travesty to speak of the Bible as a book not subject to human comprehension- a revelation that reveals nothing!

b. Jesus Himself said, "*Let him that readeth understand*" **(Mark 13:14)**.

c. Quoting from Isaiah, our Lord said, "*For this people's heart is waxed gross, & their ears are dull of hearing, & their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, & hear with their ears, & should understand with their heart, & should be converted, & I should heal them*" **(Mat. 13:15)**.

d. Paul wrote, "*Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ*" **(Eph. 3:4)**.

4. Application for us today:

a. "*If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God*" **(1**

Pet. 4:11).

b. Our only authority in matters of life & godliness is God's Word **(2 Pet. 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:16-17)**.

c. We must be doers of the word, & not hearers only **(Jam. 1:22ff)**.

d. It's imperative that we understand what His Word says!

C. They were all *attentive* to the words that were read from God's Word **(8:3)**.

1. From the first morning light to the middle of the day, Ezra, the skilled scribe, opened the stream of inspiration to the thirsty souls about him.

2. The people were attentive to what he had to say concerning the book of the Law.

a. The people had a mind to work, as well as a mind to listen!

b. There is a similar incident in the restoration of Josiah **(cf. 2 Kings 23:1ff)**; that is, the people pledged themselves to obey the terms of the covenant.

3. Application for us today:

a. God desires a people who have a hungering & thirsting for righteousness **(Mat. 5:6)**.

b. We must not take lightly the promises we make to God!

c. We must not be dull of hearing when it comes to God's Word **(Heb. 5:11)**.

d. We mustn't be in a hurry to bring to an end the reading/study of God's Word!

D. They were all in *agreement* with what God's Word revealed **(8:4-8)**.

1. A platform had been erected for the purpose of elevating Ezra so that all could see & hear.

2. Ezra was flanked by men of honor, & had been assigned assistants, probably translators, who helped the people to understand the law being read.

a. It appears as though this became sort of a large Bible class.

b. The Levites went out among the people & translated &

answered their questions & explained anything the people did not understand.

3. Note that the people stood in reverence & in respect for the holy word of God as it was read to them.
4. The people's response brought praise to Jehovah from the lips of Ezra. They assented & agreed with the hearty & emphatic amen, amen, then humbly bowed their faces to the dust & joined Ezra in his worship of the Lord.
5. Application for us today:
   a. We need to show more respect for the Word of God today. We're to *"give attention to the public reading of Scripture"* **(1 Tim. 4:13)**.
   b. It's imperative that we examine the Scripture; proper application & understanding is necessary **(Acts 17:11)**.
   c. Some plant-some water, but God gives increase: Ezra read-planted & Levites helped explain- watered **(1 Cor. 3:6-7)**.
   d. We must all be united/of the same mind in matters of the faith **(Eph. 4:1ff; Phi. 4:2)**.
   e. Public (large assembly) & private (one-on-one) teaching is essential **(Acts 20:20)**.
   f. When it comes to our worship, we must show reverence & respect to the One in whom we worship- God **(John 4:24)**
   g. Teachers of God's Word must make it understandable.

II. HAPPINESS AS A RESULT OF THE WORD (8:9-12)

A. Emotions were overflowing as the people realized what God had done for them.
   1. They mourned as they realized how inadequate they were as individuals & wept as they realized that God still loved them.
   2. The reading of God's Word was powerful & it had moved them to tears **(Heb. 4:12)**.

B. You may recall that when Josiah heard God's message from the book of the law, he tore his clothing & wept before the Lord.
   1. The reason was apparent: *"For great is the wrath of the Lord that*

is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us" **(2 Kings 22:11-13, 19)**.

2. And the same curse hung heavily over the exiles **(Neh. 1:6-11)**, & God's Word produced in them a similar reaction.

C. But this was not the proper occasion for sadness & weeping; rather, they had manifold reasons for joyful praise.

1. They had been released from Babylonian Captivity & restored to their homeland.
2. They had a greater degree of security within the walled city than they had known for many years.
3. All debts had been canceled, & all property returned to its rightful owners, ending some of the extreme hardships of the past.
4. The word of God was available to all of understanding, guiding them in the grace & favor of the Lord.
5. They had leaders, civil & religious, who loved God & had the deepest concern for His people.
6. Most of all, they could rest in the assurance that God was their strength- an ever present help in time of trouble.

D. Thus, a day for rejoicing & festivity was proclaimed.

1. Once the Levites had convinced them, they readily caught the joyful spirit & enthusiasm of the occasion.
2. They celebrated it with feasting, & shared gladly & liberally with those less fortunate than themselves.
3. They not only understood the words, but also the import of God's Law- a message designed to bring the ultimate joy & gladness to the lives of men!

III. HEEDING TO THE WORD (8:13-18)

A. On the 2nd day of the 7th month, a second & more detailed reading of God's Word was done; this time, however, only the heads of the various families or clans, along with the priests & Levites, met with Ezra.

B. Scripture was given for purposes of doctrine, reproof, correction, & instruction in righteousness **(2 Tim. 3:16-17)**; & it is with this

recognition of its holy content that the book of the law is now spread before these leaders.

C. While studying the Law, they found that they were to observe/keep the Feast of the Booths- something Israel had not done for a very long time.

1. This celebration was also called the feast of tabernacles, & was observed from the 15th to the 21st of Tishri- the 7th month.

2. When the harvest had been gathered, all Israelites moved into booths constructed of tree branches to remind them of their escape from Egypt, & of their period of wilderness wanderings when they had no fixed dwellings **(Exo. 23:33-34; Lev. 23:34-43; Deut. 6:13-16)**.

   a. The feast was a time for looking back & remembering the nation's 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, when then people were homeless & lived in temporary shelters.

   b. It too was a time for looking around at the harvest blessings from the hand of God. The Lord had given them a good land, & they were to never forget the Giver as they enjoyed the gifts **(Deut. 8)**.

   c. It was also an occasion for looking ahead to the glorious kingdom God promised His people Israel **(Zec. 14:4ff)**.

3. This feast had been restored by Ezra about 13 years earlier **(Ezra 3:4)**, but its practice had again fallen into disuse.

4. It's not enough to hear the Word of God; we must obey what it tells us to do **(Jam. 1:22-25)**.

   a. **8:16-18-** The people went forth & did as God commanded.

   b. There is but one way a real restoration can be accomplished. When people find their religion out of harmony with the pattern given in God's Word, they must change & conform themselves to the divine rule.

   c. Years of living in apostasy neither sanctify human tradition nor nullify God's original plan.

   d. Having determined God's will from a study of His Word, the people immediately erected their booths & moved in.

   e. These Jews not only had joy in hearing the Word, but they

had also great gladness in heeding/obeying it **(8:17)**.

D. The last part of this chapter concludes by depicting the authority of the book of God's law being restored to its rightful place in the hearts of the people, & it being read to them each day during the feast of booths. God had always expected that from His people **(cf. Deut. 31:12)**.

CONCLUSION:

1. Nehemiah understood that there was much yet to do; however, he also knew that it was now time to celebrate!
2. Lessons for all of us:
   a. We must solidify ourselves in the Lord, but understand that the enemy is always lurking, waiting for an opportunity to attack.
   b. Physical labor is essential, but all of us must take time out to study God's Word!
   c. There's nothing wrong with celebrating a success; so long as we remember Whom it was that brought the success about!
   d. Competent, faithful men should lead the people of God in worship & study.
   e. It's imperative that we put into practice/obey that which we hear from God's Word.

remember Whom it was that brought the success about!

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NEHEMIAH 9

GODLY LEADERS CONFESS THEIR SINS & DIRECT THOSE THEY LEAD TO FOLLOW SUIT.

INTRODUCTION:

1. A California industrialist once said, *"There are two things that are the most difficult to get people to do: to think...& to do things in the order of their importance."*
   a. Indeed, it is difficult to find a person who thinks first- & then acts.
   b. Most of us usually do the opposite.
   c. Equally difficult is helping people maintain proper priorities & to use time wisely.
   d. Not only does the leader wrestle with ways to help others think & put

first things first, he struggles to do this himself.

e. And the degree to which the leader can maintain these disciplines will determine how well they can lead.

2. Nehemiah was a man who thought before he acted & kept his priorities clearly in view.

   a. He didn't bring a group of people to Jerusalem & immediately have them start to stack up bricks. He spent four months in uninterrupted thought/prayer before doing anything.

   b. When opposition came, he didn't instantly retaliate; he thought it over. He prayerfully planned the best way to handle the interruption or the opposition, & then acted wisely.

   c. When the time came to develop the plan for a righteous lifestyle, what we would call a good government, he didn't suddenly plunge into it; he first spent more time thinking.

   d. And the people, apparently imitating the thoughtful approach exemplified by Nehemiah, also went to God in prayer, as recorded here in chapter 9.

3. Having concluded the feast of tabernacles (Tishri- 7th month; 15th-21st day), the people of Israel once again assembled.

   a. Isn't it interesting that after 52 days of working side-by-side, these folks continued to be together.

   b. **7:5, 66; 8:1; 9:1-** they assembled together.

   c. Purpose for this assembly was once again spiritual; that is, they had come together on the 24th day of the 7th month with penitent hearts.

4. They devoted this 24th day of the month to fasting, penitence, meditation & prayer &, once again, God's Word was given special prominence.

5. The detailed prayer of Neh. 9 develops naturally from the preceding chapter.

   a. Neh. 8 focuses on God's Word to them.

   b. In Neh. 9, the people respond with their words to Him; words of genuine sorrow about their sins & of grateful remembrance of His grace.

6. Their six hour service was likewise divided into two parts.

   a. First, they listened to god's Word.

   b. Then, they responded to its message by confessing their sins & by

worshiping the God whose nature & promise guaranteed their pardon.

7. This chapter can be broken down into three parts.

I. THE GREATNESS OF GOD (9:1-6)

A. The Feast of Tabernacles has ended, but the people lingered to hear more of the Word of God.

1. Feasting had turned to fasting as the Word brought conviction & people started confessing their sins.
2. This service lasted a half a day (6 hours).

B. God's greatness is seen in the fact that He receives our worship.

1. True worship involves many elements: hearing the Scriptures, praising God, praying, confessing sin (self-examination), & separating ourselves from that which displeases God.
2. Worship involves the Word of God, for the Word of God reveals the God of the Word.
3. The better we know the Scriptures & respond to them, the better we will know God & become like Him.
4. Any worship service that ignores the Scriptures will not receive the blessing of God.
5. In the Scriptures, God speaks to us; & in prayer & praise, we speak to Him.
6. Notice also that the people took time to confess their sins **(9:2-3)** & seek the Lord's forgiveness.
7. They also separated themselves from the world as they drew near to the Lord.

a. The nation of Israel was chosen by God to be a special people, separated from the pagan nations around them.
Lev. 20:26: You shall be holy to me, for I the Lord am holy & have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.

b. Peter applied these words to Christian believers in the church today **(cf. 1 Pet. 1:15; 2:9-10)**.

c. An acknowledgment of sin is necessary, but it must also be followed up by abandoning-getting rid of such practices.

8. Thus, if they were to be the people of God, they had to be the people of God's Book. That was true of the Israelites; it is equally true of us today **(cf. Rev. 1:3; 22:14, 18-19)**.

C. God's greatness is also seen in the fact that He is God alone **(9:6a)**.

1. The nation of Israel was surrounded by idolatry & the degrading lifestyle that was associated with pagan worship.
2. As God's chosen people, they were to have no other gods before them **(Exo. 20:3)**.

D. God's greatness is also evident in this passage in the fact that He created the universe **(9:6b)**.

1. **cf. Gen. 1:1**
2. Whenever God wanted to encourage His people, He would point to creation around them & remind them that He had made it all **(Isa. 40)**.
3. To know that our Father in heaven is the Creator of all things is a great source of strength & peace.
4. Idolatry means worshiping & serving the creature & the creation rather than the Creator **(Rom. 1:25)**.

E. God's greatness is seen in the fact of His providential care for His creation **(9:6c)**.

1. God did not simply make everything & then abandon it to its own course.
2. He is involved in the affairs of His creation **(Psa. 145:16)**.

F. Finally, God's greatness is seen in the fact that the hosts of heaven worship Him **(9:6d)**.

G. In our worship, it's wise to begin with the greatness of God.

1. If we focus too much on what we want Him to do, we may find our hearts becoming selfish.
2. Sincere worship honors God in spite of circumstances or feelings, or desires.

II. THE GOODNESS OF GOD (9:7-30)

A. This prayer rehearses history of Israel, revealing God's goodness to His people & their repeated failure to appreciate His gifts & obey His will.

B. The word "*give*" is used in one way or another at least 16 times in this chapter, for our God is indeed the "giving God," who delights in meeting the needs of His people **(1 Tim. 6:17)**.

1. **9:8, 15, 35-** God gave Israel a land.
2. **9:13-** God gave Israel a law.
3. **9:20-** God gave Israel the ministry of the Spirit.
4. **9:15, 20-** God gave Israel food & water.
5. **9:27-** God gave Israel deliverers.
6. **9:22, 24-** God gave Israel victory over their enemies.

C. Israel's history records God's goodness.

1. **9:7-18-** God's goodness seen in the forming of a nation.
   a. God promised to make of Abraham a great nation **(Gen. 12:1-3; 17:1-8)**.
   b. Note the fact that God brought Abram out (separated) of Ur of the Chaldeans.
   c. Note also the fact the Abraham was faithful/obedient to God's Will, even willing to sacrifice His son Isaac **(Gen. 22)**
   d. God's covenant **(Gen. 12:1-3)** was the basis for all that God did with & for Abraham & his descendants. It was God's purpose that all the world be blessed through Israel, & He did this in the sending of His Son **(Gal. 3:8)**.
   e. In the land of Egypt, the nation multiplied greatly, saw God's power over the pagan gods, & experienced deliverance from bondage by the mighty hand of God **(Exo. 1-15)**.
   f. God destroyed Egyptian army at the Red Sea. It was a complete deliverance; Israel was to have no further relationship with Egypt.
   g. God was good to His people, giving them food & water. He too gave them His Law, so that in their civil, personal, & religious life, they knew the will of God.

h. Sadly, Israel responded to God's goodness by refusing to bow to His authority **(9:16-18)**.

(1) Israel tempted God over their food & water supply **(Exo. 16:1-3; 17:1-2)**.

(2) Then they complained about the kind of food provided **(Num. 11:4-6)**.

(3) Even while Moses was on Sinai receiving the Law, they formed a golden calf to lead them back to the leeks & cucumbers of Egypt **(Exo. 32:1-4)**.

(4) For 40 years their rebellious hearts would continue to tempt God **(Heb. 3:15-19)**.

(5) God's altar was violated with strange fire **(Lev. 10:1ff)**; fearful hearts refused to enter the promised land **(Num. 14:1ff)**; the priesthood of Aaron was rejected **(Num. 16:3-4)**; & idolatry & immorality became a common practice **(Num. 25:1-3)**.

(6) It was enough to tempt God to disinherit them & start over with a new seed **(Num. 14:11-12)**.

2. **9:19-22**- God's goodness seen in His leading the nation.

a. During the 40 years of Israel's discipline in the wilderness, the old generation died & a new generation was born; but God never forsook His people **(cf. Exo. 34:5-6)**.

b. This mercy & forgiveness He manifested to Israel in four distinct ways:

(1) He guided & shielded them with the pillar of cloud & fire.

(2) He gave them His good Spirit to instruct them, referring no doubt to the revelation of the Spirit given through Moses, & the system of prophecy which was made such a unique feature of the Holy people **(Deut. 18:15-19)**.

(3) Their physical needs were totally supplied during their

40 years of wilderness wanderings.

(4) He gave them the kingdoms of the wicked heathen for their own possession.

3. **9:23-30-** God's goodness is seen in His chastening of the nation.

a. We don't usually associate chastisement with love; yet, the two go hand in hand.

(1) Would it be love if I, as a father of two, allowed my children to do whatever they wanted without any repercussion?

(2) **Pro. 13:24: He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.**

b. God promised to multiply His people, & He kept His promise **(Gen. 22:17)**. He also promised to give them a good land, & He kept that promise **(Gen. 13:14ff; 17:7-8)**.

(1) Under Joshua's leadership, the army of Israel invaded Canaan, conquered the land, & claimed all its wealth. It was God who gave them victory & enabled them to possess cities, houses, lands, & wealth in the land of Canaan.

(2) It was a fat land (fertile), & Israel became a fat people (nourished; satisfied); & this led to their downfall.

Deut. 32:15: But Jeshurun (Israel) grew fat, & kicked; you grew fat, stout, & sleek; then he forsook God who made him & scoffed at the Rock of his salvation.

(3) Israel delighted in God's great goodness but they did not delight themselves in the Lord.

(4) *Like the prodigal son* **(Luke 15:11-24)**, *they wanted the Father's wealth but not the Father's will!*

(5) Novelist John Steinbeck wrote, *"If you want to destroy a nation, give it too much- make it greedy, miserable & sick."*

Pro. 30:8-9: Feed me with the food You prescribe for me; lest I be full & deny You, & say 'Who is the Lord?' Or lest I be poor & steal, & profane the name of my God.

c. Once in the land, Israel enjoyed rest during the days of Joshua & the elders who had served with him; but when those godly leaders were gone, the new generation turned away from the Lord **(Jug. 2:6-15)**.

(1) God disciplined them, so they cried out for help; & God raised up deliverers to rescue them.

(2) Then they'd walk in God's ways for a time, lapse back into sin; & the cycle would be repeated.

d. Against the dark background of Israel's unfaithfulness shines the bright light of the faithfulness of God.

(1) When Israel obeyed Him, He was faithful to bless; when they disobeyed Him, He was faithful to chasten; when they asked for mercy, He was faithful to forgive.

(2) God is willing to give His people many privileges, but He will not give them the privilege of sinning & having their own way.

(3) God's purposes are more important than our pleasures, & He will accomplish His purposes even if He has to chasten us to do it.

e. Israel's sins finally became so disgusting to God that he decided to discipline them away from their own land; that is, by way of Assyrian & Babylonian Captivity.

f. Israel's allegiance to the holy covenant, once they were settled in the promised land, was at best a sporadic thing. A brief summation might be given as follows:

(1) Baal worship- Mesopotamian subjection for 8 years- repentance- deliverance by Othniel **(Jug. 3:8)**.

(2) Evil practices- 18 years' subjection to Moab- repentance- delivered by Ehud **(Jug. 3:12-15)**.

(3) Evil practices- 20 years oppression by Canaan- repentance- deliverance by Deborah **(Jug. 4:2)**.

(4) Evil practices- 7 years subjection to Midian- repentance- deliverance by Gideon **(Jug. 6:1ff; 7:22)**.

(5) Like a scratched record repeating itself, such a yo-yo relationship with God was to continue through 15 judges & 43 kings- a 1,000 years of halting between two opinions **(1 Kings 18:21)**.

g. Surely mercy had been strained, & their designation as the People of God unmerited; but through it all God's love & faithfulness had remained steadfast.

h. God's chastening is as much an evidence of His love as is His bountiful supply of our needs **(Heb. 12:1-11)**.

(1) We should be grateful that God loves us too much to allow us to become spoiled children.

(2) **Psa. 94:12-13: Blessed is the man whom you discipline, O Lord, & whom you teach out of your law, to give him rest from days of trouble, until a pit is dug for the wicked.**

(3) **Psa. 119:67: Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word.**

III. THE GRACE OF GOD (9:31-38)

A. God was good to His people when His people were not good to Him.

1. He sent them prophets to teach them & to warn them, but the nation refused to listen **(2 Chr. 36:14-21)**.

2. He was merciful to forgive them when they cried out for help, & He was longsuffering with them as they repeatedly rebelled against His Word.

3. He could have destroyed the nation & started over again, but He graciously spared them.

4. In His mercy, God didn't give them what they deserved; & in His grace, He gave them what they didn't deserve.

B. As the Levites prayed, they acknowledged the sins of the nation & God's justice in sending punishment.

1. If you recall, at one time, Israel accused God of dealing unfairly

with them **(Ezek. 18:25)**, but now they acknowledged that responsibility for the broken covenant rested squarely on their shoulders.

2. From the time of Assyrian oppression until this renewal of the covenant over 276 trouble-filled years had elapsed (721-445 BC).
3. Jehovah was asked not to consider lightly those long years of suffering as He heard their confession & viewed their penitence.

C. The Levitical confession now reaches this dramatic conclusion **(9:34-37)**: every calamity that had befallen them, including their present state of servitude, had bene brought about by disobedience to that holy law.

1. Writer of Hebrews reiterated their conclusion with these words:

   Heb. 2:2: Every transgression & disobedience received a just recompence of reward.

2. But for our benefit the writer added...

   Heb. 2:3: How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, & was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.

3. Thus, God's law must reign supreme over the hearts & lives of His people, whether under the Mosaic Dispensation or in the Christian Age.

D. The Levites had acknowledged God's greatness & goodness; & now, on the basis of His grace, they asked Him for a new beginning for the nation.

1. They couldn't change the servitude they were in (serving king of Persia), but they could surrender themselves to a greater Master & seek His help.
2. No matter who exercises dominion over us, if we are yielded to the Lord, we are free in Him **(1 Cor. 7:22; Eph. 6:5-9; Rom. 6:15ff)**.

E. If the Holy People were ever again to enjoy the blessings of their God, there was but one course of action left open for them **(9:38)**.

1. Apostasy from God's law as the directive for their lives had led

them to their present state; only a restoration of that law to its original intent would rectify their situation.

2. So from this time forward they made a solemn covenant, confirmed by their oaths, to abide by the teachings of the Word of God.

CONCLUSION:

1. Chronologically Nehemiah is the last book of the O.T. The next 400 years are often called 400 years of silence because the Bible does not record what happens to the chosen nation during this time.
2. Nehemiah had a tremendous responsibility in not only leading the last return of exiles to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls but in preparing the people for the next 400 years.
3. Beginning in chapter 9 & continuing throughout the rest of the book, Nehemiah committed the nation of Israel to God through a comprehensive confession, prayer, covenant, & ceremony.

4. Lessons Learned:
   a. Repentance is necessary for salvation **(9:1ff; Luke 13:3)**
   b. God's people must separate themselves from the sinful practices of the world **(9:2; cf. Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 6:14-17)**.
   c. There is only One God & one faith **(9:5-6; Eph. 4:4ff)**.
   d. God is the sustainer of life **(9:6; Mat. 6:25ff)**.
   e. God is the creator of all things **(9:6; Gen. 1:1ff)**.
   f. God keeps His promises **(9:8; 2 Pet. 3:9)**.
   g. God hears His people **(9:9; 1 Pet. 3:12)**.
   h. God disciplines His people when they forsake Him **(9:16ff; Heb. 12:6)**.
   i. God is the giver of every good & perfect gift **(9:22ff; Jam. 1:17)**.
   j. People tend to forsake God when all is well physically/materially.
   k. God is just!

NEHEMIAH 10

THE COMMITMENT NECESSARY TO LEAD

INTRODUCTION:

1. The first verse of Chapter Ten picks up with what was said in the last verse of Chapter Nine:

   "Because of all this we make a firm covenant in writing; on the sealed document are the names of our princes, our Levites, & our priests **(9:38)**...*On the seals are the names of Nehemiah the governor..."* **(10:1)**.

2. Illustration:

In a certain church there was a man who always ended his prayers with, *"And, Lord, clean the cobwebs out of my life! Clean the cobwebs out of my life!"* One of the members of the church became weary of hearing this same insincere request week after week, because he saw no change in the man's life. So, the next time he heard the man pray, *"Lord, clean the cobwebs out of my life!"* he interrupted with, *"And while you're at it, Lord, kill the spider!"*

3. It's one thing to offer the Lord a passionate prayer of confession, such as we have in Nehemiah 9, & quite something else to live an obedient life after we say "Amen."
4. But these people were serious about their praying & were determined, by God's grace, to make a new beginning & live to please the Lord.
5. The commitment they made was not only confirmed verbally, but it too was written down! They were serious about recommitting their lives to God!
6. In addition to agreeing to obey all the commands, decrees, & regulations of God, the people promise: GOOD SERMON IDEA
   a. Prohibit mixed marriages **(10:30)**.
   b. Preserve the holiness of the Sabbath **(10:31)**.
   c. Protect the poor **(10:31)**.
   d. Prevent failure by taking full responsibility **(10:32)**.
   e. Provide resources to meet spiritual responsibilities **(10:32)**.
   f. Present their best to the Lord **(10:35)**.
   g. Perpetuate the priesthood **(10:37)**.
6. Was their commitment & dedication genuine?

I. SUBMISSION TO THE WORD OF GOD (10:1-27, 29).

A. Nehemiah as the head of state, the priests & Levites as the religious leaders, & the chiefs of the various clans & families all signed the covenant as representatives of the people.

1. With Nehemiah's name heading the list, 84 persons put their seal on the covenant that they made with the Lord.
   a. This list included priests **(10:2-8)**, Levites **(10:9-13)**, & the leaders of the people **(10:14-27)**.
   b. Their signatures placed the whole nation under a sworn obligation to obey the terms of the covenant.

2. All the people who had heard the Word of God read & explained were now committing themselves to obey what they had heard.

B. Putting a seal on this document was a serious matter because it meant taking a solemn oath before the Lord. Perhaps they had heard Ezra read: 1. **cf. Deut. 29:10-13**

2. **Num. 30:2: If a man vows a vow to the Lord, or swears an oath to bind himself by a pledge, he shall not break his word. He shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.**

C. We don't necessarily bind ourselves to God today via oaths; however, when we respond in obedience to the Gospel, we are in essence committing ourselves to life-long service to Him!

II. SEPARATION AS THE PEOPLE OF GOD (10:28-31).

A. Why did they separate themselves from the Gentiles?

1. God chose Abraham & his seed as a channel for blessing all mankind **(Gen. 12:1-3)**, made them special unto Himself above all the other people of the earth **(Deut. 7:6-9)**, & entered into a covenant relationship with them **(Gen. 17:7-8)**.

2. The principle of separation from foreign elements was mandated by this special selection & divine mission **(Deut. 7:1-9)**, & there could be no renewal of the covenant aside from it.

B. What about the phrase, *"And entered into a curse?"*

1. **cf. Jos. 23:12-13**

2. The people now acknowledged this curse as a consequence of disobedience to God's covenant law, & placed themselves fully under it should they once more violate the Father's divine injunctions.

C. Valid restoration not only required commitment to a principle or a plan, it also demanded conformity- decisive action, reflected in reformation of life & practice.

1. It instigated a search for the old paths **(Jer. 6:16)**, an abolition of false systems contrary to the covenant **(2 Kings 23:4ff)**, & a return to the primitive practices of the covenant people **(Isa.**

30:15).

2. This was true of Israel as the following verses clearly show **(10:30-31)**; it is still true of us today!
   a. Marriage **(10:30)**:
      (1) God's requirements with reference to heathen marriages were clear & precise **(cf. Deut. 7:1-4)**.
      (2) It now must be a committed practice of the people.
   b. Sabbath keeping **(10:31)**:
      (1) In memorial of creation & deliverance from Egyptian bondage, God commanded a weekly sabbath **(Gen. 2:2-3; Exo. 20:8-11; Deut. 5:12-15)**.
      (2) On that day both man & beast enjoyed rest from their burdens & toil **(Duet. 5:13-14)**, & their ever pressing search for sustenance was temporarily suspended.
      (3) Even fires in their homes were left unkindled **(Num. 15:32-36; Exo. 35:3)**.
      (4) It was a capital offence to violate that holy day **(Exo. 31:15; 35:2)**.
      (5) But despite these stringent laws governing sabbath keeping, it was often profaned **(Ezek. 20:13; 22:8; Amos 8:5)**.
      (6) It became a matter of the top priority for Nehemiah to see that the sanctity of this day was restored.
   c. The 7th year **(10:31)**:
      (1) In addition to the weekly day of rest there was also the 7th year sabbath, required to be observed in the following manner:
         (a) The land stood idle for one year, & whatever grew of its own was reaped only by the poor **(Exo. 23:9-11; Lev. 25:1-7)**.
         (b) Debts against fellow-Israelites were canceled **(Deut. 15:2)**.
         (c) All Hebrew slaves were released **(Deut. 15:12)**.

(d) It was a special time for reading & hearing the law **(Lev. 25:1-7)**.

(e) Their past failure of observing this was one of the reasons why God sent them into Captivity **(2 Chr. 36:21)**; that he might give the land 70 years of rest **(Jer. 29:10)**. For every 7th year unobserved, was one year of captivity (7 x 70).

(2) Violations of these very humane statutes had nearly destroyed the poor inhabitants; thus, their restitution was imperative.

D. To accomplish such, a separation was in order; that is, they had to give up-abandon the sinful practices they had allowed to influence them.

III. THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE HOUSE OF GOD (10:32-39).

A. The phrase *"house of our God"* is used 9 times in this section & refers to the restored temple.

B. The people were promising God that they would obey His laws & provide what was needed for the ministry at the temple.

C. Their promised support was specific & involved four different areas of ministry.

1. *The temple tax* **(10:32-33)**.

a. By commandment a half-shekel tax for the ransom of souls, & for use in the tabernacle services, was collected from both rich & poor alike. Originally this appears to have been collected only when a census was made **(Exo. 30:11-16)**.

b. The populace now bound on themselves a third-shekel annual contribution. This was later increased to the half-shekel mentioned in Exodus, & was still practiced during the time of Jesus **(Mat. 17:24-27)**.

c. The required temple service performed on a regular basis

cost a considerable sum.

d. If such temple worship was to be restored, & indeed it must, the price would have to be paid- the temple tax would meet that need.

e. We today don't have to provide animals, grain, & other materials in order for the church to worship the Lord; but, we do have to help maintain the work of the ministry.

2. *The wood offering* **(10:34)**.

a. In addition to the funds required for their worship, menial tasks, such as providing wood for the burnt offerings & sacrifices, had to be performed.

b. This job had previously been carried out by the Nethinims **(Jos. 9:22-27)**, but apparently their number was not now sufficient for the task; thus, lots were cast to determine in what order the people would supply the necessary wood.

3. *The first-fruits* **(10:35-37a)**.

a. The law made provision for the first-fruits of the harvest to be offered to the Lord **(Exo. 23:19; 34:26; Deut. 26:2)**.

b. The Jews were taught to give God the first & the best, & this is a good example for us to follow today.

Pro. 3:9-10: Honor the Lord with your wealth & with the first-fruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, & your vats will be bursting with wine.

c. In addition, the first-born of their sons was also to be dedicated to God. Generally speaking God's legislation relating to the firstborn was as follows:

(1) When God destroyed all the firstborn of Egypt, the Israelite households were passed over unharmed; therefore, every firstborn in Israel, both of man & beast, was to be dedicated to the Lord **(Exo. 13:2ff)**.

(2) All clean animals were to be set apart for the Lord's service; unclean animals were either to be redeemed or killed **(Exo. 13:11ff; 34:19-20)**.

(3) In lieu of the firstborn males, God chose the tribe of Levi & set them apart for His special service **(Lev. 8:14ff; Num. 3:12, 45)**.

4. *The tithes* **(10:37b-39)**.

a. The Levites received no land inheritance as did the other tribes, but were supported with the tithes from the land **(Num. 18:20-24)**; thus, they had the responsibility for receiving & distributing the tithes.

b. But as a safeguard against abuse, the priest stood by as the tithes were received & transferred to the storage rooms of the temple.

c. Even though they were supported by the tithes from people, the Levites still paid tithes of that which they received **(Num. 18:26)**.

d. While there is no express command in the N.T. that God's people should tithe today, proportionate giving is certainly commended **(1 Cor. 16:1-3)**.

CONCLUSION:

1. So after many years of rebellion, captivity, & exposure to reproach of their enemies, the exiles were again residing within the safety of their own walls.
2. They had turned in repentance & confession to God & His law, purged themselves from idolatrous practices, & restored the ancient & pure religion of their fathers.
3. Lessons Learned:

a. When we give ourselves to Christ in obedience to His will, we are making a commitment to serve Him faithfully all the days of our life.

b. It's imperative that leaders lead the way in their commitment to God.

c. God's people must separate themselves (abandon-give up) sinful practices of the world **(Rom. 12:1-2)**.

d. We must allow God's Word to direct our steps **(Jer. 10:23; Psa. 119:105)**.

e. It's imperative that God's people do all that God commands **(Rev.**

22:18-19).

f. God's people must contribute to the work of the Lord **(1 Cor. 16:1ff; 2 Cor. 8-9).**

g. When giving to God, we must give Him our very best!

NEHEMIAH 11

LEADERSHIP LIVING

INTRODUCTION:

1. In the ancient world, cities were places of wealth & power.
2. In modern times, in spite of their magnificence, too often our cities are bankrupt institutions famous for pollution, poverty, & crime.
3. How to finance & manage the great cities is a vexing problem to government

leaders around the world.

4. John F. Kennedy once said, "*We will neglect our cities to our peril, for in neglecting them we neglect the nation.*"
5. Nehemiah followed the same philosophy.
   a. He knew that the nation of Israel could never be strong as long as Jerusalem was weak.
   b. But Jerusalem could not be strong unless the people were willing to sacrifice.
6. Thus, the 11th chapter of Nehemiah is an exhaustive list of those who willingly made the choice to live w/in the city walls.

I. THE LEADERS IN JERUSALEM (11:1-24).

A. Since Jerusalem had long served as the capital of Judah, it was but natural that its present rulers would make their homes their.
   1. But its broken walls & depressed economy proved to be less attractive to the majority of the exiles, who had chosen to settle in the open areas of Judah **(7:4)**.
   2. If the restoration movement was to be successful & the city defensible, more people would have to live in the city.
   3. Thus, the rest of the people cast lots, providing a means for selecting at random a tenth part of the population of Judah to be moved to Jerusalem.

B. The newly constructed walls, a dedicated leadership, & a revival of religious zeal caused those selected to willingly make the move; & that with the blessings of those left in the other cities of Judah **(11:2)**.

C. It was Nehemiah's practice to list the names of the people involved in his projects.
   1. **Neh. 3-** a listing of the people who worked on the wall, along with what part of the wall they repaired.
   2. **Neh. 7-** the names of the people who returned with Zerubabbel.
   3. **Neh. 8-** a recording of the names of leaders involved in the spiritual revival at the Water Gate.
   4. **Neh. 10-** contains the names of 84 men who set their seals to the dedication covenant.

5. In listing these names, Nehemiah was giving evidence of his sincere appreciation for each individual who assisted in the work.
6. It also reminds us that God sees & records what His chidlren do as they serve Him.

D. A break-down of those who would live in Jerusalem:

1. **11:4-9-** People of Judah & Benjamin.
   a. These two tribes composed the kingdom of Judah (Southern Kingdom) after the nation divided **(1 Kings 11-12)**.
   b. ***Valiant men-*** *"mighty men; brave fighting men; wealthy men of substance.*
2. **11:10-24-** The priests, Levites, & temple workers are named.
   a. God had set aside special cities for them **(Jos. 21)**, so they could have legitimately lived outside Jerusalem; but they chose to be with the people as they served God in the temple.
   b. Like Jeremiah, they chose to remain with God's people, even though it might have been safer & more comfortable elsewhere **(Jer. 40:1-6)**.
3. **11:19-** A couple of the leading gate-keepers were listed (172 gate-keepers in all lived in Jerusalem).

II. VILLAGES OUTSIDE JERUSALEM (11:25-36).

A. In this section of Sacred Script, Nehemiah gives us the names of the villages where the rest of the Jews lived, some of which were quite a distance from Jerusalem.

B. Thus, Nehemiah repopulated the city, with the remaining people living throughout the area.

CONCLUSION:

1. Lessons Learned:
   a. Sacrifice is necessary if we're to please God.
   b. We can serve God in whatever area we find ourselves in.
   c. All areas of service are important & necessary for the overall good of the church.

NEHEMIAH 12

LEADERSHIP DIRECTS THOSE THEY LEAD IN CELEBRATION & PRAISE.

INTRODUCTION:

1. The people have finished the wall. They have committed their lives to God. They are now ready for the dedication of the wall.

2. In this chapter, we find Nehemiah presiding over a comprehensive ceremony that seems to involve every resident of Jerusalem.
3. He directed two choirs to march in opposite directions on top of the wall while giving thanks.
4. And this day of dedication finished in the house of God with sacrifices & rejoicing.

I. DETAILED LIST OF THE PRIESTS & LEVITES WHO HAD RETURNED TO REBUILD THE WALLS (12:1-26).

A. This chapter begins with a list of the chief or leaders of the priests who had returned with Zerubbabel to re-establish the temple worship in Jerusalem **(12:1-7)**.

1. David had originally divided the priests into 24 courses **(1 Chr. 24:7-19)**, but only 22 are mentioned here.
2. Perhaps the number of priests returning was insufficient for all the divisions.

B. Next, Nehemiah lists the names of eight Levitical family heads who returned with Zerubbabel **(12:8-9)**. NOTE: Some names not included in the list given by Ezra are added here **(Ezra 2:40)**.

C. Nehemiah then inserts the genealogical record of the high priestly families from Zerubbabel to Nehemiah **(12:10-11, 22; Ezra 2:2)**.

D. Nehemiah follows up by providing a list of a second generation of priests following Zerubbabel **(12:12-21)**.

E. Nehemiah lists additional Levites who served during the period of Ezra& Nehemiah, and up to the time of Darius the Persian **(12:22-26)**.

II. DEDICATION OF THE WALLS (12:27-43).

A. Dedication was a celebration of joy, accompanied by sacrifice & praise, at the completion of a task **(12:27-30)**.

1. In a short time God had granted to His people freedom from their enemies, & a real chance for vastly improved social, economic, & spiritual conditions- symbolized by the wall of protection that now surrounded them.

2. It was highly appropriate that a special service, characterized by sacrifice & thanksgiving, be conducted to honor God, & invoke His blessings on both the wall & the people.
3. NOTE: It appears as though all Israelites took part in this dedication/celebration.

B. Many leaders of Judah were then assembled on the wall **(12:31-43)**.
1. Having divided into two separate choirs, Ezra & Nehemiah then led the worshipers in separate directions along the wall until they met & assembled for a mass worship service at the house of God.
2. Grateful songs of praise & sacrifice were offered, & all the people joined in the exuberance of the occasion.
3. Their sounds of joy carried throughout the city.

C. QUESTION: Why did Nehemiah & Ezra organize this kind of dedication service? Why not just meet at the temple area, let the Levites sing & offer sacrifices to the Lord, & send everybody home?
1. To begin with, it was the walls & gates that were being dedicated; & it was only right that the people see & touch them.
2. The people were bearing witness to the watching world that God had done the work, & He alone should be glorified.
   a. The enemy had said that the walls would be so weak that a fox could knock them down **(4:3)**, but here were the people marching on the walls!
   b. What a testimony to the unbelieving Gentiles of the power of God & the reality of faith.
   c. It was another opportunity to prove to them that *"this work was wrought by our God"* **(Neh. 6:16)**.
3. By marching on the walls, the people had an opportunity to see the results of their labors & realize anew that the work had not been done by one person.
   a. True, Nehemiah had been their leader, & they needed him; but the people had a mind to work **(Neh. 4:6)**.
   b. Various people & families had labored on different parts of the wall **(Neh. 3:1ff)**, but nobody *"owned"* the part he or

she had worked on. The wall belonged to God!

4. Their marching around the walls was a symbolic act by which they stepped out by faith to claim God's blessing.
5. But the most important thing about this dedication service was not the march around the walls. It was the expression of joyful praise that came from the choirs & the people.
    1. **Heb. 13:15: By him (Christ) therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.**
    2. **Psa. 69:30-31: I will praise the name of God with a song, & will magnify him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock that hath horns & hoofs.**

III. DISTRIBUTION MADE TO SUPPORT THE PRIESTS & LEVITES (12:44-47).

A. By divine appointment the Levites were supported from the tithes & offerings of the other eleven tribes **(Lev. 8:14-22; Num. 18:21-24)**.
    1. Probably both from poverty & a disrespect for the law of God, this clear injunction had been ignored **(Mal. 3:8-10)**.
    2. At certain times the Levites even had to take to the fields to provide their own sustenance **(Neh. 13:10-11)**.

B. With the primitive practice of bringing tithes into the storehouse restored, honorable men were selected to distribute fairly the necessary provisions to the Levites.

CONCLUSION:

1. It was a high & holy day in Jerusalem, a happy day because the work had been completed & God had been glorified in a wonderful way.

NEHEMIAH 13

LEADERS KNOW HOW TO DEAL WITH DETERIORATION

INTRODUCTION:

1. By every measure, Nehemiah had been an effective leader.

a. He had guided the people in rebuilding the walls, in rebuilding their nation, & in rebuilding their lives.

b. But that is not the end of the story. Nehemiah returns after a few years to check on Israel & he is astonished at what he finds.

2. There is some difficulty in establishing the chronology of this & some of the events of the preceding chapter.

a. Nehemiah came to Jerusalem in 445 B.C. **(2:1)**.

b. The walls were completed in 52 days, but his tenure as governor lasted for 12 years, which was the 32 year of the reign of king Artaxerxes **(6:15; 5:14)**.

c. If the wall was dedicated as soon as it was completed, which would seem most likely, then the events of chapter 13 are separated from the preceding one by more than 12 years.

3. Nehemiah, after a period of time of being away, returned to find that Israel had deteriorated; thus, action was taken to restore their wrongs.

I. SOCIAL COMPROMISE (13:1-9)

A. The chapter begins with a reference to Israel reading from the Book of Moses **(13:1)**.

1. The written Word, restored to its rightful place among the Holy People, continued to remold them according to the ancient pattern.

2. Given free course, God's Word still has the power to do the same for us today **(Heb. 4:12; 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17; 1 Pet. 1:22-25; Acts 4:32)**.

B. In their reading, they learn that the Ammonites & Moabites should not come into the congregation of God.

1. The Ammonites & Moabites were blood relatives to Israel **(Gen. 19:30-38)**.

2. God gave them an inheritance on the eastern side of Jordan, & charged Israel not to meddle with them **(Deut. 2:9, 19)**.

3. Nevertheless Balak hired Balaam to curse the Israelites, thus

inaugurating an effort to frustrate God's eternal plan for redemption through the Holy Nation **(Num. 22-24)**.

4. God thwarted Balak's plan, & forbade either of these two nations ever to enter the congregation of Israel **(Deut. 23:3-6)**.
5. This restriction may seem harsh to the casual reader, but the facts show otherwise.
   a. Israel inherited the promised land conditionally- obedience to God's covenant law **(Jos. 23:6-13)**.
   b. God thwarted Balaam's initial attempt to curse Israel; but evidence indicates that Balaam infiltrated the Israelite camp, learned of their conditional inheritance, then introduced God's people to the abominable & lascivious rites of Baal worship **(1 Kings 11:2; 2 Pet. 2:14-15; Jude 2:11; Rev. 2:14)**.
   c. That unholy alliance hung like a millstone around Israel's neck, & finally drowned her in her own iniquity **(2 Kings 23)**.
6. Is it any wonder, then, that God has wisely warned, "*Stay away from these people for ever?*"

C. Thus, Nehemiah records that they "*separated from Israel all those of foreign descent*" **(13:3)**.

D. But they soon compromised socially, & Nehemiah would fix it **(13:4-9)**.
1. Eliashib the priest had made Tobiah his close companion.
   a. Eliashib served as high priest in Judah during Nehemiah's tenure as governor, & had even joined him in repairing the wall **(Neh. 3:1, 20-21)**.
   b. At present he had the oversight of the storage chambers of the temple, & the responsibility of distributing to the Levites their due portion of the tithes & offerings.
2. This friendship corrupted & compromised the holiness of the house of God when Eliashib allowed Tobiah to move in.

a. Tobiah was an Ammonite, & a confirmed enemy of Nehemiah & his effort to restore the work & worship of the Holy People **(Neh. 2:10, 19; 4:3, 7-8; 6:12-13)**.

b. Tobiah had always had considerable influence among the captives **(Neh. 6:17-19)**; but through his close association with Eliashib, he had even been given one of the storage areas of the temple for his living quarters- an arrangement in total violation to the law of God.

3. Nehemiah immediately threw Tobiah out of the house of God & sent in workers to clean up Tobiah's mess.

a. In fact, he purified or fumigated the room. He then restored the room to its former use.

b. Reminds me of what our Lord did when He found His house of prayer turned into a place of merchandise **(John 2:13-17)**.

II. ECONOMIC COMPROMISE (13:10-14)

A. With the storage area being occupied by Tobiah, the tithes of the people were not being collected.

1. Where is the money? The people had promised to give tithes of grain, new wine, & oil to the Levites, priests, singers, & gatekeepers **(10:32)**.

2. But the money was not there.

3. In fact, the Levites had to return to the field so they could eat.

B. Nehemiah finds trustworthy men & immediately fixed the economic compromise.

III. SPIRITUAL COMPROMISE (13:15-22)

A. The people had promised to preserve the holiness of the Sabbath **(Neh. 10:31)**. Again, they had broken a commitment by compromising.

1. God designed the Sabbath as a day of complete rest for both man

& beast **(Exo. 20:8-11; 31:15; Jer. 17:21-22)**.

2. But to the materialistic Israelite it eventually became an impediment to financial gain **(Amos 8:5)**, & Sabbath violations figured prominently in her captivity in a foreign land **(Lev. 26:34-43; Ezek. 20:12-26)**.
3. Recognizing this fact, the Jews who sealed the covenant bound themselves by stringent oath to obey all Sabbath requirements.
4. In the absence of Nehemiah, however, godliness soon yielded to gain. Wine flowed from the presses on the Sabbath, & the streets of Jerusalem became beehives of activity as peddlers hawked their produce. They had secularized the Sabbath.
5. They had made the Sabbath into a day just like any other day.

B. Nehemiah quickly responded by warning the producers, rebuking the nobles, shutting the doors to the city, & threatening the merchants & sellers who resisted his efforts.

1. The Jewish reckoning of time was from evening to evening **(Gen. 1:3-5; Exo. 27:21)**; thus, the Sabbath was in effect from sunset to sunset **(Mark 15:42-43; Luke 23:50-54)**.
2. To stop the illegal Sabbath traffic, Nehemiah required the gates of the city to be closed during the celebration of the Sabbath.
3. He further insured compliance by stationing some of his servants at the gates.
4. According to *verse 20*, some merchants set up shop outside the walls to continue their traffic on the Sabbath.
5. Nehemiah gives a strong warning to those in violation of the Sabbath in *verse 21*; that was, if their practices were not discontinued immediately, they could face arrest, imprisonment, & maybe even the physical wrath of Nehemiah as well.

IV. DOMESTIC COMPROMISE (13:23-31)

A. The people had earlier promised to prohibit mixed marriages **(10:29)**.

1. This was important because it would allow Judah to retain their

national identity for the next 400 years.

2. It would also preserve the line of the coming Messiah.

B. Nehemiah was outraged over their sin, even beating some & pulling out their hair **(13:25)**.

1. He makes reference to Solomon & his sin with foreign wives **(cf. 1 Kings 11:1-4)**

2. In addition, it would appear that not only were these foreign marriages tolerated by the Jewish nobles, they were encouraged.

a. Perhaps they looked on them as a means of assuring a peaceful coexistence.

b. But there can be no peace in compromise.

C. In *verses 28 & 29*, we have further evidence that marriages were being contracted to ally the Jews to the nations about them.

1. This had led to Solomon's downfall.

2. It was certainly no less dangerous in the house of Eliashib.

a. Such alliances had defiled the priesthood, the covenant they were called to maintain, & those continually employed in the service of God.

b. Having so polluted their religion at its very head, the poison would soon saturate even the remotest recesses of the restoration movement.

c. With such a threat hanging over the exiles, Nehemiah saw but one course of action- he drove Eliashib's son-in-law from his presence.

CONCLUSION:

1. The people, in a relatively short amount of time, had compromised their commitment in four areas (socially, economically, spiritually, & domestically).

2. Compromise is every leader's greatest enemy, but Nehemiah dealt with it justly & quickly!

The Book of Nehemiah

I. Introduction:

A. Author: Nehemiah (Written in the 1st person)

1. Written: 431-430 B.C.

2. The book of Nehemiah is the last of the Historical books

B. Purpose: To show the history and restoration of the Jewish nation after Babylonian captivity and to show God's continued protection of Israel.

C. Background of the Book

1. Nehemiah, the Man

a. Means "Jehovah Comforts"

b. Sometimes abbreviated as Nahum (Nah. 1:1; 1 Chr 4:19); or Nahamani (Neh. 7:7).

Na 1:1 ¶ The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.

1Ch 4:19 And the sons of his wife Hodiah the sister of Naham, the father of Keilah the Garmite, and Eshtemoa the Maachathite.

Ne 7:7 Who came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, Baanah. The number, I say, of the men of the people of Israel was this;

c. Nehemiah was the cupbearer to King Artaxerxes

d. He resided in the palace of Shushan (the city of Elam, 200 miles east of Babylon)

A) Same Shusha were Daniel saw the vision of the ram with the horns (Dan 8:2)

B) Where Esther (in 478 B.C.) became Xerxes' Queen

C) It was the winter residence of the Persian kings

D) It was located east of the Tigris River, near the head of the Persian Gulf

e. Nehemiah's humility is evidenced by:

A) His hesitancy to tell us concerning his position as cupbearer until the end of the chapter.

1) The cupbearer was the official tester to make sure the food was safe to eat

2) Risked his life on the king's popularity and unpopularity with every single meal

3) At the same time he must be the most trusted person in the whole empire

4) Position next to that of the crown prince himself

5) He had access to the entire palace including the King's harem

B) His neglecting to tell us the position to which he was appointed until Neh. 10, and then it was a passing reference.

Test f. He was a man of prayer, patriotism, action, courage, and perseverance.

g. He was cautious, courageous, and uncompromising

2. Nehemiah will lead the 3rd return to Palestine

a. 536 b.c. – Zerubbabel – rebuild the temple

b. 457 b.c. – Ezra returns to reestablish the law and worship

c. 444 b.c. – Nehemiah returns to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem

D. Keys to the Book

1. Key Word: Rebuilding, prayer, work

2. Key Verse: 4:6, 9, 17, 20; 6:15-16; 8:8

Ne 4:6 So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work. 9 Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them. 17 They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. 20 In what place therefore ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us.

Ne 6:15 ¶ So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days. 16 And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God.

Ne 8:8 So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.

3. Key Phrase: "For the people had a mind to work"

4. Key Chapter: 9 – Confesses Israel's sins

E. Outline of the Book:

F. Christ in the Book: (The Qualities of Nehemiah are descriptive of Christ as well)

1. Nehemiah was sympathetic to the people (1:4)

Ne 1:4 And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven,

2. Quality of prayerfulness (1:4)

3. Able to distinguish between the worthy and the evil (6:1-7)

Ne 6:1 ¶ Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;) 2 That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief. 3 And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you? 4 Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner. 5 Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand; 6 Wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words. 7 And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together.

4. Upright, courageous, unselfish, and wholehearted (6:16-19)

Ne 6:16 And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God. 17 Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters unto Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came unto them. 18 For there were many in Judah sworn unto him, because he was the son in law of Shechaniah the son of Arah; and his son Johanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah. 19 Also they reported his good deeds before me, and uttered my words to him. And Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear.

5. These are true characteristics of Good Leaders

G. Lessons Learned from Nehemiah

1. Love and respect for the Word of God

a. Nehemiah read the law from the beginning of the morning to mid-afternoon during the week of the feast of the Tabernacle - Nehemiah 8:3 (Rev 1:2-3)

Re 1:2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. 3 ¶ ***Blessed is he that readeth****, and* **they that hear the words of this prophecy,** *and* **keep those things which are written therein***: for the time is at hand.*

b. Ezra and the fellow priests read and explained (Neh 8:8)

Ne 8:8 So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.

c. The People had asked for the reading (Neh 8:1)

Ne 8:1 ¶ And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel.

d. They **stood up** when the book of the law was read!

e. They bowed their heads and worshiped God and wept when they heard the words of the law (Neh 8:6-9)

Ne 8:6 And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground. 7 Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place. 8 So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. 9 ¶ And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep. ***For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.***

f. There followed a great revival among the people of God

2. The devices of Satan our Adversary (2 Cor. 2:11)

2Co 2:11 Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: ***for we are not ignorant of his devices.***

a. The device of **ridicule** (Neh 4:1-3)

Ne 4:1 ¶ But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. 2 And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these

feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned? 3 Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.

A) The weapon of ridicule can be both cruel and effective

b. The device of **conspiracy** and **intimidation** (Neh 4:7-8)

Ne 4:7 ¶ But it came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth, 8 And conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it.

A) The Samaritans, Arabians, Ammonites, and Philistines form a coalition against Israel

B) They had their differences but all of them could be temporarily ignored to fight against God's people

c. The device of **compromise** (Neh 6:1-4)

Ne 6:1 ¶ Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;) 2 That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief. 3 And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you? 4 Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner.

d. The device of a **false report and slander** (Neh 6:5-9)

Ne 6:5 Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand; 6 Wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words. 7 And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together. 8 Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart. 9 For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands.

A) This was and is one of Satan's most dangerous weapons

B) The design of this device is to make us **afraid** (6:9)

e. The device of a **false prophet forecasting evil** (Neh 6:10-13)

Ne 6:10 ¶ Afterward I came unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee. 11 And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in. 12 And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. 13 Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me.

A) Satan uses his ministers to accomplish the same end (2 Cor 11:13-15)

2Co 11:13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. 14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

Test

3. Errors opposed and corrected from within

a. The purity of the people was being deteriorated by:

A) Marriage ties

B) Friendship ties

C) Commercial ties

D) The separation of the Jews from the surrounding heathen by food, circumcision, and customs was essential to the purity of the nation.

1) Christians are:

a) To be separated from the world (2 Cor 6:14-18; Rom 12:1-2; 1 John 2:15-17; Jam 4:4)

2Co 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive

you, 18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

Ro 12:1 ¶ I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

1Jo 2:15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

Jas 4:4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

b) Not to bid error of any type God's speed (2 John 1:9-11; Rom 16:17-18)

2Jo 1:9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. 10 ¶ If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: 11 For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

Ro 16:17 ¶ Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. 18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

c) Not to tolerate immorality among God's people (Mat 19:9; Gal 5:19-21)

Mt 19:9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

Ga 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

b. The High Priest (Eliashib – Neh 13:4-5) desecrated the Temple by providing a temple chamber as a dwelling place for Tobiah the Ammonite who was allied by marriage

Ne 13:4 And before this, Eliashib the priest, having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God, was allied unto Tobiah: 5 And he had prepared for him a great chamber, where aforetime they laid the meat offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the new

wine, and the oil, which was commanded to be given to the Levites, and the singers, and the porters; and the offerings of the priests.

A) Nehemiah drove Tobiah out of the temple and restored it to its proper use

1) Reminds us of the times Jesus cleansed the temple (John 2:13-17; Mat 21:12-13; 1 Cor 6:18-20; 3:16-17)

Joh 2:13 And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, 14 And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: 15 And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; 16 And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. 17 And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.

Mt 21:12 ¶ And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, 13 And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.

1Co 6:18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. 19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

1Co 3:16 ¶ Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? 17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

2) The Expulsion of evil from the temple is typacle of God's demands upon the church to purify itself (1 Cor 3; 6)

B) The tithes for the support of the priests and the temple worship were withheld

1) The poorest of the flocks and herbs had been brought for sacrificing including: the blind, torn by wild beasts, the sick, and abused (Neh 13:10; Mal 1:7-8; 3:8-10)

Ne 13:10 ¶ And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given them: for the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field.

Mal 1:7 Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible. 8 And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? Saith the LORD of hosts.

NEHEMIAH NOTES
Eddy Craft

CHAPTER ONE VERSES 1-3 HANANTS REPORT:

THE REQUEST CHAPTER ONE

LEARNING ABOUT THE WALL:

Neh. 1:1-3 The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. And it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace, [2] That Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. [3] And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.

1. Nehemiah had become cupbearer to king Artaxerxes (2:1), and had amassed a considerable fortune, as may be inferred from the fact that he was able to serve as governor of Judah for twelve years without any material compensation.

2. The words of Nehemiah indicates that Nehemiah was the author of the work before us.

3. See Winters book for the history of this work. Pages 75-76.

4. In the month of Chisleu. This would be the ninth month of the Jewish calendar (Zechariah 7:1) Zech. 7:1 And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, that the word of the Lord came unto Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, even in **Chisleu;**

5. Shushan the palace. It contained a quite heavy concentration of the dispersed Jews, Some of whom, Along with Nehemiah, had become very successful in the affairs of government. **Esther 1:2** That in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace. **Esther 2:16** So Esther was taken

unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. **Daniel 8:2** And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I was at Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai.

6. Hanani. The brother of Nehemiah. He had made a visit to Judah, and returned with a first hand report of the sad plight of the returned captives. He was a man of above average integrity and religious zeal who would later accompany Nehemiah to Jerusalem and serve under him as one of the rulers of the city. **Neh. 7:1-3** Now it came to pass, when the wall was built, and I had set up the doors, and the porters and the singers and the Levites were appointed, [2] That I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: for he was a faithful man, and feared God above many. [3] And I said unto them, Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun be hot; and while they stand by, let them shut the doors, and bar them: and appoint watches of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, every one in his watch, and every one to be over against his house.

7. Gods people under great affliction and reproach. They were subjected to greedily landlords and avaricious politicians (5:1-13). See also Matt. 18:23-35. The message received by Nehemiah was a very disturbing one. It would drive Nehemiah to depression, despair, and finally to a determination to sacrifice all if necessary to rebuild the Holy City.

LAMENTING OVER THE WALL: VERSES 4-11

ISRAEL'S PLIGHT VERSES 4-7

Neh. 1:4-7 And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven, [5] And said, I beseech thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments: [6] Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of

Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned. [7] We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses.

1. "I sat down and wept." Literally, a flood of tears or loud weeping. The description that he was given of the plight of his people and his home land was such a shock to Nehemiah that he gave in to emotional desire.

2. "And mourned certain days." Nor was this just a superficial emotional wound: four months later king Artaxerxes would be able to discern from physical appearance and disposition a distinct state of depression in his servant.

3. See Winters on fasting. Page 78. Perhaps elements of all three of these were present in Nehemiah's fast:
    1. The unprotected and sparsely populated Jerusalem was wide open to attack from neighboring nations.
    2. Nehemiah himself had suffered a personal calamity as Hanani's report shattered all his hopes and dreams of his escaped brethren having successfully rebuilt and fortified the Holy City.
    3. No doubt fasting was a regular part of this Godly man's religious devotions.
4. The similarity between the prayer of Nehemiah and Daniel. Daniel 9:3-19.

5. "I beseech thee." A strong entreaty, indicating the writer's deep need for God's intervention.

6. See Winters on Elohiym. Page 78. God is the Holy God whose glory covers the earth. **Isaiah 6:1-3 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. [2] Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. [3] And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.**

Mal 3:8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. 9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. 10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

a) They dishonored God

i) Parallel to us giving our leftovers to God

b) They robbed him of due

c) The penalty fell upon them

i) The Priests and Levites had been forced to go home and earn their living since the people had refused to support them in their religious work; this resulted in the temple work to be neglected

H. Nehemiah was a true leader of the people and prophet for God

II. Nehemiah 1 – **The Report**

A. (1:1-3) – Learning about the Wall See Winters pg 76

Ninth month ↑ our Dec. Zech 6:1

Ne 1:1 ¶ The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. And it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace, 2 That Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. 3 And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.

1. called by Greeks Susa. 2 one of the capitals of Persian Empire.

3. It was a mild climate, and the Kings of Persia often stayed there during the Winter Months.

B. (1:4-11) – Lamenting over the Wall

1. vs. 4-7 – Israel's Plight

Neh 1:4 And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven, 5 ¶ And said, I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments: 6 Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned. 7 We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and

have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses.

a. vs. 6 - ***and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned.***

A) 1 John – If *we say* that we have not sinned (Rom 3:23)

B) Nehemiah recognized the fact it was not just the other people's sins, but everyone's sins affect the situation

C) Every sin is against God

b. Vs. 7 - ***We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses.***

A) These things were not new, they were commandments that began back with Moses

B) Moses had warned against these things

C) "kept" – vs. 9 – ***But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them***

(Keep = protect and guard it)

1) Mat 19:20 - "***All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?***"

2) Paul said that he "kept the faith" (2 Tim 4:7) – military term

3) You can guard and keep something without <u>*doing*</u> it!

4) You can do the Word of God, but not guard and defend it either

2. vs. 8-10 – God's Promise

Neh. 1:8 Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations: 9 But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there. 10 Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand.

3. vs. 11 – Nehemiah's Petition

Neh. 1:11 O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name:

and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer.

III. Nehemiah 2 – **The Request**

A. (2:1-10) – The Request

1. Vs. 1-5 - The Petition to the King

Ne 2:1 ¶ And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence. 2 Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid, 3 And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire? 4 Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven. 5 And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it.

a. Nehemiah makes a petition to the king and desired to go to Jerusalem

b. Vs. 1 - You countenance may say something

A) The way you say something makes a difference

B) The way you act when you rebuke or petition someone is important

C) Just criticism is important for all preachers

D) We are communicators and the best way we can do that is how we need to preach!

1) Be able to speak to the scholar

2) Be able to speak to the common man

2. Vs. 6-10 – Permission from the King

Ne 2:6 And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him,) For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time. 7 Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into Judah; 8 And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertained to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me. 9 ¶ Then I came to the governors beyond the river, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army

and horsemen with me. 10 When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.

a. Nehemiah traveled to Jerusalem in spite of the opposition of Sanbalat and Tobiah

B. (2:11-20) – **The Review**

1. Vs. 11-16 – Nehemiah's Examination

Ne 2:11 So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days. 12 And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon. 13 And I went out by night by the gate of the valley, even before the dragon well, and to the dung port, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire. 14 Then I went on to the gate of the fountain, and to the king's pool: but there was no place for the beast that was under me to pass. 15 Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall, and turned back, and entered by the gate of the valley, and so returned. 16 And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did; neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work.

2. Vs. 17-20 – Nehemiah's Exhortation

Ne 2:17 Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. 18 Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work. 19 But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king? 20 Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem.

a. Vs. 17a – The Report

b. Vs. 17b-18a – The Recommendation

c. Vs. 18b – The response

d. Vs. 19 – The Ridicule

e. Vs. 20 – The Rebuke

NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 3

GOD'S HONOR ROLL OF HIS WORKMAN!

WHY WERE GOD'S PEOPLE ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH SO MUCH IN SO SHORT A TIME?

1. **They followed a well-devised plan. Each group had its assigned section of labor, and each individual labored in the craft best suited to his ability (2:12-20).**

2. **They worked as determined body. Neither mockery, intimidation, nor violence could force them to turn from their appointed task (4:2-6,14).**

3. **They worked as a unified body- the men working with their hands, they guards who placed their lives between them and the enemy, the rulers backing the work in every way-to achieve a common goal (4:15-21).**

4. **They looked on the work-not as a menial task, not as a project of the governor-but as a service to God (2:12;3:1).**

But sadly in every church community, or project, there are the shirkers who tarnish the scroll of the faithful.

1. **They say and do not.**

Matthew 23:1-4 Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, [2] Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: [3] All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. [4] For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

2. **They will not enter the kingdom themselves, and try to hinder those who would.**

Matthew 23:13 But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

3. **They preach liberty while they themselves are the servants of corruption.**

2 Peter 2:19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.

4. **The nobles of the Tekoites were just such people.**

Neh. 3:5 And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; <u>but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord.</u>

They would gladly enjoy the protection of the refurbished wall, but they would not lift a finger to get the job done. Their record mars the continuity of this honor roll, but inspiration will not ignore their neglect. They have gone down in infamy as men who would not dirty their hands on one of the truly great triumphs of Divine history.

I. Nehemiah 3 – **The Repairs** : God's Honor Roll of His Workmen

A. (3:1-2) The Sheep Gate

Ne 3:1 ¶ Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep gate; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel. 2 And next unto him builded the men of Jericho. And next to them builded Zaccur the son of Imri.

B. (3:3-5) – The Fish Gate

Ne 3:3 But the fish gate did the sons of Hassenaah build, who also laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof. 4 And next unto them repaired Meremoth the son of Urijah, the son of Koz. And next unto them repaired Meshullam the son of Berechiah, the son of Meshezabeel. And next unto them repaired Zadok the son of Baana. 5 And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord.

C. (3:6-12) – The Old City Gate

Ne 3:6 Moreover the old gate repaired Jehoiada the son of Paseah, and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah; they laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, and the locks thereof, and the bars thereof. 7 And next unto them repaired Melatiah the Gibeonite, and Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon, and of Mizpah, unto the throne of the governor on this side the river. 8 Next unto him repaired Uzziel the son of Harhaiah, of the goldsmiths. Next unto him also repaired Hananiah the son of one of the apothecaries, and they fortified Jerusalem unto the broad wall. 9 And next unto them repaired Rephaiah the son of Hur, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem. 10 And next unto them repaired Jedaiah the son of Harumaph, even over against his house. And next unto him repaired Hattush the son of Hashabniah. 11 Malchijah the son of Harim, and Hashub the son of Pahathmoab, repaired the other piece, and the tower of the furnaces. 12 And next unto him repaired Shallum the son of Halohesh, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem, he and his daughters.

D. (3:13) – The Valley Gate

Ne 3:13 The valley gate repaired Hanun, and the inhabitants of Zanoah; they built it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof, and a thousand cubits on the wall unto the dung gate.

E. (3:14) – The Dung Gate

Ne 3:14 But the dung gate repaired Malchiah the son of Rechab, the ruler of part of Bethhaccerem; he built it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof.

F. (3:15-25) – The Fountain Gate

Ne 3:15 But the gate of the fountain repaired Shallun the son of Colhozeh, the ruler of part of Mizpah; he built it, and covered it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof, and the wall of the pool of Siloah by the king's garden, and unto the stairs that go down from the city of David. 16 After him repaired Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, the ruler of the half part of Bethzur, unto the place over against the sepulchres of David, and to the pool that was made, and unto the house of the mighty. 17 After him repaired the Levites, Rehum the son of Bani. Next unto him repaired Hashabiah, the ruler of the half part of Keilah, in his part. 18 After him repaired their brethren, Bavai the son of Henadad, the ruler of the half part of Keilah. 19 And next to him repaired Ezer the son of Jeshua, the ruler of Mizpah, another piece over against the going up to the armoury at the turning of the wall. 20 After him Baruch the son of Zabbai earnestly repaired the other piece, from the turning of the wall unto the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest. 21 After him repaired Meremoth the son of Urijah the son of Koz another piece, from the door of the house of Eliashib even to the end of the house of Eliashib. 22 And after him repaired the priests, the men of the plain. 23 After him repaired Benjamin and Hashub over against their house. After him repaired Azariah the son of Maaseiah the son of Ananiah by his house. 24 After him repaired Binnui the son of Henadad another piece, from the house of Azariah unto the turning of the wall, even unto the corner. 25 Palal the son of Uzai, over against the turning of the wall, and the tower which lieth out from the king's high house, that was by the court of the prison. After him Pedaiah the son of Parosh.

G. (3:26-27) – The Water Gate

Ne 3:26 Moreover the Nethinims dwelt in Ophel, unto the place over against the water gate toward the east, and the tower that lieth out. 27 After them the Tekoites repaired another piece, over against the great tower that lieth out, even unto the wall of Ophel.

H. (3:28) – The Horse Gate

Ne 3:28 From above the horse gate repaired the priests, every one over against his house.

I. (3:29-30) – The East Gate

Ne 3:29 After them repaired Zadok the son of Immer over against his house. After him repaired also Shemaiah the son of Shechaniah, the keeper of the east gate. 30 After him repaired Hananiah the son of Shelemiah, and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph, another piece. After him repaired Meshullam the son of Berechiah over against his chamber.

J. (3:31-32) – The Inspection Gate

Ne 3:31 After him repaired Malchiah the goldsmith's son unto the place of the Nethinims, and of the merchants, over against the gate Miphkad, and to the

WE NEED MORE MEN LIKE HUR
EXODUS 17:8-13
EDDY CRAFT

TEXT: Exodus 17:8-13 Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. 9 And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. 10 So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. 11 And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. 12 But Moses hands w*ere* heavy; and they took a stone, and put i*t* under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. 13 And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

INTRODUCTION:

A. This is very important moment in the life of the nation of Israel. As they journey toward the Promise Land, they are faced with there first encounter with an army. The Bible tells us that they came face to face with the armies of Amalek. These people were nomadic tribe that was a constant thorn in the side of the people of Israel. In the first encounter, they proved their nature by conducting an unprovoked attack against the Israelites. This prompts the Lord to promise the total annihilation of the Amalekites.

B. In this scene from the travels of Israel, we find the great leader Moses mentioned, along with Aaron, as well as the first mention of the future leader Joshua. All of these men were great leaders in the history of Israel and all played a very important role in the early history of this great nation. However, there is another man mentioned in these verses that deserves our attention; his name is Hur. **This is a man who steps out of nowhere, does a great work and then disappears into the same shadows from which he came.**

C. People have long looked to Moses and Joshua as great leaders and role models. Both men are classed, and rightfully so, as true heroes of the faith. I want us to look at the real heroes of this story. Aaron and Hur.

D. Notice the context!

E. Hur stands out in this context to me. Here is a man that we know next to nothing about, yet he enabled an entire nation to see a great victory.

F. Today, in the Lord's church, there are many Hur's. We should always have a deep appreciation for all those who are willing to take the second seat. People who are often unnoticed, un-thanked and under appreciated, people just like Hur.

I. PEOPLE LIKE HUR ARE ABSOLUTELY INVALUABLE:

A. Exodus 17:12 But Moses' hands *were* heavy; and they took a stone, and put *it* under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.[1]

B. In this story Moses is unable to hold up his hands, if they fall then the Amalekites will certainly win the battle. However, Aaron and Hur step forth and hold the hands of Moses up until the battle is won.

C. The task Hur accomplished that day may not sound like much to you, however, had it not been for the work of this man, Moses would not have had the strength to do his job, and Joshua would never have been able to lead Israel to victory in the battle. To me, Arron and Hur are the real heroes of this battle.

D. The job they performed was absolutely invaluable

[1]The Holy Bible : King James Version. 1995 (Ex 17:12-13). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

II. PEOPLE LIKE HUR ARE ALWAYS INVOLVED:

A. Exodus 17:10,12 So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.12 But Moses' hands *were* heavy; and they took a stone, and put *it* under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.[2]

B. Hur wasn't a great leader like Moses. He was not a great General like Joshua. He was not a great high priest like Aaron. He was not a warrior like those in the army. He was just Hur.

C. The Bible tells us that he was a man of influence among the people. Exodus 24:14 And he said unto the elders, Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you: and, behold, Aaron and Hur *are* with you: if any man have any matters to do, let him come unto them.

D. On this a day there was one thing that Hur could do and he did it. He did it **willingly, actively** and **faithfully.**

E. What a great lesson for the church to learn today (1Cor. 12:4-27). The whole idea here is that we cannot do everything we can do something's.

F. Mark 14:8 SHE HATH DONE WHAT SHE COULD: SHE IS COME AFOREHAND TO ANOINT MY BODY TO THE BURYING.[3]

G. The main thing to remember before we press on in this message is that there is a great work to do and there is room for all who want to be involved in the Lord's work.

H. Psalm 84:10 For a day in thy courts *is* better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

I. Thank God for those people that can't do everything but are willing to do something. (1Cor 15:58; Eph 2:10).

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[2]The Holy Bible : King James Version. 1995 (Ex 17:10-13). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

[3]The Holy Bible : King James Version. 1995 (Mk 14:8-9). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

III. PEOPLE LIKE HUR ARE OFTEN INVISIBLE

A. Exodus 17:12

B. This man is not mentioned before this incident and there are only a couple of others afterwards. This man lived in the shadows while others around him received the glory.

C. He was invisible to the crowd, who could only see Moses, Aaron and Joshua.

D. After the battle, can you imagine Joshua as he led the victorious Israelite army back into camp? I am sure there were congratulations all around, slaps on the back and shouts of *"Way to go"*, Good work, Joshua! I can see the people as they received Moses back into the camp with shouts and expressions of gratitude.

E. There are many in the church today like Hur. They are invisible to the crowds. The preachers, the teachers and those who lead public worship receive the praise and hear the people say *"Well done!"*

F. You might say that there are disadvantages to being like Hur:

1. It is often a thankless task Matthew 6:2,6,16

2. People like Hur work and others get the recognition.

IV. PEOPLE LIKE HUR ARE ALWAYS INVESTORS:

A. Exodus 31:2 See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah.

B. When we serve the Lord as we should, we are making an investment in the lives of others.

CONCLUSION:

A. Thank God for guys like Hur.

B. Don't grow weary in well doing.

going up of the corner. 32 And between the going up of the corner unto the sheep gate repaired the goldsmiths and the merchants.

K. Lessons:

1. The People had a mind to work

2. Idea: Unity (all working together to achieve a common goal)

3. The accuracy of the Scriptures in History

4. See Winters page 92

II. Section 2: Nehemiah 4:1-6:14 – The Troubles

A. Ridicule (4:1-6)

Ne 4:1 ¶ But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. 2 And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned? 3 Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall. 4 Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity: 5 And cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked thee to anger before the builders. 6 So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.

1. If a fox goes up upon the wall, it will fall down

   a. then why are they so worried about? 2. Fortify Themselves: Could such a puny element actually fortify and defend a city? Ridiculous! Or at least that is what Sanballat hoped to lead his people to believe.

   b. Neh 6:14

   Neh 6:14 My God, think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear.

2. When people have a mind to work, you can't slow them down!

   a. Vs. 6 is the key verse in the book of Nehemiah

   b. Neh 8:8

   Ne 8:8 So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.

3. What you set your mind to, you can accomplish!

4. Success is determined upon ***drive***!

B. Conspiracy (4:7-9)

Ne 4:7 ¶ But it came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth, 8 And conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it. 9 Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them.

1. The Plot (vs. 7-8) and the Prayers (vs. 9)

2. Unity in the enemies

3. Don't ever forget the benefit of Prayer!

4. No matter who is working against you, you *must learn to pray for your enemies*!

5. You are in a soul saving business, don't ever desire someone to go to hell!

6. Rom 12:20

Ro 12:20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

C. Discouragement (4:10)

Ne 4:10 And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.

1. Much rubbish – Whatever you start to do, you've got much rubbish

   a. You can't build a house without making some rubbish!

   b. But, if you don't get rid of the rubbish, it will halt the work!

D. Intimidation (4:11-23)

Ne 4:11 And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease. 12 And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us they will be upon you. 13 Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows. 14 And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses. 15 And it came to

pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work. 16 ¶ And it came to pass from that time forth, that the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah. 17 They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. 18 For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me. 19 And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another. 20 In what place therefore ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us. 21 So we laboured in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared. 22 Likewise at the same time said I unto the people, Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and labour on the day. 23 So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, saving that every one put them off for washing.

1. The craftiness of the enemy (vs. 11-12)

2. The challenge of the prophet (vs. 13-14)

   a. Preparation is *required* for battles to come Faith – Works!

3. The commitment of the workers (vs. 15-23)

   a. Vs. 23 (5:14-19)

      A) Lead by example!

      B) Elders/ Deacons/ Preachers!

      C) ***<u>If you're not willing to do the work, you don't deserve the position</u>***!

E. Internal Strife (5:1-19)

1. The ruthlessness (Vs. 1-5)

Ne 5:1 ¶ And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews. 2 For there were that said, We, our sons, and our daughters, are many: therefore we take up corn for them, that we may eat, and live. 3 Some also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth. 4 There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute, and that upon our lands and vineyards. 5 Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and some of our daughters are brought

unto bondage already: neither is it in our power to redeem them; for other men have our lands and vineyards.

a. Vs. 1 – The great outcry

b. This is a good chapter in dealing with complaints

A) Sometimes it requires taking a strong stand!

B) Some decisions you make will not be popular

c. Some complaints are true!

A) Take all complaints seriously!

B) Don't be respecter of persons

2. The Reprimand (Vs. 6-11)

Neh 5:6 ¶ And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words. 7 Then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them. 8 And I said unto them, We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? Then held they their peace, and found nothing to answer. 9 Also I said, It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies? 10 I likewise, and my brethren, and my servants, might exact of them money and corn: I pray you, let us leave off this usury. 11 Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them.

a. Vs. 6 – I was *very angry*!!!

A) Righteous indignation <u>is not wrong</u>

b. Vs. 7 – I consulted with myself

A) **Think before you act**!!!

c. Vs. 8 – He put them to silence

d. Vs. 9 – should we not walk in the fear of our God!

A) When we bring reproach upon the church by our actions, we bring reproach upon Christ!

(Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me)

3. The Repentance (vs. 12-13)

Neh 5:12 Then said they, We will restore them, and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest. Then I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise. 13 Also I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out, and emptied. And all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the LORD. And the people did according to this promise.

a. Shake off = N.T. the dust from their feet

4. The Role-model (Vs. 14-19)

Neh 5:14 ¶ Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year even unto the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that is, twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor. 15 But the former governors that had been before me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God. 16 Yea, also I continued in the work of this wall, neither bought we any land: and all my servants were gathered thither unto the work. 17 Moreover there were at my table an hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, beside those that came unto us from among the heathen that are about us. 18 Now that which was prepared for me daily was one ox and six choice sheep; also fowls were prepared for me, and once in ten days store of all sorts of wine: yet for all this required not I the bread of the governor, because the bondage was heavy upon this people. 19 Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people.

a. He took ***nothing*** from them!

b. They needed the break from the taxation to restore the moral

c. Paul did this in Corinth (1 Cor 9)

d. Vs. 19 – (Neh 13:14, 22, 29, 31)

Ne 13:14 ***Remember*** *me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof.*

Ne 13:22 And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should come and keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath day. ***Remember*** *me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy.*

Ne 13:29 ***Remember*** *them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites.*

Ne 13:31 And for the wood offering, at times appointed, and for the firstfruits. ***Remember*** *me, O my God, for good.*

F. Evil Plot (6:1-4)

Ne 6:1 ¶ Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;) 2 That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief. 3 And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you? 4 Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner.

1. Vs. 3

   a. Why should the work cease just to come visit with you

   b. Acts 6:1-7, 2

Ac 6:2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables

G. Slander (6:5-9)

Ne 6:5 Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand; 6 Wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words. 7 And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together. 8 Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart. 9 For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands.

1. Vs. 8 – Wolves in sheep's clothing

H. Treachery (6:10-14)

Ne 6:10 ¶ Afterward I came unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee. 11 And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in. 12 And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. 13 Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me. 14 My God, think thou

upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear.

1. Vs. 11 – Should such a man as I flee – shows courage

III. Section 3 (7:1-10:39)

A. (7:1-3) – The City of God

B. (7:4-73) – The People of God

1. Vs. 4-65 – The Names

2. Vs. 66-73 – The Numbers

a. The Count (vs. 66-69)

b. The Contribution (vs. 70-73)

C. (8:1-12) – The Word of God

1. Vs. 1-6 – The Communication

2. Vs. 7-8 – The Clarification

3. Vs. 9-12 – The Celebration

D. (8:13-18) – The Festival of God

IV. (9:1-38) – The Confession to God

A. Vs. 1-3 - The Laity

B. Vs. 4-38 - The Levites

1. Vs. 7-8 – Abraham to Moses

2. Vs. 9-23 – Moses to Joshua

a. Vs. 9-15 – God's faithfulness – what God did for them

A) 7th Day Adventist – vs. 13-14 = the Sabbath *was given at Mt. Sinai*!

B) Moses is writing Genesis later looking back at the creation

C) Nehemiah, writing by inspiration, wrote that God made it known on Mt. Sinai

D) Eze 20:12

Eze 20:12 Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them.

b. Vs. 16-18 – Israel's unfaithfulness

3. Vs. 24-26 - Joshua to the Judges

4. Vs. 27-31 – Judges to Ezra

5. Vs. 32-38 – Ezra to Nehemiah

a. This was a sign between Israel and God

b. Not God and the World

V. (10:1-39) – The Vow of God

Title: We Don't Have a King That Is Unapproachable
Text: Est. 4:11
Thesis: God is able to be approached for help
Purpose: To encourage the congregation to approach God when in need

Introduction:

1. Have you ever met someone that was unapproachable? (attitude)
2. Have you ever contemplated what it would be like to try to approach the U.S. President without an invitation?

Body:

I. Kings in Old Time

A. In the days of Ahasuerus the king of Persia (Est 1:1)

B. Esther, a Jew, was made queen after Ahasuerus' former queen was banished from the throne (Est. 1)

C. After Esther became queen, a man named Haman sought to have the all of the Jews exterminated because Mordecai (Esther's cousin that raised her) didn't bow down to him.

D. Haman convinced Ahasuerus to sign letters stating that on a certain date there would be a reward for the death of the Jews

E. When Mordecai heard concerning this decree, he sat at the gate of the Palace in sackcloth and ashes

F. Esther heard concerning Mordecai's condition and inquired concerning it

G. Mordecai told her concerning Haman's plot against the Jews

H. He insisted that she needed to go and approach the king on behalf of her people.

I. Esther responded that if she went in to the king without being summoned first, the king would be completely within his rights to have her killed.

II. An Unapproachable God (Heb 12:18-29)

Heb 12:18 ¶ ***For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, (Sinai)*** *and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, 19 And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: 20 (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: 21 And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) 22* ***But ye are come unto mount Sion,*** *and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, 23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24* ***And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.*** *25 See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: 26 Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. 27 And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. 28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: 29 For our God is a consuming fire.*

A. There was a time when God was unapproachable (Exo 19:12)

> *Ex 19:12 And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death:*

B. The Lord commanded that if anyone touched the mountain, they would be struck dead

C. During the Mosaical law there were limits on who could offer sacrifices (priests)

D. Even Kings of Israel could not offer sacrifices (1 Sam 13:9-14)

> *1Sa 13:9 And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering. 10 And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him. 11 And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash; 12 Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering. 13 And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the*

commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. 14 But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee.

E. The High Priest had to intercede for the people before the Lord (Lev 23:27; Exo 30:10)

Le 23:27 Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD.

Ex 30:10 And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it once in a year with the blood of the sin offering of atonements: once in the year shall he make atonement upon it throughout your generations: it is most holy unto the LORD.

F. Only the Priests could do service in the Tabernacle (Exo 29:44-46)

Ex 29:44 And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest's office. 45 And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. 46 And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the LORD their God.

III. God is approachable to us (Heb 12:22-24)

Heb 12:22 ***But ye are come unto mount Sion,*** *and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, 23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24* ***And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.***

A. The Hebrew's writer was writing to Jewish Christians who had turned back to the Old Law

B. He was calling for them to come back because the New is better than the Old

1. The key word in the whole book of Hebrews is "**Better**"

2. Christ is **Better** than Moses (Heb 3:5-6)

3. Christ is **Better** than Aaron (Heb 7:11-19)

4. New Priesthood is **Better** than the old Priesthood (Heb 7:23-25)

5. The New Law is **Better** than the Old Law (Heb 7:22; 10:20)

6. Christians are the priests today (1 Pet 2:5-9)

> *1Pe 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. 6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. 7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, 8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. 9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:*

C. This is why the Hebrew's writer emphasizes the importance of coming before the throne of God (Heb 4:10-16).

> *Heb 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

1. We have the ability to come <u>boldly</u> before God's throne ***anytime, anywhere***!

2. We can come for help, support, mercy, grace, forgiveness, anything we want or need.

3. We can do so without fear of repercussions from the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

4. To the direct opposite, He desires that we come before Him often (1The 5:17)

> *1Th 5:17 Pray without ceasing.*

5. We can have this ability through the sacrifice and experience of *our* High Priest

> *Heb 4:14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. 15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be*

touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

6. God has blessed us with an avenue to come before Him for anything, why then would we not use it?

Conclusion:

1. Esther had a need and she went before the king at the risk of her life.
2. We have needs and desires every day that we should seek the King's help with
3. We have not fear, but we can come boldly before the throne of grace…
4. We must ask in the name of (by the authority of) Jesus Christ (John 16:23-24)

Joh 16:23 ¶ And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. 24 Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

5. Let us be ready always to approach our King, Father, and God

Title: Convictions
Text: Est 4:16
Thesis: Christians have convictions
Purpose: To actuate the congregation to greater convictions in the realm of God

Introduction:

1. Convictions: 3a – *A Strong Persuasion or belief* (Webster)
2. There was a time when this country was made up of people who had strong convictions
3. They were willing to fight for what they believed in
4. There were people willing to stand up and say "no" when things were going the wrong direction
5. There were people who were willing to risk everything for what they believed!
6. These people were and are few and far between, but when they come along, they should be heroes to all of us
7. Christians should be those of strong convictions

Body:

I. People With Convictions:

A. "*Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death*" – Patrick Henry

B. Convictions should move us to, "*speak out on subjects that others confined to their hearts*" (American heritage – Patrick Henry)

C. Many people have strong convictions concerning American liberties

D. One of the points of pride in American History is the pride that drives Americans to give their lives for what they believe in.

E. "Star Spangled Banner" – F. Scott Key

Oh, say can you see, by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming?
Whose broad stripes and bright stars, through the perilous fight,

O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming?
And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.
O say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

F. "God Bless the U.S.A." – Lee Greenwood

And I'm proud to be an American,
where at least I know I'm free.
And I won't forget the men who died,
who gave that right to me.

And I gladly stand up,
next to you and defend her still today.
'Cause there ain't no doubt I love this land,
God bless the USA.

G. The national pride of our country, and the honor and freedom that comes with being American is something that many are willing to die for.

H. We honor those who are willing to stand for what they believe in, even if it requires their life

II. A woman with conviction (Est 4:16)

> *16 Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and* ***if I perish, I perish****.*

A. The Situation:

1. The evil Haman had plotted to kill the Jews because of pride
2. The plot was found out after the king made an edict to have all of the Jews slaughtered on a certain day
3. Haman and the king were unaware of the fact that Esther was a Jew
4. When Mordecai heard concerning the plot, he sat down at the gate of the palace in sackcloth and ashes mourning for the plight of the Jews

5. Esther sent to him inquiring concerning why Mordecai was mourning
6. When Mordecai tells her and convinces her that she must attempt to stop the slaughter, Esther becomes resolved to save her people.

B. Esther's attitude is "if I perish, I perish".

1. Like Patrick Henry, Esther was prepared to do whatever necessary for the cause she pursued.
2. We should have this kind of conviction today concerning things within our lives.

III. Our Conviction - Patient Perseverance

A. We must have the conviction it takes to remain faithful unto death, even in the face of death

B. This was the conviction of Esther

C. What does this mean for us?

1. When we are pressured to serve Satan, we stand up for Christ
   a. PA's attempted law that would require even churches to not be able to refuse to hire Homosexuals because of their lifestyle
   b. Friends provoking us to smoke, drink, do drugs, watch bad films, listen to bad music, wear immodest clothing, steal from others, commit fornication, dance, use bad language, etc (not just problems for young people)
   c. What do we do when these things come before us?

      A) We need protection to be in place (Psa 119:11; Pro 16:6; 8:13)

      Ps 119:11 ¶ Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

      Pr 16:6 ¶ By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.

Pr 8:13 The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.

B) We need to withstand the forces of Evil with a "it is written" (Mat 4)

1) This may not make you popular

2) It may be hard, but it will work

2. When we are told that it is best to serve ourselves, we stand up for Christ

a. When you are encouraged to take the deceptive way to the top in your Job, live honestly

b. When you are told to tear someone else down for your own good, seek humility

c. When you find a way you can cause yourself to be exalted, find a way to exalt someone else

d. These things are not easy, but God said, "*Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall*" (Pro 16:18)

e. If you humble yourself, if you stand fast for your beliefs even if it means you're unpopular, God will exalt you (Jam 4:8-10)

Jas 4:8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. 9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

3. When we are told to give up Christianity or die, we stand up for Christ (Rev 2:10)

Re 2:10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: ***be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life****.*

a. The population of Muslims is steadily growing in America

b. There is coming a day when we will might have to die for our beliefs, if you aren't prepared to do that, then you need to work on your faith and Conviction!

4. When we are told not to teach and preach the Gospel, we stand up for Christ (Acts 5:27-33)

> *Ac 5:27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, 28 Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. 29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. 30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. 31 Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him. 33 When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.*

Conclusion:

1. We must be those who have conviction
2. We must be prepared to act upon those convictions
3. We must be prepared to say, "if I perish, I perish"

Title: Ezra, the Man (Part 1 of 2)
Text: Ezra
Thesis: Ezra was a good example in Scripture
Purpose: To encourage the congregation to follow the example of Ezra

Introduction:

1. There are great examples of good men in Scripture.

2. When we look at Ezra as an example in Scripture, we see his faith, his prayer life, his trustworthiness, his courage, and his respect for God's word, his desire to do the work of God

Body:

I. Ezra a man of Faith

Ezra had faith in God's deliverance (8:21-32)

Ezr 8:21 ¶ Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. 22 For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him. 23 So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us. 24 ¶ Then I separated twelve of the chief of the priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them, 25 And weighed unto them the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, even the offering of the house of our God, which the king, and his counsellors, and his lords, and all Israel there present, had offered: 26 I even weighed unto their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, and silver vessels an hundred talents, and of gold an hundred talents; 27 Also twenty basons of gold, of a thousand drams; and two vessels of fine copper, precious as gold. 28 And I said unto them, Ye are holy unto the LORD; the vessels are holy also; and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering unto the LORD God of your fathers. 29 Watch ye, and keep them, until ye weigh them before the chief of the priests and the Levites, and chief of the fathers of Israel, at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of the LORD. 30 So took the priests and the Levites the weight of the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, to bring them to Jerusalem unto the house of our God. 31 ¶ Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he

delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way. 32 And we came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days.

A. Ezra had prepared all of the necessities to go to Jerusalem

1. He had the people
2. He had the money
3. What he didn't have was anyone to keep his company safe while they traveled

B. The people between Persia and Jerusalem did not have a love for the Jews (Ezra 4:1-5)

Ezr 4:1 ¶ Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the LORD God of Israel; 2 Then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither. 3 But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the LORD God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us. 4 Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, 5 And hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

1. There were people who were opposed to Jerusalem being reestablished and blessed by God
2. There were adversaries all along the road

C. Ezra could not bring himself to ask help from the king because of all of the things he had spoken concerning God's might and power

1. How does it look for a Christian to claim they have a mighty and powerful God and yet never give evidence of putting faith and trust in Him?

2. God is deserving of our trust (Deu 10:17-18; 32:1-4)

De 10:17 For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward: 18 He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.

De 32:1 ¶ Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. 2 My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: 3 Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. 4 He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.

3. This was not a wrong kind of pride because it caused Ezra and the people to go before God and plead for His protection

4. Because of their faith, God protected and cared for them on their journey

II. Ezra a man of Prayer (Ezra 9:5; 10:1)

Ezr 10:1 ¶ Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore.

A. We are commanded to pray (1 The 5:17)

1Th 5:17 Pray without ceasing.

B. Ezra prayed when sin was found out (Ezra 9:1-5)

Ezr 9:1 ¶ Now when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, doing according to their abominations, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. 2 For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass. 3 And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonied. 4 Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been

carried away; and I sat astonied until the evening sacrifice. 5 ¶ And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the LORD my God,

1. We ought to pray for the forgiveness of other people's sins

   a. Many people do not pray to God in the face of other people's sin

   b. Paul prayed for Israel that they might be saved (Rom 10:1)

Ro 10:1 ¶ Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

   c. When we think concerning the sins of others, it should touch us enough to intercede on their behalf

   d. Our compassion in knowing the grace of God should provoke us to desire that God forgive them (Acts 7:60; Luke 23:34)

Ac 7:60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Lu 23:34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

2. Ezra should be an example to all of us in praying for others

C. Ezra realized that Prayer was essential for forgiveness

1. Peter commanded Simon to repent and <u>pray</u> that sin of his heart might be forgiven (Acts 8:22)

Ac 8:22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.

2. Repentance is a change of mind and if one truly changes their mind about something, then they change their actions as well

3. One of the requirements to receive forgiveness is to ask for it.

4. If one where to sin against a brother, but then realize he was wrong and change, but never asked the brother to forgive him, he has not been forgiven

5. If one sins against God but later changes his ways, yet never asks God to forgive him, then he is not forgiven.

6. You cannot have forgiveness without prayer.

III. Ezra a trustworthy man (Ezra 7:13-26; Pro 10:9)

Pr 10:9 ¶ He that walketh uprightly walketh surely: but he that perverteth his ways shall be known.

A. Ezra was a man trusted by the King of Persia

1. He was trusted with the riches of the whole nation

2. This is even more significant if you remember that he was part of a nation that was in subjection to the Persians

3. Artaxerxes sent out a letter giving Ezra these powers:

a. Free-will offering from Artaxerxes for the purchase of sacrifices (7:15-18)

Ezr 7:15 And to carry the silver and gold, which the king and his counsellors have freely offered unto the God of Israel, whose habitation is in Jerusalem, 16 And all the silver and gold that thou canst find in all the province of Babylon, with the freewill offering of the people, and of the priests, offering willingly for the house of their God which is in Jerusalem: 17 That thou mayest buy speedily with this money bullocks, rams, lambs, with their meat offerings and their drink offerings, and offer them upon the altar of the house of your God which is in Jerusalem. 18 And <u>whatsoever shall seem good to thee, and to thy brethren, to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, that do after the will of your God</u>.

b. Ezra was trusted with access to the kings treasury and the treasuries of the peoples near Israel (7:20-21)

Ezr 7:20 And whatsoever more shall be needful for the house of thy God, which thou shalt have occasion to bestow, bestow it out of the king's treasure house. 21 And I, even I Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the treasurers which are beyond the river, that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, it be done speedily,

c. Ezra was trusted to setup judges in the land (7:25-26)

Ezr 7:25 And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that is in thine hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know them not. 26 And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment.

A) They were to teach the people

B) They were also to execute judgment upon the people

4. Artaxerxes placed a great deal of trust in Ezra and he was not disappointed by Ezra's actions.

B. He was trusted by God to teach the People (Ezra 7:10; Neh 8:1-8)

Ezr 7:10 For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

Ne 8:1 ¶ And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel. 2 And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. 3 And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law. 4 And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam. 5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up: 6 And Ezra

blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground. 7 Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place. 8 So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.

1. God had confidence in Ezra because he prepared himself for the task
2. He also had confidence in him because Ezra understood the law and could help others understand it as well
3. We need teachers like Ezra who will not bend the message to the hearers pleasure (2 Tim 4:1-5; 1 Tim 4:16)

2Ti 4:1 ¶ I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; 2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. 5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

1Ti 4:16 Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

Conclusion:

1. We need more examples like Ezra in our world today
2. May we all take the examples of Faith, Prayer, and Trustworthiness and apply them to our lives

Title: Ezra The Man (p2)
Text: Ezra
Thesis: Ezra was a good example in Scripture
Purpose: To encourage the congregation to follow the example of Ezra

Introduction:

1. There are great examples of good men in Scripture.

2. When we look at Ezra as an example in Scripture, we see his faith, his prayer life, his trustworthiness, his courage, and his respect for God's word, his desire to do the work of God

Body:

I. Ezra a Man of Moral Courage

A. He had the courage to require those who had married foreign wives put them away (Ezra 10:5, 16)

Ezr 10:5 Then arose Ezra, and made the chief priests, the Levites, and all Israel, to swear that they should do according to this word. And they sware.

Ezr 10:16 And the children of the captivity did so. And Ezra the priest, with certain chief of the fathers, after the house of their fathers, and all of them by their names, were separated, and sat down in the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter.

B. We need to have the courage of Ezra in our lives and in our congregations

1. We need to have the courage to put away the evil doers from our assemblies (1 Cor 5)

a. We are to deliver them to Satan that their souls might be saved (5:5)

1Co 5:5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

b. We are to purge them out (5:7-8)

1Co 5:7 ¶ Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is

sacrificed for us: 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

c. We can and must judge our brethren (5:11-13)

1Co 5:11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. 12 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? 13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

2. We need to have the courage to put away sin in our own lives

a. Many people become involved in sins that are hard to pull themselves out of for many reasons

A) Some because of peer-pressure

B) Some because of personal desire

b. We must have the courage to purge our lives

A) Rom 12:1-2

Ro 12:1 ¶ I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

B) 1 John 3:1-3

1Jo 3:1 ¶ Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. 2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. 3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

3. Our lives and our congregations must be holy in order to be pleasing to God.

2. Ezra a Man with Respect for God's Word

A. He Honored it by studying and obeying it (Ezra 7:10; Neh 8:2-3, 5-6, 8)

Ezr 7:10 For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

Ne 8:2 And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. 3 And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.

5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up: 6 And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

8 So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.

B. We should have this kind of respect for God's Word

1. It is the power of God unto salvation (Rom 1:15-17)

Ro 1:15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. 16 ¶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

2. It is how man should sustain himself (Deu 8:3)

De 8:3 And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.

3. They are pure and holy (Psa 12:6)

Ps 12:6 The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.

4. We must have a heart that is willing to listen to God's word

(Psa 85:8)

Ps 85:8 ¶ I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly.

3. His greatest work was to restore the Word of God to the hearts and Lives of the People

A. Many characters from Scripture completed many great tasks

1. Examples:

a. Solomon – temple

b. David – Kingdom of Israel

c. Moses – Wilderness wanderings

d. Noah – Ark

2. What could be greater than the restoration of a people back to God?

3. Nehemiah rebuilt the wall with perishable materials to pretect the people from the heathen.

4. Ezra built them up spiritually from within, with the eternal word of God, to protect them from sin.

5. The people needed the Word of God in their heart in order to live acceptably to him (Psa 119:11)

Ps 119:11 ¶ Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

B. We all need the word of God within our hearts

1. 1 Cor 1:18-25

1Co 1:18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. 20 Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? 21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. 22 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: 23 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; 24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

2. 2 Tim 2:15

2Ti 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

3. The word of God is what we will be judged by in the last day (John 12:48)

Joh 12:48 He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

Conclusion:

1. Let us strive to follow the example of Ezra in all that he did that was good.

2. Let us learn from him the attitudes and actions of:

   A. Faith

   B. Prayer

   C. Trustworthiness

   D. Moral Courage

E. Respect for God's Word

F. Restoration of the Word to the hearts of the people

Title: Our God has punished us less than our iniquities deserve
Text: Ezra 9:13
Thesis: Sinful man deserves Hell
Purpose: To actuate the congregation to obedience

Introduction:

1. Many people cannot accept God because they cannot comprehend how God can punish
2. These people do not have a correct view of God
3. They do not understand punishment, and they do not understand grace
4. They don't comprehend the grand view of reality
5. They become offended because God says that there are consequences for one's actions
6. The truth of the matter is, "*Our God has punished us less than our iniquities deserve*".

Body:

I. The Hideousness of Sin
   A. When people think of hideous sins they think of:
      1. Murder
         a. The first murder is recorded in Scripture
         b. It wasn't very long after the world had been created that the first murder took place (Gen 4:8)

Ge 4:8 ¶ And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

         c. We view murders and murderers as hideous sins committed by horrible people
         d. There were nearly 200 murders committed in Washington D.C. alone in 2015, which actually was about 250 less than 1993
         e. We see murder, and we think "how terrible"… and it is
      2. Rape
         a. We have records of those who were raped in Scripture
         b. Dinah was raped by Shechem (Gen 34:2)
         c. Tamar was raped by her brother Amnon (2 Sam 13:14)
         d. New York City alone had over 1,500 rapes last year which was down from over 3,100 rapes in 1990
         e. We think, how disgusting that someone would
   B. When God thinks of hideous sins, he thinks of:
      1. Lying
         a. The world has come to believe that there is really such a thing as a white lie
         b. This idea of itself is a lie that the devil has made up to make people believe that it is not actually that bad to lie

c. God's view:

A) It is an abomination (Pro 6:16-17)

Pr 6:16 These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: 17 A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,

B) It stems from Satan, the father of lies (John 8:44)

Joh 8:44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

C) God does not view sins as we do, they are all terrible in his sight!

2. Disobedience to Parents

a. Many people look at being disobedient as something that is minor, but not in God's eyes.

b. God expects the parents to be the parents and the children to be the children.

c. Paul, by inspiration, said that being disobedient to your parents is worthy of death under the old <u>*and*</u> new covenants (Rom 1:30-32)

Ro 1:30 Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: 32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

d. He even included them in the same list as homosexuals in God's eyes!!! (vs. 27)

C. Sin in all of it's many forms and facets is hideous and deplorable in the eyes of God

D. There is not a sin that God does not hate, nor a sinner that God does not love.

E. If all sin is this despicable in God's eyes, then what does all sin make one worthy of? Death (Rom 6:23)

Ro 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

II. What Sin Deserves (Ezra 9:6-15)

Ezr 9:6 And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens. 7 Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as it is this day. 8 And now for a little space grace hath been shewed from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage. 9 For we were bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem. 10 And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken thy commandments, 11 Which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying, The land, unto which ye go to possess it, is an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness. 12 Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever: that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children for ever. 13 And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this; 14 Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? Wouldest not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping? 15 O LORD God of Israel, thou art righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day: behold, we are before thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before thee because of this.

A. Israel's Sin

1. They had taken wives and children of the foreign people

2. They had broken the commandments of the Lord… again

3. When Ezra reaches Jerusalem and finds out, this is his reaction, and his prayer before the people.

B. Sin (according to Ezra)

1. Sin Brings shame

a. Their iniquity was great

b. It was such that they were again repeating history

2. God had given them grace and brought a remnant back from Babylonian captivity

a. He had not forsaken them, but given them a permanent place in his holy place

b. He had granted them mercy

c. How have they repaid him?

3. They had forsaken his commandments

a. They had filled the land with uncleanness

b. After all God had done for them in the face of their sinful past, and still not completely forsaken them

c. Were they again going to provoke God to anger?

d. Ezra makes this statement, "*O LORD God of Israel, thou art righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day: behold, we are before thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before thee because of this.*"

C. Ezra realized that their sins were such that they <u>*deserved*</u> to be destroyed and never brought back!

D. Let us then look at the grand scheme of redemption!

III. Does man deserve Hell?

A. What God has Done:

1. God has blessed man with everything he could possibly need (Gen 1-2)

2. He has shown man every possible advantage (Psa 19:1-11)

3. He refuses to allow man to be tempted above that which he is able to handle

   (1 Cor 10:13)

4. He has given us everything we can possibly need to overcome every trial, every tribulation, every temptation, and examples for all (2 Pet 1:3)

5. He has even sent His only begotten Son to die on the cross that we might not receive eternal damnation (John 3:16)

B. What God Expects:

1. Obey His commandments through faith (1 John 5:1-4)

1Jo 5:1 ¶ Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. 2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. 4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

2. If one does this, God guarantees him victory over Hell and Satan.

3. He has supplied man with power, all man has to do is make the choice.

C. The Consequences

1. God has done all of this and offered man a choice

2. If man turns down such a blessed offer, then man only leaves God one option

3. There are beings that deserves Hell and for them Hell was prepared (Mat 25:41)
4. But these beings are the ones who have taken God's blessings and gifts and thrown them back in His face in rebellion
5. When we sin, even the "smallest" of sins, we throw God's gifts back in His face, and we become worthy of Hell

Conclusion:

1. God has supplied grace and provided for every possible problem
2. Will we accept God's grace, obey Him, and allow God to happily say "I punished him less than his sins deserved" when He says "welcome, thou good and faithful servant!"

Title: Esther
Text: Esther
Thesis: Esther was a good example for us today

Introduction

I. Other than Ruth, Esther is the only other woman in the Bible to have a book named after her.

II. Although the account of Esther is one that is familiar to many, there are still many facts and lessons to be learned through a study of her life.

Body

I. Who Esther Was

A. There is not a record of Esther's parents in Scriptures.

1. Instead, there is a record of who took care of Esther.

2. Esther 2:5-7 tells that Mordecai, Esther's cousin raised her.

3. Although we do not know how Esther's parents died, we know that once they did, Esther was taken in by Mordecai.

B. Miscellaneous information concerning Esther.

1. She is first introduced as Hadassah, which is a Hebrew name.

a. Hadassah means "myrtle."

b. Esther is most likely a Persian name for "star."

2. Esther was a Jew.

a. Although there is not a verse which directly says this, we understand through implications.

i. First, Mordecai was a Jew (Esther 2:5).

ii. Since Mordecai was a Jew and was related to Esther this would mean that Esther was a Jew.

b. Later on in the book, when Haman sends out a decree to kill all the Jews, Mordecai tells Esther she would not be exempt from this decreed even though she was Queen.

C. Esther was Queen of Persia.

1. Before Esther, the queen was Queen Vashti.

a. King Ahasuerus, while during a feast, called for Queen Vashti to be brought forth for the men to look upon.

i. This made him very upset and he asked his wise men what should be done.

ii. They decided that a new queen must be found.

iii. If the word spread that the queen was allowed to disobey the king, then all other women would think they could disobey their husbands.

b. A decree was sent throughout the empire declaring that all wives were to give their husbands honor.

2. Once the king's anger had subsided, he asked that fair young virgins be brought before him.

a. The women were gathered in Shushan.

b. Esther was among the virgins.

i. She obtained grace and favor in the king's eyes.

ii. The king loved her more than all the other women and made her queen over Persia.

II. Esther as Queen

A. She fought for her people and outwitted evil Haman.

1. King Ahasuerus made Haman over all the princes. (Esther 3:1-5)

a. When this was done, it was also commanded that all the servants and all those in the king's gate bow and reverence Haman.

b. Mordecai, who sat in the king's gate, did not bow down nor reverence him.

c. The other servants in the gate continually asked Mordecai why he transgressed the king's law.

d. Although there is no scripture which tells us why Mordecai did not bow, it is safe to say that it was because of his faithfulness to God.

2. Haman's wrath took hold of him and he made a decision that would affect the Jewish nation. (Esther 3:5-15)

   a. The servants told Haman that Mordecai was a Jew.

   b. He set out to destroy all of the Jews that were in the entire kingdom.

   c. Haman went to King Ahasuerus in a deceitful manner in effort to have the Jews destroyed.

      i. The king gave Haman the signet ring which gave him the power to do whatsoever he desired.

      ii. Haman sent out a decree for all Jews, young and old, to be killed.

3. Esther had heard how Mordecai and the Jews were in great mourning. (Esther 4)

   a. She sent one of the king's chamberlains to inquire what had happened.

   b. Esther found out that a decree had been given for all the Jews to be destroyed.

   c. Mordecai asked that Esther make supplication to the king on her people's behalf.

      i. Esther's first response was to remind him of the law concerning those who went before the king.

(i) If someone went before the king who had not been called, they could be killed.

(ii) If the king held out the scepter, then that would show his acceptance of the one who came before him.

ii. Mordecai told Esther that she would not escape death and who knew if she was "*come to the kingdom for such a time as this.*"

iii. Esther asked that Mordecai gather all the Jews in Shushan and fast for three days.

4. After three days of fasting, Esther went before the king.
   a. She did not immediately ask for her people to be saved, but instead she waited until the time was right.
   b. There were two feasts which were prepared for her, King Ahasuerus, and Haman.
   c. It was at the second feast that Esther revealed how Haman had sent a decree to destroy all of her people.
      i. The king was wrath and went into the gardens while Haman pleaded for his life to Esther.
      ii. When the king returned, he saw that Haman had fallen upon the bed where Esther was.
      iii. This angered the king even more and he ordered that Haman be hung.
5. Esther was willing to put her life on the line for her people.
   a. Although she knew she could be put to death, she still went before the king.
   b. It was as if she knew she was the only hope for the Jewish nation.
6. Esther came before the king again, but this time to ask for the decree to be reversed.

a. Although the decree could not be reversed, King Ahasuerus made a decree to counteract the first.

b. The second decree gave the Jews the power to stand for their life and defend their property.

B. While queen, Esther brought popularity and power to the Jewish nation while they were in captivity.

1. Once the decree was brought to the Jews, things began to change in their favor.

a. Not only were they allowed to defend themselves, but Mordecai was put in a position of power.

b. He was adorned in royal apparel and went throughout the city.

2. In all of the provinces and cities, the Jews were joyful and thankful.

3. Many people in the land became Jewish proselytes because they were fearful of the Jews.

a. The people of the land had Haman as an example of what could happen to them.

b. They most likely heard of Haman's death for attempting to destroy the Jews.

c. Surely this put fear into the people's hearts that the same consequence would befall them if any did harm to the Jews.

III. Lessons Learned from Esther

A. God's providence works in many ways.

1. It is interesting to note that God is not explicitly mentioned in the book of Esther.

2. There is however, a reference to His providence.

a. Esther 4:14 "*For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and*

thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

b. Through God's providence Queen Vashti was removed and Esther was made queen.

3. Although God worked directly in the Old Testament and miraculously in the First Century, He works through providence today.

   a. Mordecai used the phrase "for such a time as this" which is very applicable to us today.

   b. There are times in our life when we do not know why we are in a certain situation, however, later on down the road it can be seen why.

   c. We need to keep in mind though that there is a purpose for everything we do.

B. God exalts those who serve him.

1. It is safe to say that Esther was chosen as queen because of her godly life and her beauty, both inner and outer.

   a. God also, through His providence, put Mordecai in a position of power.

   b. By Esther and Mordecai both being in a position of power, they were able to deliver the Jews.

2. Today, God is the one who ultimately puts people in power.

   a. When Christ appeared before Pilate, Pilate told Jesus,

   "Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?" (John 19:10-11)

   b. Christ's response was,

   "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin."

3. Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome, "*Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.*"
   a. God is the supreme ruler over all.
   b. He has the authority to give power and to take it away.

C. The position we hold in life should not affect our attitude towards others.

1. Although Esther was placed in the position of queen, this did not affect how she treated Mordecai or her people.
   a. She still heeded to Mordecai's advice when the Jews were in danger of being wiped out.
   b. Esther was willing to put her life on the line in order to go before the king on her people's behalf.
2. When people are put into positions of power, it is possible for them to let it go to their head and to become haughty.
   a. It is important that we keep in mind that God is the giver of all and can take all away.
   b. We can quickly lose friends and the support of family if our pride gets in the way.
   c. Proverbs 16:18 says, "*Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.*"

Conclusion

I. Esther was an amazing woman who did that which was right in God's eyes.

II. All Christians, male or female, should strive to be like Esther and be faithful to God regardless of our situation in life.

Title: Think Before You Act!
Text: Neh. 5:6-7
Thesis: The Christian's Brain should engage before their Mouth or their Body
Purpose: To actuate the congregation to more self-control

Introduction:

1. Nehemiah – A man with self-control

   A. Self-control -

      1. To check; to restrain; to govern one's self

      2. To overpower; to subject to authority; to counteract; to have under command one's self

      3. To direct or govern in opposition; to have superior force, or authority over one's self

      4. CHECK, RESTRAIN, GOVERN, OVERPOWER, SUBJECT, UNDER-COMMAND, DIRECT or GOVERN against opposition, to have AUTHORITY

   B. The Problem

      1. Nehemiah was leading the remnant in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem

      2. The problem was that after they began to build, their enemies attempted to stop the building

      3. Once the enemies started to harass the people, other problems came to the surface

      4. The People were working diligently day and night to build the wall when the people cried out from within with complaints

         a. The rulers of the Jews had been taking advantage of the common people

b. The people had been forced to make their children bond-servants to the rulers in order to survive

c. Nehemiah records his action when he heard this complaint (Neh 5:6):

Ne 5:6 ¶ And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words.

d. Nehemiah, with the powers given to him by Artaxerxes, could have taken immediate vengeance upon the rulers, but he did not

e. He exerted <u>self-control</u> (Neh 5:7)!

Ne 5:7 Then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them.

2. We as Christians must have *control* of our minds, our hearts, and our bodies!

3. Self-control is required to <u>master</u> many secular activities (1 Cor 9:25)

A. Martial Arts – All techniques are based upon self-control (HURT OTHERS)

B. Military Snipers – Control surroundings, actions, and most of all their own bodies. (even down to their breathing and heart rate) (BE HURT BY OTHERS)

C. If you do not maintain self-control, you fail

D. Many have died in battle because they lost self-control

E. Swordsman – Zorro – Must maintain self-control (HURT THEMSELVES)

F. Why these Examples? – Paul said we are in a war (2 Cor 10:1-6)

1. To be a Christian and to win in this war, we must cast down imaginations and pride

2. But we also must <u>bring every thought captive unto Christ</u>

BODY:

I. We must maintain self-control over our **pride**

A. Pride can cause us to receive the *wrath of God*

1. Pharaoh (Ex 5:2)

Ex 5:2 And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.

2. Manasseh (2 Chr 33:9-13)

B. Pride can cause us to refuse healing (of our sins) – Naaman (2 Kin 5:9-14)

C. Pride can cause us to be separated from God (Pro 3:5-7; 8:13)

Pr 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. 7 ¶ Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.

Pr 8:13 The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.

D. God will lift up the humble, but refuses those who are prideful (James 4:6)

1. If you sing your own praises, you're not singing God's (2 Cor 10:17-18)

2. Pride brings a person down, but honor can raise up the humble (Pro 29:23)

3. A proud heart stirs up strife (Pro 28:25)

4. Whoever trusts in their own heart is a fool (Pro 28:26)

II. We must have self-control over our **mouth** (Psa 141:3)

Ps 141:3 Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.

A. Someone who is careful with their mouth will keep his life, those who shoot their mouths off will receive destruction (Pro 13:3)

B. Therefore, be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath (Jam 1:19)

C. Someone who is religious but doesn't seek to control their tongue, his religion is vain (James 1:26-27) but pure religion is service and holiness from the world.

D. There are 7 things that are an abomination to God: (Pro 6:16-19)

1. Proud look
2. Lying Tongue
3. Hands that shed innocent blood
4. Heart that think wicked things
5. Feet that are swift to evil
6. A False Witness
7. One who sows discord among brethren
8. Are we guilty of abominations against God???

III. We must have self-control over our **anger**

A. We can be angry, but we must not sin in our anger (Eph 4:26)

B. Jesus even became angry (Mark 3:1-6)

C. A loss of control over anger has killed many people… even the first recorded to have ever died (Gen 4:5-8)

D. (Pro 16:32; 14:29)

1. One who is slow to anger is better than the a mighty person and is of great understanding
2. One who has self-control is better than one who can capture a city, but one who is hasty of spirit (lacking self-control) exalts folly (Extreme sinfulness)

E. Jesus taught that the meek would be those who would be blessed and would inherit the earth (Mat 5:5)

F. Anger many times comes because of pride, but we should not be prideful

G. Those who a quick tempered deal foolishly (Pro 14:17)

H. An Elder in the church cannot be those who are quick tempered, they must be meek and have self control (Tit 1:7) and elders are to be examples for all of us to follow

CONCLUSION:

1. How do we gain self-control?

   A. Exercise (Hard Work) – Acts 24:16)

   B. Dad's advice – If something is worth doing, do it right the first time (build good habits now)

   C. We must be transformed into one who is Holy and Godly (Rom 12:1-2)

   D. We must allow God to direct our path (Jer 10:23)

   E. We must exercise self-control by keeping ourselves under CHRIST'S control (2 Cor 10:5)

Title: Working for the Lord
Text: Nehemiah
Thesis: God's people must have the correct motivation, intentions, and goals
Purpose: To actuate the congregation to work for the Lord

Introduction:

1. The Children of Israel in the book of Nehemiah succeeded in rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem because they had desire and they had the correct motivation, intentions, and goals

2. The People:

   A. The children of Israel had the correct motivation, intentions, and goals in their work

   B. They were seeking to please God in rebuilding the city (Neh 3:17-20)

   C. They were seeking to live in accordance with God's will (Neh 8:1-18)

      1. They heard the Word

      2. They understood the Word

      3. They obeyed the Word

Body:

I. Correct Motivation

   A. Many people who do not work for the Lord do so because they have a wrong motivation in their actions

   B. It is important to know that your motivation is for doing anything is the correct one.

   C. Good things can come out of actions by people with poor motivations, but they do not benefit the person doing those actions (Php 1:15-18)

Php 1:15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: 16 The one preach Christ of contention,

not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: 17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. 18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

D. Our motivation must be provided by the studying of the Word

1. Studying should drive us to <u>work</u> (2 Tim 2:15)

2Ti 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a ***workman*** *that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

2. Studying should drive us to greater love for our fellow-man (Psa 119:48; 1 John 4:7)

Ps 119:48 My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes.

1Jo 4:7 ¶ Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. 8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. 9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. 10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

II. Correct Intentions

A. Some people do something good, but only by accident

B. It was not their intention to be pleasing to God, but they simply did something that was in agreement with His commandments

C. If we work for the Lord, but do so out of:

1. Pride

a. Haughtiness is a problem in the church when people do things just to say "I'm better than you"

b. People with this attitude might do something in accordance with God's word, but they have defied God's laws concerning humbleness in the process (Jam 4:10; Pro 6:17)

Jas 4:10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

Pr 6:17 A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,

c. Annanias and Saphaira found out how dangerous the wrong intentions could be (Acts 5)

2. Selfishness

a. If a person works for the Lord, but only does so for what they can get out of it, then they are truly not serving the Lord

b. Jesus said that His task was to fulfill the will of the one who sent Him (John 4:34)

Joh 4:34 Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

c. Our goal should be to have the intention of pleasing God and He will take care of the rest (Mat 6:33)

Mt 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

III. Correct Goals

A. Goal of winning the Lost (Luke 19:10; Rom 1:15-17; 1 Cor 9:15-19)

Lu 19:10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Ro 1:15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. 16 ¶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

1Co 9:15 ¶ But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void. 16 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! 17 For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me. 18 What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel. 19 ¶ For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.

B. Goal of attaining Heaven (Rev 2:10; Jam 1:12; Mat 25:21-23; Heb 12:1-2)

Re 2:10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

Jas 1:12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

Mt 25:21 His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. 22 He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. 23 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

Heb 12:1 ¶ Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, 2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Conclusion:

1. We must have the right Motivation, Intentions, and Goals in order to be faithful to God

2. What are your motivations, your intentions, and your goals?

Aaron J. Cozort

Title: Devices of the Devil
Text: Nehemiah
Thesis: Satan has devices he uses on us
Purpose: To instruct the congregation in the devices of the Devil

Introduction:

1. We are not (should not be) ignorant of Satan's devices (2 Cor 2:11)

> *2Co 2:11 Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.*

2. We must be prepared to do battle against all of the Devil's evil trickery and temptation (Eph 6:10-18)

3. The book of Nehemiah has many great examples of the devices that Satan uses against the people of God to keep them from the work that they are to be doing

Body:

I. Derision & ridicule

A. Derision – *the use of ridicule or scorn to show contempt* (Webster)

B. Neh 4:1-3

> *Ne 4:1 ¶ But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. 2 And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned? 3 Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.*

C. The Devil used mockery and ridicule to attempt to stop the building of the walls

D. How many people have given up on something just because they were derided or ridiculed for trying?

1. Edison might never have invented the light bulb

2. The Wright Brothers might never have flown the first airplane

3. Noah might never have built the first barge (Gen 6-7)

4. David would never have slain Goliath (1 Sam 17)

5. If the walls had never been rebuilt, the devil would have had a good chance of destroying the seed line of Christ

E. What are we to do when we face Derision?

1. Place it in God's hands

2. Prayer is the best solution for ridicule (Neh 4:4-5)

Ne 4:4 Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity: 5 And cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked thee to anger before the builders.

3. If God be for us, who can be against us? (Rom 8:31)

Ro 8:31 ¶ What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

II. Dishearten through intimidation

A. Intimidation - *to inspire with fear, to dishearten someone* (Webster)

B. Neh 4:7-8

Ne 4:7 ¶ But it came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth, 8 And conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it.

C. People can be intimidated into leaving behind the work of God

1. Professors and Teachers have intimidated many young people (and older people) into not speaking up for Christ

2. We must be willing to stand our ground when people start to intimidate us

3. Most intimidation hinges on flawed logic and holds grasp because of our fear of being unpopular

4. Paul asked for Boldness to speak the gospel (Eph 6:19-20)

Eph 6:19 ¶ And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

5. Paul knew he couldn't stand to not proclaim the Gospel just as Jeremiah couldn't shut it up in his bones (1 Cor 9:16; Jer 20:7-13)

1Co 9:16 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

Jer 20:7 ¶ O LORD, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I ***am in derision daily, every one mocketh me****. 8 For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the LORD was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily. 9 Then I said,* ***I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay****. 10 For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him. 11 But the LORD is with me as a mighty terrible one: therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail: they shall be greatly ashamed; for they shall not prosper: their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten. 12 But, O LORD of hosts, that triest the righteous, and seest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I opened my cause. 13 Sing unto the LORD, praise ye the LORD: for he hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of evildoers.*

D. We must be as Paul and Jeremiah and speak the Word of the Lord no matter who tries to mock or intimidate us!

III. Destructive Compromising

A. A destructive compromise is *one that is detrimental to your morality and godliness*

B. Neh 6:1-4

Ne 6:1 ¶ Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;) 2 That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief. 3 And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you? 4 Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner.

C. When there are difficult situations that must be handled, there will always be people who will want to compromise to truth in order to please everyone

D. They fail to see that any compromise in the truth will ultimately fail to please God!

E. God calls for His children to follow after his path and his alone:

1. Jer 6:16

Jer 6:16 Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.

2. Mat 7:14

Mt 7:14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

F. There can be no compromising when it comes to truth (John 17:17)

Joh 17:17 ¶ Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

IV. Defamation of Character

A. Defamation - *The uttering of slanderous words with a view to injure another's reputation; the malicious uttering of falsehood respecting another which tends to destroy or impair his good name, character or occupation* (Webster)

B. Neh 6:5-9

Ne 6:5 Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand; 6 Wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words. 7 And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together. 8 Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart.

C. When the Devil can't pull you down by derision, dishearten you by intimidation, destroy your service to God through compromise, then he will begin to destroy your standing with others

1. If he can do the before mentioned, then he has persuaded you to destroy your own character because you don't have the backbone to stand up to him
2. Yet many will buckle under the pressures of lies
3. Once again, our strength must be in prayer
4. David turned to God in prayer when he was derided (Psa 109:1-4)

*Ps 109:1 Hold not thy peace, O God of my praise; 2 For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me: <u>they have spoken against me with a lying tongue</u>. 3 They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause. 4 For my love they are my adversaries: **<u>but I give myself unto prayer</u>**.*

5. We should have the Word of God close by when troubles and trials like these arise (Psa 119:92-95)

Ps 119:92 ¶ Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction. 93 ¶ I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me. 94 ¶ I am thine, save me; for I have sought thy precepts. 95 ¶ The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: but I will consider thy testimonies.

V. Dishonest Prophets forecasting evil

A. Neh 6:10-13

Ne 6:10 ¶ Afterward I came unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee. 11 And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in. 12 And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. 13 Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me.

B. There are false teachers that we must beware of (Mat 7:15-23)

Mat 7:15 ¶ Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. 16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? 17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. 21 ¶ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

C. There are those who desire to have us simply for their own glory (Gal 6:13)

Ga 6:13 For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.

D. We must not give in to these false teachers, or we will miss Heaven as well (Mat 23:13-15)

Mt 23:13 ¶ But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. 14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. 15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

E. We must study to know what is right and what is wrong (2 Tim 2:15-16)

2Ti 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 16 But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.

Conclusion:

1. We must be aware of the devices of the devil and combat those devices
2. Have you fallen under Satan's power?
3. Why not reject his counsel and turn to the Lord?

The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction (Pro 1:7)

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. (Pro 3:5-6)

Aaron J. Cozart

Title: Attitudes toward the Word of God
Text: Psa 119:161-168
Thesis: We must have the correct attitude towards the Word of God
Purpose: To show examples of how the congregation should approach the Scriptures

Psalm 119:161-168

> *161 ¶ SCHIN. Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word. 162 ¶ I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil. 163 ¶ I hate and abhor lying: but thy law do I love. 164 ¶ Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy right-eous judgments. 165 ¶ Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them. 166 ¶ LORD, I have hoped for thy sal-vation, and done thy commandments. 167 ¶ My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly. 168 I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies: for all my ways are before thee.*

Introduction:

I. God has commanded all men to study and to know His Word (2 Tim 2:15)

> *Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

A. It is not enough for a person to simply read and peruse it, but one must truly study it
B. They must commit it to their heart and keep it in their mind (Psa 119:11)

> *Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*

C. It should be what guides them and what they talk about everyday (Psa 119:105; Deu 6:6-7)

> *Ps 119:105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*

> *De 6:6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: 7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*

II. If one is to study God's word acceptably, they must do it with the right attitude
A. You can study with the <u>wrong</u> attitude:
1. To prove others wrong
2. To prove the Bible wrong
3. Out of (false) Pride
4. Out of Necessity

B. You must study with the <u>Right</u> Attitude

Body:

I. I stand in awe of thy word (vs. 161b)
A. To stand in awe of something is to be so overwhelmed with it that you simply stand still and stare
B. Mental image: Jurassic Park – Seeing a real live gynormous dinosaur with your own eyes
C. Many people who have grown so accustomed to the "stories" in Scripture have lost sight of the majesty and magnificence of God's Inspired Word
D. Many people fail to see the awesomeness in Scripture because they have quit looking for something to get excited about
E. God was wise enough to place within Scripture something for all learning levels and ages
F. Awesome Things Within Scripture:
1. Crossing of the Red Sea (Exo 14:13, 21-31)

a. Approximately 3,000,000 people traversed the Red Sea in ONE NIGHT!
b. It has been estimated that there would have to be a 1-3 MILES expanse of dry land for the people to be able to get themselves and their belongings over in one night

2. Paul is bitten by a poisonous snake and is not harmed (Acts 28:1-6)
3. Creation (Gen 1-2)
4. The Ark & the Flood (Gen 6:1-8:4)
5. The Response on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41)
6. The Running of Elijah before the chariot of Ahab (1 Kings 18:41-46)
7. Dagon bowing down before the Ark of the Covenant (1 Sam 6:1-4)
8. Jesus stilling the Storm on Galilee (Mark 4:36-41)
9. Elijah taken up in a Chariot of Fire (2 Kin 2:11)
10. Over 300 Prophecies from the OT of Jesus Fulfilled
11. Samson killing 1,000 men with the jawbone of an donkey (Jud 15:14-17)
12. The typology of the Tabernacle and the Church

G. There is always something new to learn in Scripture, the challenge is for you to look

II. I rejoice in it as great riches (vs. 162)

A. Who, somewhere in the back of their mind, hasn't wished that they could strike it rich and find hidden treasure of untold proportions?
B. Hollywood has literally made billions of dollars just on films about finding massive expanses of riches
C. The Psalmist said that he was as happy studying the Scriptures as if he had just found an untold fortune!
D. When was the last time you got excited about God's word?
E. When is the last time you dug into it just to see what you could find?
F. When was the last time you were so happy when you were studying or reading God's word that you just couldn't put it down?
G. When was the last time the Word of God provoked any emotion at all?

III. I love it because it is truth (vs. 163)

A. Oh how the child of God aught to <u>*love*</u> truth!
B. John 17:17

> *Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*

C. John 8:31-32

> *Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

1. The truth can set you ***<u>FREE</u>***
   a. Free from pain, sickness, toil, care
   b. Free from sin, depression, and slavery
   c. Free to live a life devoted to God with the best life possible ahead of you
2. Truth is one of the most powerful forces in the Universe
   a. It has the power to overturn governments
   b. It has the power to build friendships
   c. It has the power to solve problems
   d. Most importantly, it has the power to save souls
3. What about truth is not to be loved? And what greater truth than the saving power of the Gospel?

IV. I praise God continually throughout the day because of the righteousness of His judgments (vs. 164)

A. Righteousness – "Applied to God, the perfection or holiness of his nature; exact rectitude; faithfulness."
B. The Psalmist had the desire and the ability to unendingly praise God because of the "rightness" of His judgments and actions
C. Many people have a very hard time grasping God's righteousness in judgments because they fail to look at it in a universal and Biblical light.
D. They ask, "how can God allow a little child to die some horrible death"?
   1. Yet they do not think about it from the point of view that God has just allowed that small child a "free pass"
   2. A "free pass" out of all the sin, pain, sorrow, and misery of this world
   3. A "free pass" into Heaven because they are innocent in His eyes and He loves them!
E. They ask, "how can a loving God eternally punish someone in Hell?"
   1. Do they understand that God didn't create Hell for mankind?
   2. Do they understand that God has done everything within His power to keep people out of Hell without taking away their free moral agency?
   3. He has given every direction, every help, every commandment, every expectation, every promise, every open door that man might need to get into Heaven, yet Man has to CHOOSE to go, God will not force anyone to do so
F. Because of the work of God for man, the psalmist could praise God continually without reservation… and so should we!

V. It brings peace to them that love it and allows them to remain steadfast (vs. 165)
A. The peace that the Word of God can give to people is above anything understandable by the human mind (Php 4:5-7)
   1. The peace of a calm ocean breeze while the surf slowly beats against the rocks is nothing compared to the peace that can be found in the Word of God.
   2. A calm ocean breeze cannot give you assurance of eternal salvation (1 John 2:1-3)
   3. A calm ocean breeze cannot show you the path to righteousness (Psa 119:105)
   4. A calm ocean breeze cannot give you the faith to survive horrendous persecutions by those who despise and hate you (Acts 5:41-42)
B. "…and nothing shall offend them."
   1. (nkjv) Great peace have those who love Your law, And nothing causes them to stumble. (v. 165)
   2. This is the idea that those who love God's law will not be drawn away from it and the things in this life that come along will not knock them off the course of Christianity
   3. This is with the understanding that if you *truly* love God's Word, that means you study it and meditate upon it daily, you read and study so that you might grow, and you always seek to follow God's commandments (John 14:15; Jos 1:6-8)

VI. It brings hope because of its promised salvation to them that obey (vs. 166)
A. The one who obeys fervently from the heart the commands of God has all the hope he or she could need in this life
B. In the darkest and most dreary day of a person's life, if they have the hope of the Gospel, there is nothing they cannot endure
C. Laura McCuistion
   1. Cancer in every major organ but her appendix
   2. 2 daughters with Cistic-Fibrosis
   3. Another daughter who she knew would probably outlive the rest of her family
   4. Said "God knows what is best for me and will take care of me no matter what"
   5. She amazed every doctor she had with her attitude
   6. While raising 3 daughters on her own, managed to save and donate $10,000.00 to the SOP

VII. Obedience is essential (vs. 168)

Ps 119:168 I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies: for all my ways are before thee.

A. God Requires Obedience
B. John 10:27-30

Joh 10:27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. 29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. 30 I and my Father are one.

C. Mat 7:21-29

Mt 7:21 ¶ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. 24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: 25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. 26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: 27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. 28 And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: 29 For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

D. Rom 6:17

Ro 6:17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

E. Rom 8:28

Ro 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

F. Php 4:9

Php 4:9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

G. Heb 5:8

Heb 5:8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

Conclusion:

1. He knows if we obey as we should because all things are before Him
2. How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? (Heb 2:3)
   What is our attitude toward the Word of God?
4. Is it everything it should be?
5. Plan of Salvation:

a. Hear - John 10:27-30
b. Believe – Rom 10:17
c. Repent – Mat 9:13
d. Confess – Php 2:11
e. Be Baptized – Rom 6:3-4
f. Live Faithful – 1 John 1:6-10

Title: Singing according to the way of the Lord (Psa 138:5a)
Text: Eph 5:19; Col 3:16
Thesis: We must sing according to the way God has commanded
Purpose: To instruct the congregation concerning singing God's way.

Introduction:

1. Singing is something special
   a. It has been a part of every known civilization in some form or another
   b. It can bring forth strong emotions even in the hardest of hearts
   c. In Song:
      A) Joy can be found
      B) Relief can be shared
      C) Depths of despair can find comfort
      D) Praise can be offered
2. One of the greatest examples of Praise in Scripture is David (Psa 138:1-5)

> *Ps 138:1 ¶ <<A Psalm of David.>> I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee. 2 I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name. 3 In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul. 4 All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O LORD, when they hear the words of thy mouth. 5 Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the LORD: for great is the glory of the LORD.*

   a. David declares his desire to praise God
   b. He will do it before the mighty of this world
   c. He will do it towards the Temple of God because of God's lovingkindness
   d. All the leaders of the earth will praise the name of the Lord because of His Word.
   e. He says, "*Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the LORD: for great is the glory of the LORD.*"
3. We must be those that Sing in the ways of the Lord and we must do so because of the greatness of the Glory of God.

Body: (Singing in the Way of the Lord involves:)

I. Singing in accordance with God's Commandments (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16)
   A. We must Sing Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs
      1. Psalms - A sacred song or hymn; a song composed on a divine subject and in praise of God (referring mainly to those contained within the OT book).
      2. Hymns – A hymn among Christians is a short poem, composed for religious service, or a song of joy and praise to God.
      3. Spiritual Song – A Song having to do with spiritual things
      4. The same song could have all three terms be applicable to it, but these obviously separate the songs of worship from the songs of secular life.
      5. It is not sufficient to sing *anything* for worship.
      6. The songs we sing must be those that are authorized, being psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.
   B. Singing Correctly

1. Without Instruments
   a. Many religious groups use mechanical instruments of music in worship.
   b. Part of worshiping God in Spirit and in Truth (John 4:24) means that we must worship according to the <u>way</u> that He has prescribed
   c. Nadab and Abihu found out the hard way what happens when you profane the worship of God (Lev 10:1-2).

      Le 10:1 ¶ And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. 2 And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.

   d. We must not go beyond the commandments of God
   e. God's commandments concerning singing in <u>New Testament Worship</u>: (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16)

      Eph 5:19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

      Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

      A) *Speaking to yourselves; teaching and admonishing one another* – cooperative and reciprocal action that is used to teach and help the singers grow in faith and knowledge
      B) *Singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord* = The Heart strings are the only instruments that are every commanded to be played
      C) There is no commandment to use mechanical instruments of music in worship and there are no examples that would allow such either

II. Singing in Truth (1 Cor 14:15)3

1Co 14:15 ¶ What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: ***I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.***

A. Truth = Word of God (John 17:17)

Joh 17:17 ¶ Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

1. Rom 3:4 – It doesn't matter what men might say concerning singing, only God's opinion matters.

   Ro 3:4 God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.

2. The Word of God and only the Word of God is absolute truth when it comes to religion.

3. If one is not living, practicing, and worshipping according to the New Testament plan, then they are not doing so in accordance with the will of God (John 14:15; 15:14)

Joh 14:15 ¶ If ye love me, keep my commandments.

Joh 15:14 Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

B. Singing false doctrine
1. There are often questions concerning whether or not we should sing certain songs that are in our songbooks
2. Things to remember when you look at the songs in modern songbooks is that they were not all written by Christians, therefore, it is possible for them to contain false doctrine.
3. It is not any better to sing false doctrine (and teach and admonish that way) than it is to preach it.
4. We must understand what is being taught by the songs that we sing and only sing those that are in accordance with the Word of God (truth)

C. Singing without Understanding = Vain Worship
1. It is also important that we pay attention to the things that we sing in worship because if we worship God without our hearts, it is vain and means nothing.
2. Solomon emphasized the need for careful consideration of what we do in worship to God (Ecc 5:1-5)

Ec 5:1 ¶ Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. 2 Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. 3 For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words. 4 ¶ When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. 5 Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.

3. If we worship God in vain, then it is useless, and if it is useless then we have not fulfilled the commandments to worship God, and if we do not worship God, then we will be lost eternally.
4. It is important to have understanding when it comes to worship.

III. Singing with Desire (1 Cor 14:15)

A. Not Miraculous, but with the correct attitude (John 4:24)
1. The context of 1 Cor 14:15 is that of Miraculous gifts, but can mean that one is singing with their whole being.
   a. To sing correctly, we must do so with the correct attitude.
   b. It does not benefit us to mouth words and yet hate praising God
   c. We can worship wrong by using the wrong actions with the right intentions, or we can worship wrong by having the wrong intentions and the right actions.
   d. You cannot praise God ½ heartedly and it be acceptable to Him, you must do so with the whole heart (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16).

2. Praise should always be flowing from our lips because of what God has done for us (Psa 61:8)

   Ps 61:8 So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever, that I may daily perform my vows.

B. Must be done with honor, and respect
   1. To be acceptable with God, one must fear Him (especially in worship)
   2. Exo 18:21 – Judges in Israel

      Ex 18:21 Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens:

   3. Deu 6:13 – God's people must…

      De 6:13 Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.

   4. Psa 66:16-20 – Those that fear God hear the proclaiming of His word

      Ps 66:16 Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. 17 I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue. 18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me: 19 But verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. 20 Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.

   5. Ecc 12:13

      Ec 12:13 ¶ Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

   6. All Christians should fear God in Holiness

      2Co 7:1 ¶ Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

   7. Rev 14:6-7 – God is feared and praised in Heaven

      Re 14:6 ¶ And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, 7 Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

C. Singing without desire to praise God is vain worship
D. Vain Worship is useless and it mocks God

Conclusion:

1. Are We Singing in the Way of the Lord?

2. Are we singing according to His commandments?
3. Do we desire to praise Him or is it just something we do because we have to?
4. Will you enjoy Heaven?
   a. Rev 5:9

      Re 5:9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

   b. Are you prepared to praise God for all eternity?

Title: The Omniscience of God
Text: Psa 139
Thesis: God is an Omniscience God
Purpose: To Instruct the congregation in the Omniscience of God

Introduction:

1. It is important for us to understand God's abilities and attributes.
2. David was a man after God's own heart
3. He gives us an understanding concerning the power and nature of God.

Body:

> *Ps 139:1 ¶ <<To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.>> O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. 2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. 3 Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. 4 For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. 5 Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.*

I. He Knows Our Thoughts (vs. 1-2)
   A. God informed Samuel that God looks on the inward, not the outward man find out the true person (1 Sam 16:7)

> *1Sa 16:7 But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.*

   B. The Apostles prayed that God would choose the right replacement for Judas (Acts 1:24)

> *Ac 1:24 And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen,*

   C. God knows what is in the hearts and minds of men, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.
   D. What are our thoughts?
      1. Jesus said that it is that which comes out of the heart of man that defiles him (Mat 15:10-20)

> *Mt 15:10 ¶ And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: 11 Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. 12 Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? 13 But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath*

not planted, shall be rooted up. 14 Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. 15 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable. 16 And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding? 17 Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? 18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. 19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: 20 These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

2. David asked for God to search his heart and try this thoughts (Psa 139:23-24)

   Ps 139:23 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: 24 And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

3. Our thoughts are to be captive to Christ, not to lusts (2 Cor 10:5; Php 4:8; 1 John 2:15-17)

   2Co 10:5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

   Php 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

   1Jo 2:15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

E. What are you thinking about?

II. He knows our Actions (vs. 3)

   Ps 139:3 Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.

A. Job states concerning God that sees everything under heaven, whether for good or ill (Job 28:24)

   Job 28:24 For he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven;

B. Solomon wrote that the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, there is nothing that He doesn't see (Pro 5:21)

Pr 5:21 For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings.

C. What kind of actions does God see you participating in?
   1. Fruit of the Spirit? (Gal 5:22-23)

Ga 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

   2. Or works of the Flesh? (Gal 5:19-21)

Ga 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

III. He Knows our Speech (vs. 4)

Ps 139:4 For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.

A. God knows everything we say, and the thoughts of our heart that produce those words (Mat 12:34-37)

Mt 12:34 O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. 35 A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. 36 But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. 37 For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

B. God will hold us accountable for <u>*every word*</u> that comes out of our mouth.
C. How do we use our tongues?
   1. Jam 1:19

Jas 1:19 ¶ Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

   2. Tit 2:7-8

Tit 2:7 In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, ***8 Sound speech, that cannot be condemned;*** *that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.*

   3. Col 4:6

Col 4:6 Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

4. Psa 141:3

Ps 141:3 Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.

5. God also knows what we need to ask for in prayer before we ask, but He desires for us to ask anyway (Mat 6:7-8)

Mt 6:7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. 8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

6. The tongue is extremely powerful and we must use it correctly (Pro 18:21; 16:24)

Pr 18:21 ¶ Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

Pr 16:24 ¶ Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.

7. Therefore, how should we be using our tongues?

IV. He knows our past and our future (vs. 5)

Ps 139:5 Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.

A. This is a concept that has troubled and caused problems for many over the years
B. It is hard for man's mind to grasp the concept of God eternality
C. He is not bound by time as man is
D. He knows who will be saved and who will be lost, who will love Him and who will refuse to serve Him
   1. This concept is usually that which causes the most problems for people
   2. They have a hard time understanding that God can know who and who will not be saved while maintaining mankind's free moral agency
   3. What has to be understood is that there is a difference in knowing something and causing something.
   4. God knows who will be lost and saved and therefore has done everything possible to save as many as possible.
E. The fact that God knows our past and our future should give us hope that God has taken care of every problem we could possibly have on our way to heaven and will provide a way of escape
F. God has the ability to save us, we must simply obey Him (Isa 59:1-2)

Isa 59:1 ¶ Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: 2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

G. David also admits that this knowledge is to great for him to comprehend… as it is for us.
Conclusion:

1. Jehovah truly is all knowing, He is omniscient
2. There is nothing that can be hidden from His eyes.
3. Why then would men believe that God will not hold them accountable for the actions that they undertake?
4. Ecc 12:13-14

> *Ec 12:13 ¶ Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. 14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*

5. God knows what you think, Do, and Say… How then will you decide to live?

The Book of Ezra

I. Ezra 1 - The Decree of Cyrus

A. Eze 35:7; Zec 7:14

B. (1:1-4) - The Decree of Cyrus

1. Isaiah had prophesied concerning Cyrus 200 years before he was born

C. (1:5-6)

1. Chief

a. Mountain Peaks - Gen 5

b. Tops of towers - Gen 11:4

c. Heights of stars - Job 22:12

d. Leaders of families - Exo 6:14

e. Chief Priests - 2 Kings 25:18

f. Here - Men of High standing and influence (1 Kings 24:14)

2. Levites - Exo 13:2; Num 3:13; Num 8:13, 23

3. How did God move the spirits of the Levites?

a. Through His word

b. 3 Prophets concerning the return

(1) Jer 29:1-10 - Jeremiah's letter to the captives concerning their captivity

(2) Ezekiel - Ezek 14:1; 37:1-14

(3) Daniel

D. (1:7-11) - The Vessels of the House of the Lord

1. There is an apparent discrepancy between the numbers in Ezra and

Nehemiah (*See Clayton Winters on Ezra, Nehemiah & Esther for ideas and thoughts concerning this*)

2. As long as other valid explanations are possible, it is solved in regards to a discrepancy

II. Ezra 2 - The Departure of the Jews to Carry out the Decree

A. (2:3-63) - The List of Returning Captives

1. Vs. 3-19 - By Family
2. Vs. 20-35 - By Locality
3. Vs. 36-39 - The Priests
4. Vs. 40-42 - The Levites
5. Vs. 43-54 - Nethinims
   a. transliterated Hebrew term meaning "the ones given"
   b. The Levites were all Nethinims in a general sense (Num 8:19)
   c. Others also were occasionally to this service (Num 31:40, 41, 47; Jos 9:23)
   d. Those mentioned here had descended from those appointed by David (Erza 8:20)
6. Vs. 55-58 - The Sons of Solomon's servants
   a. 1 Kings 9:20-21 - Conquered Canaanite population
   b. It appears these people had remained a distinct group even in captivity
7. Vs. 59-63 - Those unable to establish their genealogy
   a. Vs. 62 - There is a need to *purge* the church through Church

Discipline

b. We are afraid to withdraw from those who are unfaithful in order to keep the Word of the Lord

c. **SERMON**: THE PURGING OF GOD

(1) (1 Cor 5; 2 The 3)

(2) The Priesthood of God must be pure and therefore you cannot be born in any other "tribe" than the priestly tribe of God

B. (2:64-70)

1. Urim & Thumim - Lights & Perfections = Placed on the garment of the High Priest for judgments.

2. Vs. 64-67 - Emphasis on Unity (Whole congregation together)

3. Reason for differences in numbering

a. Represent numbering from different times

b. The original documents damaged

c. Copyist error

d. Some method of counting that, if fully understood, would harmonize the accounts

III. Ezra 3 - The Determination of the Jews to Carry out the Decree

A. (3:1-7) - Seventh Month

1. They offered sacrifices according to that which was written

2. It takes about 4 months to travel from Babylon to Jerusalem (Ezra 4:9)

3. They kept the feast of the Tabernacle *as it was written*

4. There can be no restoration without "It is written"

5. Emphasis of Divine Revelation

6. We need to give according to as God has prospered us

7. Vs. 3

   a. Though fear had come upon them, they set the alter on bases

   b. They were attempting to set it back on the original *foundation* where it was in Solomon's Temple

B. (3:8-13)

1. Vs. 10-ff - An appreciation toward God

EZRA

INTRODUCTION:

STORY OF CAPTIVITY AND RESTORATION:

1. Retribution.
2. Remembrance.
3. Repentance.
4. Return.
5. Resettlement.
6. Rebuilding.
7. Regression.
8. Revival.
9. Reformation.
10. Relief.

HAND:

Ezra 7:6 This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the **hand** of the Lord his God upon him.

Ezra 7:9 For upon the first day of the first month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good **hand** of his God upon him.

Ezra 7:14 Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king, and of his seven counsellors, to enquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which is in thine **hand.**

Ezra 7:25 And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that is in thine **hand,** set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know them not.

Ezra 7:28 And hath extended mercy unto me before the king, and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes. And I was strengthened as the **hand** of the Lord my God was upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me.

Ezra 8:18 And by the good **hand** of our God upon us they brought us a man of understanding, of the sons of Mahli, the son of Levi, the son of Israel; and Sherebiah, with his sons and his brethren, eighteen;

Ezra 8:22 For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him.

Ezra 8:31 Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go

unto Jerusalem: and the **hand** of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way.

Kevin Camp

EZRA
INSTRUCTOR: EDDY CRAFT

Ezra: A continuation of Chro.

Similarity in 2 Chro.36:22-23 & Ezra1:1-2; Chronicles possibly wrote by Ezra.

Written about 430 bc.;

Purposes of Ezra

God keeps His promises

He restored His people to the land and How He did it.

The rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem.

The restoring of temple worship to the Law of Moses.

The perseverance of the restored people.

Trying to keep them out of idolatry.

By their marriages of the heathen women.; Deut 7:1-6

***God accomplishes such through three heathen monarchs

Cyrus; Darius; Artaxerxes

***He used three from the people.

Jeshua; Ezra; Zerrubbabel

Background of Ezra;

His name comes from a verb meaning Help; to surround or to enclose in a wall.

Jewish tradition says he gathered the writings of the O. T. together to comprise the Old Testament. His name is link to the Pharisees especially to the scribes. His duty to copy the scriptures; their duty to go back to the word.

The title comes from his name.

*** three returns from captivity:

606 bc. Daniel

596bc. Ezekial taken

586bc.

538bc. Zerubbabel comes back; to rebuild the temple. 2:64-65

458 bc Ezra leads about 1754 people back to reestablish the law and temple worship.

444bc. Nehemiah leads back to rebuild the walls.

A change in the language; Most in Hebrew ; Aramaic; 4:6-8:16(lang. of Persians)

The archeological support; because of the document found in the time of 500bc.

Keys to Ezra:

Restoration; the house of the Lord

Key chapters 6 the completion of the temple under Hag

Key verses 7:9-10; the word of the Lord; 1:1; 9:4;

Message of the book:

All men always to accept the power of the Lord in their lives and of the nation as well.

Ezra's message covers : social, religious, civil lives of the returnees from exile.

Ezra the man:

1. Man of faith; Psa. 66:18; Pro.28:13; Isa 59:1-2;
2. Man of prayer; He confessed the sins of the people; 9:5; 10:1;
3. Man of Trustworthy; Fact of the great treasure given to him. 7:13-26;

4. He of moral courage with counseling the priest and Levites about the marriage of heathen women. 10:5, 16;
5. Ezra had respect for God's word by honor and study; 7:10; Neh. 8:2-8;
6. His greatest work was to restore the word of God to the hearts and lives of the people. Psa.119:11; Nehemiah built the walls with perishables and Ezra built the people with the word of the Lord.

Outline of the book

The return under Zerubbabel 1-6

The decree of Cyrus 1:1-4

The determination of the Jews to carry out the decree. 1:5-11

The departure of the Jews to fulfill the decree. 2:1-70

The Determination of the Jews to carry out the decree. 3

The disruption of the decree. 4-5

The discovery of the decree of Cyrus. 6

The return under Ezra 7-10

Ezra's commission of Artaxerxes 7:1-28

Ezra's company 8

Ezra's communication with God 9

Ezra's commitment to God 10

Lessons from the book:

God is the God of the second chance

The sin of marrying outside the family of God; it matters whom ye marry.

Counseling points in marriage.

Between Ezra end of 6 & 7 some 78 years go by.

During this time many Jews marry outsiders. God did not condone these marriages.

God expects obedience no matter of the consequences; not even consequences known

The power of preaching and penitence

The sorrow that sin always brings 9:13-14

Divine providence in the book of Ezra; Jer. foretold of a return of the remnant. Jer.25:12; 29:10; Isa. 44:28; 45:1; See Clayton Winters page 22; chronology of Ezra;

Rejecting God's laws carries consequences. Jer.8:9;

The reasons they were carried into captivity

Eliminate idolatry; increase their zeal for God; INCREASE THEIR zeal for the land and their zeal for the temple; To instill within them to serve God faithfully.

***Know the ten "R"'s of Frank's book p.160-161

Covers about 78 years. (130+ yrs. total)

CHAPTER 1

The writing of the decree of Cyrus became important at a later time; helped being in writing.

- Vs.1-4; Cyrus puts his proclamation into writing; 2 Chro.36:22-23; Isaiah the prophet had foretold 200 years earlier about the king Cyrus. Isa.44:28; 45:1; Cyrus had read this prophecy and learned the role he would play. Proclamation from 'abar' meaning to pass over, pass through, or to pass along; used as captors

walking over the bodies of their prisoners; Isa 51:23; the floodwaters covering the earth Isa. 54:9; of something passing back and forth; Zach.7:14; Thus the word of freedom of the people flowed back and forth through the land, but furthermore it was put into writing, therefore helped when the legality of their work on the temple was challenged.Eze.35:7; The Lord gave us a picture through the written word. One cannot wave a wand and make the Bible disappear; it is here for the eternal duration of time. These men wrote down the word they received from the Lord.

- Vs.5-6; How did God move the spirits?
    - Through His word. The chief of the fathers came from the Hebrew word 'rosh' used of
        - mountain tops in Gen. 5
        - Tops of towers Gen.11:4
        - Heights of stars. Job 22:12
        - Leaders of the families; Exo.6:14
        - Chief priest; 2 Kings 25:18
    - Judah and Benjamin were the only two tribes left.
    - Jeremiah sent letters to the captives of their deliverance: Jer.29:1-10
    - Ezekiel also wrote of this in Eze.14:1;33:30
    - Daniel also wrote of this in Daniel 9:1-19
        - The Bible opened the hearts of men
            - Lydia in Acts
            - Jesus on the road to Damascus

        - The foundation of the word will make differences in the lives of men.
        - Their captivity is symbolic to the lives of Christians on earth who have the word of the Lord to look to for a faith-builder. The devil tries to put a roadblock on the way.
- Vs.7-11; There seems to be a discrepancy in the numbers between Ezra and Nehemiah: See Clayton Winters page 6
    - One may have been giving more exact numbers and the other giving generality of the numbers.
    - One must KNOW facts before one can affirm that there is a contradiction.
        - One must know there is no explanation of it.

Chapter 2

- Vs.1-63; the list of the leaders of the captives;
    - Put into 7 categories.
        - By families 3-19
        - By locality 20-35
        - By the priest 36-39
        - The Levites 40-42
        - The Nethinim 43-54
        - Sons of Solomon's servants 55-58
        - Those unable to establish their genealogy 59-63

- The Nethinim is a Hebrew word meaning the ones given. This refers to the Levites cause they were given to the Lord; Num. 8:19
    - Others also given :
        - Num.31:40,41,47;
        - Jos. 9:23
        - The Nethinims mention here had descended from the captives.
- Vs.62; those without genealogy they could not be included in the priesthood; this is a purging of the people. We need this in the church today for the sake of salvation of the souls. We are to follow that which is written. The people are restoring what is written of the Law of the Lord, we must not ignore parts of the Law, but to restore the whole law that is written. Mat.4:4; Preach the entire Bible and not be a story-teller with no principle of the Bible in it.
    - "The pew will determine the direction of the pulpit."
- Vs.64-70; Urim and Thummin from Hebrew words meaning lights and perfection.
    - These were on the breastplates of the priests.

- Vs.64-70; it is mentioned about the whole congregation being numbered together showing unity of God's people.
    - There is a difference in the numbering between accounts:
        - See Clayton Winters pp. 11-12.

- Vs.68-70; They gave to the treasury.
    - 1,100 lbs. of gold
    - About 3 tons of silver

CHAPTER 3 The accountability of the people

When one realizes the accountability of the people, it must be exact to the law of God. Eph.5:15; walking accurately. (circumspectively).

- Vs.1-3; It takes Ezra and company about 4 months to make the journey.
- Vs.4-7; They kept the law "as it is written"
    - Could not have anything without it
        - Worship
        - Preaching
        - Salvation
    - It is written will bring one closer to God; since it is His Word.
        - Cannot come out of captivity from sin without "it is written."
        - How many times are these used:
            - It is written
            - The Lord said
            - The Lord said unto
    - The people had been taken captive and were in need of restoration 2 Kings 22:8-23:24.
    - The people even attempted to set the altar upon the exact spot of the precise foundation.

- Vs.8-13; the appreciation toward God, V.10.
    - Vs.8 "to set forward" means to overseer. Hebrew verb "natsach" meaning overseer or superintendent.
    - They sang together (reciprocal). V.11
        - It shows the seriousness of their action.
        - It shows their reverence for the Lord for the foundation of the temple.
    - They were going by the ordinances V.10
    - The old men wept over the laying of the foundation;
        - Over the things that would happen there.
            - The presence of the Lord would be there. John 1:1-2; Mark 11:1-11.
            - They were thinking of the materialistic kingdom.
            - This was a type of the coming church. Eph.2:21-22.
        - Possibly over the thought that it may not be as glorious as the previous one.
        - It was laid the same month as when Solomon started the original temple.

CHAPTER 4 & 5 The disruption of the decree to work on the temple.

Just when things are going good Satan will try to disrupt your life. He will destroy the genealogical line (Christian to Christ) and the work of the Lord. He will disrupt the work of the Lord.

- Vs.1-2; It begins with the adversaries of the people.

- They at first don't appear to be an enemy. They were Polytheists, serving many "gods."
- They want to be a part of the people. 2 Pet. 3:8
- There will come a time for people to "seek" the Lord.

- Vs.3-7; the children refuse the help of the enemy (Samaritans).
  - This will cause trouble in the camp. A contradiction from the first.
  - They try to discourage the people from the work of the Lord.
  - We cannot help what others are doing, only what we are doing.
  - They also frustrated the people. They were not interested in the work of the Lord, only what they could get out of it.
  - They wrote an accusation against them.
    - The adversary will work harder to disrupt the workers of the Lord.
    - They have a selfish attitude toward the work going on.
    - Some in the church will do the same thing, trying to hinder the works of the church. They are always trying to find fault with those doing the work of the Lord.
    - Lesson learned: your view of God is important.
      - God demands purity.
      - A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. Need of discipline. 1 Cor.5; Mat.18:15-17; Acts 5:1-5, Ananias was not allowed to continue in sin.
      - It started out with a (1)false view of God; causes one to have a false doctrine. Rom.1

- (2)Your view of truth will be false.
- (3)Your morals (living) will be wrong.
- Must get the truth about God right before the others can be changed. One will continue to drift further and further until completely lost. Heb.3:12-13

- Vs. 24; The work of the Lord's house was stopped for about 16 years.

Chapter 5

- August 29, 520 bc was when Haggai stepped forward with first prophecy. Hag.1:1-11
  - He tells them that they spent more on their own houses than on the house of the Lord, and their giving for the proceeds of the house of God.
  - Spiritual advancement comes when we do thus saith, the Word of the Lord. Gen through Rev.
    - They had spent 16 years wasting.
- Sept. 20, 520 bc. was when his second prophecy.
  - God is always over us!!!
- Vs.1-2; the Divine catalyst.
  - The preacher must practice what they preach.
  - The prophets of God were helping the people; a Divine arrangement.
    - Paul;
    - Jesus;
- 3-17; they state how the work of the house of the Lord is being done diligently.
  - The eye of the Lord was upon the elders.

- Four things they done by the letter.
    - Vs.8; they are told to return and rebuild the temple.
    - Vs.12; They had provoked the Lord; rebelled from the word of the Lord. God used Nebuchadnezzar to take the children of Israel into captivity.
    - Vs.13; The decree to rebuild the house.
    - Vs.14; they return the temple articles to the Jews to put into the house of God.
- Vs.16; the people return to build the house of the Lord by Sheshbazzar.

- Written word is of such value; it is of most importance.

CHAPTER 6

- Vs.1-6; Darius issued a decree to find the written proclamation.
    - They had to follow the rules of the decree in rebuilding the temple.
- Vs.6-13; the edict for building from Darius.
    - They were to give tribute from the king's house to pay for the new temple.
    - The opposition was not to hinder the workers of the temple.
    - If one would be a hindrance to the building, their own house would be used to build a gallows to hang them from.
    - They done the decree fast and sure; when Jesus made a decree, He meant it to be done today and only death will result if not done.
- Vs.13-15; The work is to be completed.
    - March 12, 515 bc the work finished.
- Vs.16-18; the dedication of the temple.

- The people had great joy!!
- Vs.17; 12 male goats for a sin offering; one for each tribe.
    - The Lord cleansed the temple.
    - John 2; ieron and naos
        - 1 Cor.3; 6
- For some 70 years, no sin offering had been made.

- Vs,.19-22; victory is celebrated.
    - Vs.21; the people separated themselves from the world.
    - 2 Cor. 6:17; Separate yourselves from the world.

HERE THE BOOK OF ESTHER TAKES PLACE DURING THE 58 YEARS BETWEEN EZRA 6 & 7.

ESTHER

INTRODUCTION: ***The keys to the book of Esther.

Key verses; message of the book; key phrases; key chapter.

The modesty of the women to be in the right; 1 Tim. 5:3

Esther, a Jewish maiden becomes the queen of Persia.

She was raised by her cousin, Mordecai.

Responsibility to the orphans. Jam.1:27

The book centers on the three feasts:

The feast of Ahasuerus 1-2

The feast of Esther 3-7

The feast of Mordecai 8-10

485-465 bc was the time of the writing.

In Nehemiah 2:6, it is the 12th year of the Artaxerxes I who is Ahasuerus.

The Queen is sitting with the king in the 12th year, which would be Esther.

This would be a Jewish woman sitting with a Persian king on the throne.

CHAPTER 1

If there is no God, there can be no ethical system.

- Vs.1ff; Ahasuerus was Xerxes who rule over 127 provinces.
    - He was king of Persia during 485 – 465 bc.
    - The first two chapters are his feast.
    - He gave the feast because of the defeat of his father.
    - Possible he is the father of Nehemiah.
- Know something about the Medes and Persian law.
    - Once a law was written, it could not be changed except by another decree.
    - Some would try to come up with loopholes.
- The feast lasted for 180 days.
    - This was to show the king's wealth.
- Then he has a banquet for the citizens.
    - The officers were to give to every man's pleasures.
    - Misheteh means feast in Hebrew a drunken feast.
- Vashti is probably Herodotus.
    - She was also having a feast for the women.
    - She was asked to appear before the king, possibly nude?

        - The custom of the time did not allow a woman to appear in public without the veil.
        - Therefore it may be that she was to appear without the veil.
    - The example of influence; a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.
        - They had to pursue what the law called for by their laws.
        - Disobedience to obey the king called for certain actions.
    - They remove Vashti for one who would be obedient to the king.

CHAPTER 2

- After removing Vashti, they hold a beauty pageant for a new queen.
    - Hege was the king's chamberlain.
    - Vs.5; Jeconiah was Jehoiachin. Jer.22:24
    - Kish was the great-grandfather of Mordecai???
        - Shemei was in the linage also.
    - Mordecai took the orphan cousin into his house.
        - Take care of widows and orphans. Exo.22:22; Jam.1:27
        - Hadassah was her Hebrew name meaning "myrtle"
            - Esther (Persian name) meant "star"
    - She was a captive people and would be considered a lesser people.
        - This would also be to protect her.
        - This shows God's providence.
        - Mordecai shows his concern in his checking on her daily.
            - He must have some one inside to find out about her.
    - About 479 bc Dec. was when she became queen.

        - The king makes a feast for the queen.
        - The second walking of the virgins takes place again.
    - Bigthan and Teresh were angry with the king and desire to kill him.
        - Mordecai found out and told the queen.
        - She in turns tells the king.
        - This was all recorded that Mordecai would be vindicated later.
        - Mordecai sat at the gate of the king.

CHAPTER 3 The feast of Esther (chapters 3-7)

THE PLOT OF HAMAN. 3:1-4:17

- Vs.1ff; The reason for the plot.
    - Haman was an Agagite: possible the descendant of Agag the king of Amalek. They were cursed by God. Exo.17:14-16
    - Haman had a pride problem.
    - He becomes wroth because Mordecai would not bow down to him.
    - We must be obedient to the laws of the Land until it goes beyond the law of God.
        - Mordecai had respect to the king, but would not bow down to Haman. To pay homage to Haman.
        - Many of the laws of the land were God's laws.
- Vs.7ff; The authority of the plot.
    - Chapter 8:1-9; counter law is installed.
    - Haman was considered the enemy of the Jews.
    - The king accepted the advice from certain counselors.

    - The Jews had laws no other nation had; other countries were jealous of the Jews. Deut. 14:2; 26:16-19
        - These were to destroy the Jews and Judaism.
- Vs.12ff; The implementation of the plot
    - Sometime around April 17, 474 bc
    - March 7, 473 bc. See James E. Smith

- Vs.9ff; the counterplot.
    - 4:14; God's providence for the saving of the people of Jewish.
    - She was to use her position for helping the Jewish people.
    - Mordecai was trusting in the Lord by his statement.
        - Now it is like Mordecai realizes that the Lord put her there for this purpose.
        - God will take care of His people by His providence.
        - There is a time to remain silent and a time to speak.
            - This is the time to speak.
            - Before she had been told to remain silent about her linage.

CHAPTER 5

- Vs.1-14; The plan of Esther.
    - Vs.1-3; the promise of the king.
        - She had found favor in the sight of the king.
    - Vs.4-8; the plot;
        - She prepares a banquet for the king and Haman.
        - This has the providence of God in her actions.
    - Vs.9-10; Haman's pride
        - Mordecai would not bow to Haman.
        - Haman desired homage from all men, being the second to the king.
    - Vs.11-13; the price
        - Everything is going for Haman except that Mordecai was his thorn in the flesh.

- All that Haman spoke must be done to Mordecai.
- This was the thing that Haman thought to be done for himself.

- Vs.11; Haman was commanded to do something he did not want to do.
  - God may tell us to do things we don't want to do, but we must out of respect for the Lord.
- Vs.12-14; Not prevailing before Mordecai.
  - Haman had the entire system against him.
  - You can't always depend on the people advising you.
  - Haman hurried back to his house mourning because of Mordecai.
    - He had thought the queen and king desired his presence.
    - He would not desire to go to the banquet.
- Vs.7:1-4; the petition;
  - At the banquet of Esther, she gives the request about her people.
  - A person does not have to reveal all things about everything all at once.
  - She waited until the right moment to make her point, allowing Haman to hang himself.
- Vs.5-8; The pleading for his life.
  - Haman is accused of doing wrong to the queen and her people.
  - He was pleading for his life and comes to touch the queen, which was not a legal thing to do.
- Vs.9-10; the preparation
  - Haman was hanged upon the gallows prepared for Mordecai.
  - The time he was most happy about ended up being his downfall.

        - The tens sons of Haman was hanged on the same gallows as Haman.
    - Vs.11-15; The prosperity of Haman
        - If it pleases the king to mean if it is according to his will.
        - Esther is careful to make sure these things please the king.
        - Her attitude in asking was of the proper manner, not asking amiss. James 4:2-3
    - Vs.16-19; The presents
        - They would give gifts to each other.
        - This was a time of peace for the people.
    - Vs.20-28; Purim.
        - "From sorrow to joy"
            - The sin that separates us from God; the doom of damnation.
            - The joy of the death on the cross that provides salvation.
        - Being thankful every day for the remission of our sins.
    - Vs.29-32; The Peace
        - They wrote all these things in the book for records.
        - After sorrow came peace.
            - Jesus is called the Prince of Peace.
            - He came not to bring peace but a sword.
            - One must be in the kingdom to have the peace that passeth understanding.

CHAPTER 10 Prominence

- Mordecai was promoted to second behind the king.
    - He sought the good of the people.
    - He was not filled with the pride like Haman.
    - He that humbles himself that is exalted. Dan. 3:30; Jam.4:10
    - God lifts up those that humbles themselves.
        - Haman was brought low by his pride.

CHAPTER 7

7:1-8:36; The Return of Ezra

- Vs.1-10; the preparation.
    - Ezra and his linage.
    - Ezra and the law of the Lord.
        - "Seek" is found throughout the book.
        - Ezra prepared to "seek" the law and "doing" it. Acts 1:1
            - Jesus sought the law and did it. Mat. 7:24-27
        - One must do what the law states. Luke 12:47-48; Jam.4:17
        - The law has to be taught for people to know and understand it. Deut. 4:10; Psa.119:11;
        - A good heart is necessary for the teaching of the law.
            - Parable of the sower.
            - Giving from the heart. 2 Cor.9:7
- Vs.11-28; The cooperation.
    - The King's edict for Ezra. Vs.11-24
        - Any people that desired to go could go.
        - Any funds needed would be given to them.
        - By working with the Jews and their God, the wrath would not come upon them. Vs.23
            - This was taking place after the time of Esther.
            - Mordecai had become a great man in the Persian Empire. Esther 10:3

        - The law of God was in their hand; shows the power of the written word. Vs.14
        - God had put His name in Jerusalem. Vs.16
        - The law was to be done "diligently." 2 Tim.2:15
    - The King's exhortation to Ezra.Vs.25-28
        - Ezra's task. Vs.25-26
            - The task was to purify the heart of the people of the Lord.
            - Blessed are the pure in heart. Mat.5:8
            - He was to discipline those that would not comply with the law of the Lord. Mat.18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5
        - Ezra's thanksgiving Vs.27-28
            - The purification of the people would beautify the house of the Lord.
            - The mercy of the Lord would be extended unto Ezra.

CHAPTER 8

- Vs.1-20; the participation.
    - Vs.1-14; the exiles who came.
        - This is a record of the families
    - Vs.15-20; the extras who came.
        - The absence of the Levites. Vs.15-17
        - The arrival of the Levites. Vs.18-20
            - Vs.18; they did it by the law of the Lord.
- Vs.21-23; the supplication.

    - Seeking Him again. Vs.21-22
    - Ezra called a time of prayer and fasting before making any decision. Acts 2:42 Notice the prayer life of the early church.
        - Rom.11:22; the goodness and severity of the Lord.
        - The value of teaching their children at home. Deut. 4-6
- Vs.24-30; the authorization.
    - They were holy (set apart) for the work of the Lord.
    - The vision of the clean and unclean. Peter in Acts 10.
        - When God calls something holy; it is holy unto Him.
        - If we say no, we change the things God has set apart. Vs.28ff
        - We have no authority to change that which the Lord calls holy.
- Vs.31-32; the destination.
    - The hand of God delivered them from the enemy.
    - This was about a 4-month journey.
- Vs.33-36; the presentation.
    - They brought the silver and the gold to the temple.
    - They also made sacrifices unto the Lord.

CHAPTER 9

- Vs.1-15; the transgression by the people.
    - Ezra's pain; 1-4
        - The people had become mingled with the heathen nations around them.
        - They had intermarried with them.

        - This caused an impurity in the bloodline of the Jewish people.
        - This caused Ezra to rent his mantle and shave his head for the grief over the situation of the people.
    - Ezra's prayer; 5-15
        - The people had committed great iniquity against the Lord.
        - He confesses the sins of the people.
        - He deals with their past sins. Vs.5-7
        - He deals with their present sins. Vs.8-15
            - The prophets were the servants of the Lord.
            - Vs.12; Neh.2:10; the seeking of the Lord.
            - ***Nail in His holy place; setting a place of permanence in this spot.
                - Some things we need to be nailed down to.
                - Have a place of permanence to stay there.
                - A secure hold on a place.
            - A remnant are those that are brought back into the kingdom.
            - Seeking the right thing of the Lord. Vs.9 To give us a riving
            - Vs.12; we are not to seek the wealth or peace of the world.

CHAPTER 10

The confession of the people

- Vs.1-2: The repentance

    - They cry out for forgiveness.
    - 2 Chro.20:9
    - They confess their sins and turn from them.
    - They repent by hearing a prayer
- Vs.3-12; The resolve.
    - The people declare to do as the Lord desires.
    - They had married outside the children of Israel, thus polluting their bloodline.
- Vs.13-44; The record.
    - They could not take care of the problem in one day, therefore they did it by their cities.
    - The priest went first at giving up their iniquity.
        - They set the right example for the people.
        - Peter was desired by the devil. This is in the plural except the converting is the singular. If Satan leads the leaders away, the body will die.

Nehemiah
INSTRUCTOR: EDDY CRAFT

Introduction:

Author: Nehemiah; 1:1; written in the 1st person; Date around 430 bc

Last of the historical books;

Purpose was to reveal the restoration of Israel to Palestine as of prophecy and to show God's continued blessings.

Background:

Nehemiah means "Jehovah comforts." Sometimes abbreviated as "Nahum" (Nahum1:1; 1 Chro.4:19) Nahamani: Neh.7:7

He was the cup-bearer to the king. He was in the palace of Shushan, city of Elom, about 200 east of Babylon.

1. Same Shushan where Dan seen the vision of ram with 2 horns. Dan.8:2
2. Where Esther became queen.
3. The winter resident of the Persian kings.
4. East of the River Tigris and near the head of the Persian Gulf.

His humility is evidence by:

1. His hesitancy to tell of his being the cup-bearer until the end of chapter.
    a. The cupbearer was the official taster to assure the food was safe to eat.
    b. He risked his life on the popularity of the king by tasting the food.
    c. He must be the most trusted person in the whole empire.
    d. His position was next to the crown prince.
    e. He had access to the king's palace and the king's harem.

2. His neglecting to tell us the position he was appointed until chapter 10 and then in quick passing moments.
    a. He was a man of prayer, patriotism, action, courage and perseverance.
    b. He was cautios, courageous and uncompromising.
3. Background:
    a. Neh. Will lead the 3rd return to Palestine.
        i. 531 Zerubabbel.
        ii. 457 Ezra returns the law and worship.
        iii. 444 Nehemiah returns to rebuild the walls.

Key verses: 4:6, 9, 17, 20; 6:15-16; 8:8

Key chapters: 9 Confesses the people's sin and the people covenant to keep the walls.

Key phrase: "for the people had a mind to work."

Key words: Rebuilding, prayer, and work, in regard to the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem.

The rebuilding of the wall 1-7

Consecration of the people: 8-10

Consolidation of the people: 11-13

Christ in the book

Qualities of Nehemiah is descriptive of the Christ as well.

1. Nehemiah was sympathetic of the people.1:4
2. He had a quality of prayerfulness. 1:4
3. Able to distinguish between the good and bad people. 6:1-7

4. He was unselfish, upright and courageous. 6:16-19

Lessons learned:

1. Love and respect for the word of God.
    a. Nehemiah tells of Ezra reading the Law of Moses to the people. 8:1
    b. Ezra and fellow priest read in the book of the law and gave the sense and caused the people to understand the reading. 8:8
    c. The people had asked for the reading. 8:1
    d. They stood up when the book was read and they were attentive to it.
    e. They bow their heads and wept when they read the law. 8:6-9
    f. There followed a great revival after all that they had done.
2. The devices of Satan the adversary. 2 Cor.2:11
    a. The device of ridicule. 4:1-3
        i. The weapon can be cruel and effective.
    b. The device of conspiracy and intimidation. 4:7-8
        i. They were the surrounding nations: see verse 7
        ii. They had their differences but all of them could be ignored to fight against God's people.
    c. The device of compromise. 6:1-4
    d. The device of false report and slander. 6:5-9
        i. This was and is one of Satan's most dangerous weapons.
        ii. It is to make us afraid. 6:9

2. The expulsion of evil from the temple is what God demands of the church today to purify itself: 1 Cor.3 & 6:19-20;

c. The ties for the support of the temple and priest were withheld.

i. The poorest of the flocks and herds were brought for sacrificing. 13:10; Mal.1:7-8; 3:8-10

1. They dishonored God.
2. They robbed Him of His due.
3. The penalty fell upon them, the priest and Levites had been compelled to go home and earn their living since the people did not support them in their work: this resulted in the temple not being done in proper manner.

4. Final statement:

a. Nehemiah was a true leader of the people and prophet for the Lord.

CHAPTER 1

- Vs.1-11; the report
  - Vs.1-3; the learning of the wall in Jerusalem.
  - Vs. 4-11; Lamenting over the wall.
    - Vs.4-7; Israel's plight

        - They had not kept Moses' law. It was not a recent thing. The law started years ago.
    - Vs.8-11; God's promise,
    - Vs.11; Nehemiah petition. 1 John 1; if 'we' have sinned.
        - Psa.51; all sin is against God, May involve some one else.
        - The word KEPT (keep) may be a military term.
        - 2 Tim.4:7; I have "kept" the faith. Protect vigorously as a watchman.
            - Be on guard and must obey the commandments. Mat.19:20-22; this man had kept but not obeyed them.

CHAPTER 2

- Vs.1-10; the request
    - Vs.1-5 the petition of to the king.
        - He asked the king for a leave of absence to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem.
        - His countenance showed the sorrow of the heart; the king could detect that something was wrong.
    - Vs.6-10; the permission of the king.
        - There were some that did not like him seeking the wellbeing to the Jews.
        - Some people are going to oppose good
- Vs.11-20; the review;

- Vs.11-16; Nehemiah's examination.
- Vs.17-20; Nehemiah's exhortation.
    - Vs.17; the report.
    - Vs.17b-18; the recommendation.
    - Vs.18; the response;
    - Vs.19; the ridicule;
    - Vs.20; the rebuke.

CHAPTER 3

- Vs.1-32; The Repairs of the Wall.
    - Vs.1-2; the sheep gate.
    - Vs.3-5; the fish gate
    - Vs.6-12; the old city gate
    - Vs.13; the valley gate
    - Vs.14; the dung gate
    - Vs.15-25; the fountain gate.
    - Vs.26-27; the water gate
    - Vs.28; the horse gate
    - Vs.29-30; the east gate.
    - Vs.31-32; the inspection gate.
- These are recorded to show the work of the people, they were united in their effects and had a specific part of the wall to repair.

CHAPTER 4

- The threatening of the builders of the wall; Nehemiah helps secure the workers with protection. There will always be opposition to the work of the Lord. Discouragement will arise from time to time. It would have been easier to walk away from the work.
- Vs.4:1-chapter 6:14; the troubles;
    - Vs.1-6; the ridicule;
        - They ridicule the Jews; "if a fox run against the wall, it would fall" then why worry about them!!!
        - They use ridicule to mock the Jews, what are they doing?
        - 6:14; they tried to make Nehemiah afraid.
        - People who have a mind to work cannot be slowed down with simple ridicule.
        - Vs.6; see 8:8; they read from the law of the Lord distinctly.
    - Vs.7-9; the conspiracy against the workers
        - The enemy would try to conspire against the work.
        - In the time of need they prayed unto the Lord.
            - Vs.7-8; the plot.
            - Vs.9; the prayer
                - The benefit of prayer; pray for the enemy. Rom.12:20
                - The enemies of the Lord will join forces to fight the work of the Lord.
    - Vs.10; the discouragement of the workers
        - Much rubbish; need to remove the debris before progress can be made.

        - Debris will be a hindrance to the work.
    - Vs.11-23; the intimidation;
        - The craftiness of the enemy; vs. 11-12
            - The ten times representing a continuing or persistent balking to the people.
        - The challenge of the prophet; Vs.13-14
            - Nehemiah tells them not to be afraid. Mat.10:28;
            - Pray as if it all depended on the Lord and work as if it all depended on you.
        - The commitment of the people. Vs.15-23
            - They had balance upon the wall:
                - Battling and building.
                - One hand a tool and the other a weapon.
            - They did not remove their clothes: they lead by example.
- CHAPTER 5
    - Vs. 5:1-19; internal strife.
        - Vs.1-5; the ruthlessness.
            - Vs.1; the outcry of the Jewish people against their brethren; shows us that we must deal with complaints.
            - There will be valid complaints; take every ones' problem seriously, they may have a point.
        - Vs.6-11; the reprimand
            - Vs.6; there is nothing wrong with righteous indignation.

        - Vs.7; he had thought about these things.
        - Dealing with them according to their ability.
        - They were silence was noted.
        - Vs.9; "we must walk in the fear of the Lord."
    - Vs.12-13; the repentance.
        - "Shake off the dust"
    - Vs.14-19; the role model.
        - He did not take of the governor's provisions; he did not rely on others.
        - He had the right to take but he did not. 1 Cor.9;
        - Vs.15; because of the fear of the Lord.
        - Remember me because of what I done for all this people: 13:14, 22, 29, 31; 6:14
            - "REMEMBER"
- CHAPTER 6
    - Vs.6:1-4; the evil plot
        - Vs.3; why should the work cease; Acts 6:1ff the Grecian women
    - Vs.5-9; the slander from the enemy
        - The feigning of the enemy: wolves in sheep clothing.
        - Vs.9; ask the Lord for strength to overcome.
    - Vs.10-14; the treachery.
        - Vs.11; the courage of Nehemiah.
- Vs.15-19; The triumph

CHAPTER 7-10; The festival of shelters

- Vs.7:1-3; the city of God.
- Vs.4-73; the people of God.
    - Vs.4-65; the names of the people.
    - Vs.66-73; the numbers of the people.
        - The count; 66-69
        - The contribution 70-73

CHAPTER 8

- Vs.1-12; the word of God
    - Vs.1-6 the communication
        - Vs.2; he brought the word before the people.
    - Vs.7-8; the clarification
        - Vs.6; the raising of the hands to the Lord; mat.14:31; 11L:28
    - Vs.9-12; the celebration.
- Vs.13-18; the festival of God

CHAPTER 9

- Vs.1-38; the confession to God.
    - Vs.1-3; the layity; the people.
    - Vs.4ff; the Levites.
        - They recount the peoples' unfaithfulness.
        - From Abraham to Moses.
        - From Moses to the Judges
        - From the Judges to Ezra.

- God's faithfulness to provide for the people.9-15; 18-23
    - Israel's unfaithfulness. 16-18
- Vs.13-14; critical to fight 7th day Adventist; not authorized until the Law of Moses.
    - They think it was in Genesis: when Moses wrote Genesis he was looking back. God made it known at Sinai to the people.
    - Exo.20:8; Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy. This was a sign to Israel from God, not to all man.
    - Ezek. 20:12;

CHAPTER 10

- The vow of God 1-39
    - The parties Vs.1-28
        - Nehemiah and the Levites, and the leaders sign the document.
    - The promises Vs.29-39
        - The people assure that they will not intermarry with heathen nations. V.30
        - They will keep the Sabbath. V.31
        - They will care for the temple. V.32,34,39
        - They will keep the festival days. V.33
        - They will dedicate their firstborn to the Lord. V.36
        - They will pay their tithes. V.35,37,38

CHAPTER 11

- The resetting of the cities. Vs.1-36
    - Those living in Jerusalem Vs.1-24
        - How they are selected. Vs.1-2
        - Who is selected. Vs.3-24
            - The provincial officials. Vs.3-9
            - The Priest and others. Vs.10-24
    - Those living in Judah and Benjamin. Vs.25-36

CHAPTER 12

- The returning of the priest and Levites. Vs.1-26
- The rejoicing of the people. Vs.27-47
    - The music; Vs.27-30
    - The marching; Vs.31-43
    - The ministers Vs.44-47

CHAPTER 13

- The reforms of Nehemiah; Vs.1-31
    - The separation; Vs.1-3
    - The confrontations; Vs.4-31
        - Eliashib; Vs.4-9
        - The Levites; Vs.10-14
        - Those who profane the Sabbath; Vs.15-22
            - The sin Vs.15-18

- The solution Vs.19-22

- Those who marry pagan women Vs.23-27
- Sanballat's son-in-law; Vs.28-31

Adam Rymon

1. Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther:
2. Instructor: Eddy Craft.
3.
4. The Book of Ezra is a continuation of the book of Chronicles.
5. The similarity between Ezra and Chronicles Ezra 1:1-2, 2Ch 36:22-23
6. Ezra is probably the writer of both.
7. This book was written somewhere around 430 BC.
8.
9. Purposes of the Book of Ezra
10. God keeps His promises.
    A. God fulfills His promise to restore His exiled people to their land.
    B. How God did it.
        1. God accomplishes such through 3 great heathen monarchs.
            a. Cyrus
            b. Darius
            c. Artaxerxes
        2. 3 great servants
            a. Ezra
            b. Zerubbabel
            c. Jeshua
11. The rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem.
12. The Restoring of the temple worship according to the Law of Moses.
13. The perseverance of the restored people.
14.
15. He is trying to keep them from lapsing back into heathenism and Idolatry.
16. Commanding not to intermarry.
17. Who you marry has an effect on our destiny.
18. Deu 7:1-6
19.
20. Ezra means a help or aid:
21. It comes from a verb meaning to "surround or enclose; to protect, as with a wall."
22. Jewish tradition says that Ezra assembled the Book of the OT that were written before his time to comprise the early canon of Hebrew scriptures.
23. His name is linked by tradition to the beginnings of the Pharisees, particularly to the group called the scribes.
24. We know that Ezra was a scribe and a priest.
25. The scribes duty was to copy and teach the scriptures.
26. They in the old times were the back to the Bible conservatives.
27. The time of the book comes from its chief Character Ezra.
28.
29. There were three returns from captivity.
30. 606 BC Daniel and His 3 friends taken.
31. 596 BC Ezekiel taken
32. 586 BC Another carrying away.
33.
34. 538 BC Zerubbabel's Return to rebuild the temple. 50,000 Ezra 2:64-65
35. 458 BC Ezra leads the return to re-establish the law and temple worship.
36. 444 BC The final return to rebuild the walls of the city.
37.

38. Change in language,
39. Most in Hebrew,
40. 4:8-6:18 Written in Aramaic, the language of the Persians.
41. This deals specifically the court of Persian affairs and records.
42. Archaeological support for the book of Ezra
43. Scholars rejected Ezra 4 historical.
44. Elaphantine doc in 500-400 BC with letters in Aramaic.
45.
46. Keys to the book of Ezra:
47. Keywords:
48. Restoration
49. The House of the Lord
50. Key Chapter: 6, The completion and dedication of the temple under th eprophets Hagai and Zecharai.
51. Key Verse: Ezra 7:9-10
52. Key Phrase: The Word of the Lord. Ezra 1:1 9:4
53. Message: For all men always to accept the power of the word of God in their lives.
54. Religious, Social, and Civil life of the people who returned from exile.
55.
56. Ezra the Man:
57. He was a man of faith.
    A. Psa 66:18
    B. Pro 28:13
    C. Isa 59:1-2,
58. He was a man of prayer.
    A. He confessed the sins of the people and sought God's forgiveness. Ezra 9:5
    B. When Ezra had prayed and confessed. Ezra 10:1
59. He was trustworthy.
    A. The fact of the great treasure and favors granted by Artaxerxes. Ezra 7:13-26
60. He was a man of moral courage.
    A. Counseling with priest, Levites, families, making end of foreign marriages.
    B. Ezra 10:5
61. He respected God's word by honoring it, studying it, and obeying it.
    A. Ezra 7:10
    B. Neh 8:2-8
62. His greatest work was to restore the word of God to the hearts and lives of the people.
    A. Psa 119:11
    B. Nehemiah rebuilt the walls with perishable material to protect them from the heathen, Ezra built them up spiritually from within.
    C.
63.
64. The return under Zerubbabel 1-6
    A. The decree of Cyrus. 1:1-4
    B. The determination of the Jews to carry out the decree. 1:5-11
    C. The departure of the Jews to fulfill the decree. 2
    D. The determination of the Jews to carry out the decree. 3
    E. The disruption of the work of the decree. 4-5
    F. The discovery of the decree of Cyrus. 6
65. The return under Ezra 7-10

A. Ezra's commission of Artaxerxes. 7:1-28
B. Ezra's company. 8
C. Ezra's communication with God. 9
D. Ezra's commitment to God. 10

66.
67. Lessons Learned from the book.
68. Do it while you work!
69. God is the God of the second chance.
    A. Repentance.
    B. Forgiveness.
70. Rejecting God's laws carries consequences.
    A. Isa, Jer, warned of this captivity lest they repent.
    B. They went in to captivity for disobedience.
        1. Idolatry
        2. Rejection of God's law, Jer 8:9
        3. They were captive to...
            a. Eliminate Idolatry.
            b. Increase their zeal for God.
            c. Increase their zeal for the land of Judah.
            d. Increase their zeal for the temple.
            e. Instill within them a determination to serve God faithfully.
71. It matters whom you marry.
    A. Between the end of Ezra xis and the beginning of Ezra 7, 58 years transpire.
    B. This is the period of time where Esther is.
    C. During this time many of the Jews married non-Jewish people from surrounding areas.
    D. God did not approve of these marriages and did not give His sanction to them.
    E. God desires His people to marry those of like mind.
    F. Especially now because of the seed line on the road to redemption.
72. God expects obedience regardless of the consequences.
    A. Sometimes consequences are not specifically stated, but seen by implication.
    B. Many scoff at the laws of remarriage, but obedience and salvation go hand in hand.
73. The sorrow that sin always brings. Ezra 9:13-14
74. Divine providence in the book.
    A. Chronology of Ezra See Clayton Winters (p.22)
    B. Jer 25:12
    C. Jer 29:10
    D. Isa 44:28
    E. Isa 45:1
75.
76. The book of Ezra covers about 78 years, overall about 138 years.
77. Even the writing of the decree turned out to be so important later.
78. When the enemy of God later tried to hinder the plans, having the decree in writing helped.

I. Ezra Chapter One:

A. Cyrus puts the proclamation in writing.

B. The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus.

1. Josephus says Cyrus had read this prophecy and had seen his role.
2. Dan 2:46-48
3. Dan 6:1-3
4. The word proclamation. Hebrew Abar.
   a. Meaning, to pass over, pass through, or pass along.
   b. It was used of captors walking over the bodies of their prisoners.
      - Isa 51:23
   c. The floodwaters covering the earth.
      - Isa 54:9
   d. Of something passing back and forth.
      - Eze 35:7
      - Zac 7:14
   e. Thus the word of freedom for the people of God flowed back and forth over the land, like a flood.
   f. Furthermore it was put into writing, a fact that would later become very important, when the legality of their work upon the temple was challenged.
      - Harry Rimmer The Bible as a document
      - The same evidence toward the Bible, not just received and preached but written down.

C. Verses 5-6

1. There arose chief priests among the fathers.
   a. The Chief of the fathers comes from Hebrew Rosh, the word is used of Mt. Peaks, in Genesis 5, tops of towers Gen 11:4, height of the stars Job 22:2, Head of Families Exo 6:14, of Chief Priests 2Ki 25:18.
   b. Suggestive of men of high standing and influence. The kind who had been deported to Babylon in the first place 1Ki 24:14
2. God had selected the tribe of Levi instead of the firstborn of each household Exo 13:2, Num 3:12-13, He had set them apart for the priestly service, Num 8:13-23. The tribes are indispensable for restoring worship and the temple.
   a. Jeremiah sent a letter to the captives, promising deliverance at the end of 70 years, Jer 29:1-10
   b. Ezekiel regularly taught God's word to His people, the topics were conversion among the people. Eze 14:1, 33:30. Visions of His such as the valley of dry bones taking on flesh again must have restored their spirit.
   c. Daniel, learned from reading books of Jeremiah's prophecies, Dan
3. How did God move the spirits?
   a. Acts 16:14
   b. Acts 2:37
   c. The Lord on the way to Emmaus.
   d. The hope of captivity:
      - They had the word, a source of hope, by the word of God.
      - They could get out.
      - We on the earth, have God a source of hope.
      - We can get out, we can make it to heaven.
   e. If everyone had taken the position of not returning, where then would the work have

been done.
- Some where perfectly content in their captivity.

D. 7-11
1. The vessels of the house of the Lord.
2. Ezra – Nehemiah Supposed Contradictions.
   a. The Numbers are different.
   b. Two possible explanations.
      - Ezra gives a detailed list of some of the Major vessels. And other 1000
        1. There may have been other lesser vessels not mentioned in these.
        2. To know something is a contradiction then there must be NO possible explanation for it.

II. Chapter Two:

A. The Families
1. By family: 3-19
2. By Locality: 20-35
3. The Priests: 36-39
4. The Levites: 40-42
5. The Nethinims: 43-54
   a. Nethinim, transliterated Hebrew, meaning the ones given.
   b. The Levites were all Nethinim in a general sense, since they had been given to God in service to the temple.
   c. Others also where occasionally given to this service, Num 31:40-41,47, Jos 9:23.
   d. The Nethinim here had descended from those appointed by King David Ezra 8:20.
6. The Sons of Solomon's Servants: 55-58
   a. Solomon had pressed the conquered Canaanite population into forced labor, 1Ki 9:20-21, and it appears that these servants had remained as a distinct group even in captivity.
7. Those Unable to Establish their Genealogy: 59-63

B. Urim and Thumin 64-60
1. Urim and Thumin, Lights, and perfections (receiving perfection from God), objects placed on the High Priests garments, used for Judgment.

C. Numbers:
1. Those joined at the beginning by Ezra, Nehemiah, used a later census.
2. What if it is the case some came out, some went back, and others yet came out.
3. Some documents damaged.

D. Verse 62
1. While reference to the genealogy, there were people purged, this was important to keep the line pure. One of the problems in the church today is that we do not want to purge it.
2. They are restoring the Church, they cannot do it without doing all, or else we don't have a true restoration.
3. It is the Bible that converts the hearts of men.
4. Can we prove our lineage as part of the priesthood?

E. They Offered Freely.
1. When you are really striving to do the right thing your giving is not going to be a problem.
2.

III. Chapter Three: The Determination of the Jews to Carry out the Decree:

A. Determination of the Jews to carry out the decree
1. Ezra 3:1-13

2. Worship according to God's written word.
   a. Basis of unity.
   b. God's word is a document.
3. It takes 4 months, the seventh month corresponding to our Sept/Oct, people would be fairly well settled into the cities.
4. There is no restoration without IT IS WRITTEN!
   a. There is an emphasis on divine revelation.
   b. The difference between the bible and any other book, revelation, inspiration, and confirmation.
   c. Ezra quoting scripture.
   d. Jesus quoted scripture.
   e. The phrase it is written, this phrase and it's equivalent is often found in the book of Ezra.
      - Or thus saith the Lord,
      - Or God Said,
   f. Used over and over again throughout the scriptures.
   g. Ezra 7:10
   h. Ezra 10:3
   i. Ezra 8:8-9
   j. Neh 10:34,35
   k. This sets the tone for the restoration movement.
5. 2Ki 22:8 – 23:24
   a. There is absolutely no substitute for "as it is written" 1Co 4:6
6. Verse 3
   a. The alter was set upon the foundation, that it would not have even been moved off of the foundation whereupon it had originally been placed.
7. Accountability:
   a. When we realize the seriousness of our accountability, we will want to be accurate.
   b. It is not good enough to just be close.
   c. Walk circumspectly, Acrobos, walk accurately.
      - Ephesians 5:15
      - Col 2:4-5
      - We must walk accurately because we will give an account.

B. 8-13
1. Notice that we have an appreciation to God.
   a. He is good for His mercies endureth forever toward Israel.
   b. They sang together, responsively, the kind of singing, back and forth in different groups.
   c. You just don't sing, you sing from the heart.
2. They are going according to the ordinance of David the king of Israel.
   a. God is good and His mercy endures forever toward Israel.
   b. They praised the Lord for the foundation that was laid.
      - What is the foundation which has been laid for us!
      - The foundation of Christ.
   c. Old men who had seen the first temple wept.
      - It was not what it was in the past.
      - They lost site.
      - The foundation was laid in the same month that the first began.
        1. 1Ki 6:1

2. There is a consecrated determination in every way to return to the ancient order.
3. The builders set forward. Forward, translated, overseers NKJV, Verse 8. From a Hebrew verb Natsach, this an overseer or superintendent.

3. At the conclusion of chapter three.
   a. They did not realize that this temple would be blessed with the most glorious presence of God in the flesh.
   b. They had a physical mentality, they did not understand the spiritual.
   c. John 1:1-2
   d. Mark 11:1-11

IV. Chapter Four: The Disruption of the Work of the Decree: When the Church is doing well and everything is going ok, Satan will do everything he can to disrupt our life. Satan is trying to destroy God's ultimate plan of redemption.

A. They do not appear at first to be adversaries.
   1. They adversary does not always come with a gun and a knife, saying I am the enemy.
   2. Look up adversary in the Hebrew.
   3. Satan is our adversary... Be sober, Be vigilant.
   4. The word Seek, what did Isaiah say about seeking the Lord while He may be found.

B. You won't help us put one stone in it.
   1. This does not set well, because they are going to get mad.
   2. Should they go along to get along?
      a. Commit harlotry with the world?
   3. They discouraged them.
      a. Satan will send people our away to discourage us.
      b. We cannot help what other people do, but we can help what we are doing!
   4. They took counsels against them to frustrate their purpose.
      a. They wrote an accusation against them.
      b. Only the faithful will stick this out.
      c. Someone has to stay faithful and stand strong.
      d. Whether they listen or not, someone still needs to stand.
      e. It's not someone else's job, it is MY JOB!
      f. The Children of God should never be outworked by the children of Satan.

C. Chapter 4 verse 2
   1. Polytheistic.
   2. May not have known they were enemies.
   3. Attitude, we want to help 4-7, after rejection they wanted to hinder.

D. They try to attack the work.
   1. Aproximate Paralel
      a. Helpers in the Church
      b. to Hinderer's of the Lords work.
      c. Do we let our attitude become one of assault.
      d. The Israelites knew these peoples attitudes.
   2. We cannot be good servants if we believe everyone is saved.
      a. Rev 3, Attitude of God I know your works.
      b. Our view of God is important.
   3. What congregation has no need of help in any place.
      a. Do we want to do what we can't do.
      b. Some sins carry a more severe penalty.
         - God gave command to drive the people out, they were not.

- These people are a constant thorn in the flesh of God's people.
- These continued to cause problems they would not if they had been taken care of according to God's plan.

c. Rom 1, this all started out with the immorality of a false view of God, they did not want to retain God in their knowledge. Three changes in Romans. Heb 3, departing through hardening deceitfulness of sin.
   - Their view of God is false, their doctrine is therefore wrong.
   - If we develop the mindset that it does not matter what you do as long as you love God.
   - They changed the nature of God from corruptible to incorruptible, they changed the truth of God into a lie.
   - If we get one of these wrong everything else falls apart with it:
     1. God
     2. Truth
     3. Moral
     4. Living
   - God's demand of purity.

d. Esther Chapter One:
   - What kind of attitude to did the king take toward her.
   - Vengeful attitude.
   - What was the reasoning of the king.
     1. If she was able to do that then all the wives of the men could do the same.
     2. What will this say to the others.
     3. If we decide to fornicate.
     4. If they do that which we are against and then do nothing about it, what does it say to everyone else, others will follow suite.
     5. What if Ananias went unpunished.
     6. Could we bring shame and reproach upon God's people.

E. The rebellious evil city.
   1. They previously wanted to help.
   2. They are hypocrites.
   3. Do we check people out before we let people place membership.

F. Verse 24
   1. Aug 29, 520 BC Haggai and Zecharai step up to the place.
   2. Sept 21, 520 BC. Resumes and finishes.
   3. Haggai one:
      a. Are we putting more effort into our physical houses than in the house of the Lord.
      b. 16 years.
      c. Spiritual advancement as a result of THUS SAITH THE LORD!
      d. God says, the reason you are in this mess is because you didn't do what God says.
      e. Why is the Lords house laid waste.

V. Ezra Chapter Five:

A. God is always over us!

B. The divine catalyst, 1-2
   1. You are doing it in the name of the God of Israel.
   2. By His authority.
   3. They ROSE UP to build!
      a. Get off your butts!
   4. The prophets went to build.

a. It is not just our job to sit and study and preach.
b. Our business is working with the congregation to accomplish God's will.

5. God is the overseer.
   a. Our Examples.
   b. The Christ, Did and taughty.
   c. Paul, lived it.

C. 3-17 Official challenged
1. Verse 8
   a. Talks about the diligence of God's work.
   b. Are we diligent in the Lord's work.
   c. No one should be more dedicated.
2. 4 Things done in letter:
   a. Verse 8
      - Rebuilding of the temple was what they came to do..
   b. Verse 12
      - They rebelled and God gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.
   c. Verse 13:
      - Cyrus decreed the temple to be rebuilt the house.
   d. Verse 14
      - Those things which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Lord's house, they are brought back.
3. God gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.
   a. God's punishment.
   b. Nebuchadnezzar a servant of God.
   c. Nebuchadnezzar could not take God's people by his own might, but only by the Lord delivering Israel into his hand.
4. There is tremendous value in written documents.

VI. Ezra Chapter Six:

A. The building plans!
B. The Edict of Darius 6-13
1. Don't mess with God's people while building God's house.
2. What you do to God's people you do to God.
3. Let them do it as God commanded it.
4. Darius and Cyrus and their asset to the work of God.
5. If you violate this, your house will be torn down, and you will be killed on it.
6. Change my words death is the only result.
7. Darius said get to it, they got to it.
   a. When God makes a decree and says get to it.
   b. We need to get to it! We need to do it accordingly.

C. 13-15 The Work completed.
1. Around March 12, 515 BC the work was finished.

D. 16-18
1. The dedication of the temple.
2. Offering of 12 goats, for the sins of the 12 tribes during the captivities.
3. A sin offering made when the temple is completed.
4. What temple can be dedicated while full of sin.
   a. Cleansing of the temple.
   b. Ye are the temple.

E. BREAK FOR ESTHER!

VII.Ezra Chapter Seven:

A. 1-10 The Preparation

1. Ezra and the line of Aaron.
2. Ezra and the law of the Lord.
3. Vs 9-10, Good Sermon Building Verses.
4. Word seek found a number of times through Ezra
   a. 6:21 Seek God
   b. 7:10 Seek the Law, Do it, and Teach it.
   c. 8:21 Seek a right way
   d. 8:22
5. The line of Aaron,
6. This all hinges on a prepared heart
   a. Psa 119
      - 9 Take heed
      - 10 seek
      - 11 hide it in heart
      - 12 teach it
      - 13 declare it
      - 14 rejoice in it.
      - 15 meditate, respect
      - 16 delight in it
7.
   a. Deu 4:10
   b. Psa 119:11
   c. Pro 3:1
   d. Pro 4:4
   e. Pro 4:23
   f. A Bad Heart

B. 11-24 Kings Edict Concerning Ezra:

1. What the ruler will due.
2. King Artaxerxes, gives Ezra leave.
   a. Any Jews that would may go.
   b. All the finances would be provided.
   c. Artaxerxes saw the profit of helping the Jews.
      - The law of God which is in your hand, significance of God's written law.
      - The God of Jerusalem, where God had put His name.
      - If we work together and cooperate we will accomplish much more.
      - Recognition that God's law is to be obeyed and followed.

C. 25-28 The King's Exhortation to Ezra:

1. Ezra's Task
2. Ezra's Thanksgiving
3. It was not going to be easy for Ezra to carry this out.
   a. The purpose is to purify the house of God.
   b. If we realized this in the Church, we have got to stress keeping the Church pure.
   c. We do not have Church discipline to be mean to people, but we have it to keep the Church pure.
   d. Pure or Putrid, how will we have God's Church?

VIII.Ezra Chapter Eight:

A. 1-20 The Participation:

1. Ezra lists the families returning to Jerusalem.
2. Absence of the Levites
3. Arrival of Levites
4. God's hand upon them v.18
5.

B. 21-23 The Supplication:

1. Prayer and fasting before beginning and journey.
2. We need to pray before making important decision.
3. Prayer employed in the book of acts.
4. Seek a way of God.
   a. The value of training children.
   b. The value of Bible study at home.

C. 24-30 The Authorization:

1. Holiness, all this was set apart to the work of the Lord.
2. Anything that God says is holy, is.
3. Rise Kill and Eat.
   a. Peter told God no!
   b. Peter learns his lesson, you do not call unclean, unless God calls it such.
4. If God calls it holy that makes it holy.
5. Once God designates His desire, His will, that becomes holy!
   a. When we change God's commandment, we make it unholy and unclean.
   b. God has set apart a place, people, utensils, has said it is Holy, we do not mess with it.
6. Do we profane that which is holy in the contribution.
   a. Have we set aside money for the giving to God which is holy.
   b. Do we then withhold that money, profane it with other uses.

D. 31-32 The Destination:

1. 4 Month Journey
2. Ezra and the people arrive safely.

E. 33-36 The Presentation:

1. Gold and silver for the temple.
2. All is deposited and carefully recorded.
3. The king's decree's are given to the officials.

IX. Ezra Chapter Nine:

A. 1-15 Transgression by the People:

1. 1-4 Ezra's Pain:
2. 5-15 Ezra's Prayer:
   a. Confessing the faithlessness of Judah and the faithfulness of the Lord.
   b. Deals with their past sins.
   c. Their present sins.
   d. And the faithfulness of the Lord.
3. The prophets were God's servants.
   a. Neh 2:10
   b. Do not seek their peace nor wealth
4. A nail in thy holy place, peg.
   a. The idea of nailing something down.
   b. There are some things we need to be nailed down to and stay there.
   c. Everything that is not nailed down is falling apart.
   d. ESV on this verse.

5. God has punished us less than our iniquities deserve.
6. We have to seek our peace and our wealth according to the will of God.
7. Give us a little reviving in our bondage.
    a. Grace, a Remnant to whom Grace is extended, the Holy Place, a peg in it, a Revival in it, extended mercy, the servants the Prophets, seeking the right things again emphasized, our punishment, whatever it may be is less than we deserve.

X. Chapter Ten: Confession of the People.

Preaching pays off, this is a result of Ezra's preaching and prayer!

A. 1-2 Repentance:

1. Confession of sins, repentance is a turning away, going the opposite direction.
2. Confession can be a synecdoche

B. 3-12 Resolve:

1. Principals to consider for marriage divorce and remarriage material.
2. Unscriptural marriages must be dissolved.
3. Demands of repentance to resolve the situation.

C. 13-44 Record:

1. How did the solution help cover.
2. The Levites being the examples that they should be, stepping up and giving their hand.
3. They showed their willingness to the people to make it right.
4. Satan starts with the leaders.
5. Sifting Peter as wheat, Satan wants YOU Plural.
    a. When you singular are converted, strengthen the brethren.
    b.

Nehemiah Introduction

I. No reason for anyone other than Nehemiah being the penman.
   A. Neh 1:1
   B. It is written in the first person.
   C. Date of Writing:
      1. 5th Century BC
      2. 431 – 430
      3. Name Taken from Chief sentence and chief character.
   D. Last of historical books.
      1. Reveal God's restoration of Israel according to Palestine according to the prophecies.
      2. To demonstrate God's continued blessing and protection of His people.
II. Nehemiah was a man.
   A. Name means Jehovah Comforts.
   B. Sometimes abbreviated as Nahum Nah 1:1, 1Ch 4:19, Nahamani Neh 7:7.
   C. He was cupbearer for the king of Persia.
      1. He was therefore a govt. official.
      2. He was in the palace of Shushan, the city in Elam about 200mi east of Babylon.
         a. This is the same Shusha where Daniel saw the vision of the ram with two horns. Dan 8:2
         b. This is where Esther in 478 BC. Became Artaxerxes queen.
         c. It was the winter residence of Persian kings.
         d. It was located east of the river Tigris and near the head of the Persian gulf.
   D. His humility is evidenced by:
      1. His hesitancy to tell us of his position of cupbearer until the end of the chapter.
         a. The cupbearer was the official tester to make sure that the food was safe to eat.
         b. He risked his life on the king's popularity or unpopularity at every meal to protect the king's household.
            - Let me die before the king.
         c. He must be the most trusted person in the whole empire.
         d. His position was next to that of the crown prince himself.
         e. He had access to the entire palace including the king's harem.
            - No one else outside the kings family will be trusted more than him.
      2. His neglecting to tell us the position to which he was appointed until chapter ten and then just as a passing reference.
   E. He was a man, patriotism, action, courage, and perseverance.
   F. He was cautious, courageous, and uncompromising.
III. Nehemiah will lead the third return to Palestine.
   A. 536 BC Zerubabel to rebuild the temple.
   B. 457 BC Ezra returns to reestablish the Law and worship.
   C. 444 BC Nehemiah returns to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.
IV. Keys
   A. Key Words
      1. Rebuilding
      2. Prayer
      3. Work
   B. Key Verses
      1. 4:6
      2. 9:17, 20

3. 6:15-16
4. 8:8

C. Key Chapter 9
1. Confesses Israels sins.
2. The people keep the law.

V. Christ in the Book.
A. Jesus had qualities that reminded the people of some of the prophets.
1. Elias.
2. Jeremias
3. One of the Prophets

B. The qualities of Nehemiah are descriptive of Christ as well.
1. Nehemiah was sympathetic toward the people. Neh 1:4
2. Quality of Prayerfulness. Neh 1:4
3. Able to distinguish between the worthy and evil. Neh 6:1-7
4. Upright, courageous, unselfish, wholehearted. Neh 6:16-19
5. These are true Characteristics of good leaders.

VI. Lessons Learned from Nehemiah.
A. Love and Respect the Word of God.
1. Nehemiah tells of Ezra reading the book of the law to the people from early morning to mid day during the feast of tabernacles. Revelation 1:2-3. Neh 8:8
2. The people had asked for the reading. Neh 8:1
3. They stood up and listened.
4. They bowed their heads and worshiped God and wept when they heard the words of the law. Neh 8:6-9.
5. There followed a great revival among the people of God.

B. The devices of Satan, our adversary. 2Co 2:11
1. The device of ridicule. Neh 4:1-3
a. The weapon of ridicule can be both cruel and effective.
2. The device of conspiracy and intimidation. Neh 4:7-8
a. The Samaritans, Arabians, and the Amonites formed a coalition against Israel.
b. They had their differences but all of them could be temporarily ignored if they could prevent the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem. It was a far cry from unity, but they could forget about it to fight against God.

C. The device of compromise. 6:1-4
D. The device of false report and slander. 6:5-9
1. This was and is one of Satan's most dangerous weapons.
2. The design of this device is to make us afraid 6:9

E. The device of a false prophet to forecast evil unless they compromise with their enemies. 6:10-14
F. Satan uses his ministers to accomplish the same end. 2Co 11:10-15

VII. Errors opposed and corrected from within.
A. Purity of people deteriorated by ties of friendship, marriage, and commercial bonds.
B. Separation of the Jews from the surrounding heathen, by food, circumcision and various customs, were essential to the purity of the nation.
C. Christians are;
1. To be separated from the world 2Co 6:14-18, Rom 12:1-2, 1Jo 2:15-17
2. Not to bid error of any type God speed. 2Jo 1:9-11, Rom 16:17-18
3. Not to tolerate immorality among God's people. Matt 19:9, Gal 5:19-21

VIII. The High Priest Eliashab (Neh 13:4-5) Desecrated the temple, by providing a temple chamber

as a dwelling place, for an Tobiah Amonite who was allied by marriage.

A. What does Nehemiah do to Tobiah? Drives him out and restores it to its proper use.
   1. Reminds us of the time that Jesus cleansed the temple. John 2:13-17, Mat 21:12-13, 1Co 6:18-20, 1Co 3.
   2. Expulsion of evil from the temple is typical of God's demand for the Church to purify itself.
   3. The tithes for the support of the pries and of the temple were withheld.
      a. The poorest of the flocks and herbs had been brought for sacrificing, the blind, sick, torn by wild beasts. This was the kind of sacrifices offered. Neh 13:10, Mal 1:7-8, Mal 3:8-10
         - They dishonored God.
         - They robbed Him of His due.
         - The penalty fell upon them.
         - The priests and Levites had been compelled to go to their homes and earn their living, since the people refused to support them in their religious work; and this resulted in the temple service being neglected.

IX. Nehemiah was a true leader of the people and a prophet for God.

Nehemiah

I. **Nehemiah Chapter One:**
   A. **1-11 The Report**
      1. 1-3 Learning about the wall.
         a. Nehemiah is told concerning the sad situation in Jerusalem.
      2. 4-11 Lamenting over the wall.
         a. 4-7 Israel's plight.
            - Verse 6
              1. 1Jo
              2. Ezra 10:1
            - Every sin is against God.
              1. Against thee and thee alone have I sinned.
              2. Ultimately we sin against God, though it may also effect others.
              3. He realized his sins had played their part as well though he may not have played as direct a role as others.
            - Verse 7
              1. These commandments had been in effect as early as Moses.
              2. The Law had begun, but then the people violated it.
              3. You have not kept.
                 1. Military Term in Grk
                    1. Paul kept, GUARDED! The faith! 2Ti 4:7
                 2. Does the same apply to Hebrew?
                 3. You don't just guard, but also obey, and vice versa.
         b. 8-10 God's Promise.
         c. 11 Nehemiah's petition.

II. **Nehemiah Chapter Two:**
   A. **1-10 The Request:**
      1. 1-5 The Petition to the king.
         a. Nehemiah asks king Artaxerxes that he might return to Jerusalem to rebuild the wall.
         b. One's countenance might say something.
      2. 6-10 Permission from the king.
         a. Artaxerxes not only permits his leaving, but agrees to help him finally.
         b. Opposition to anything we endeavor to do for good.
      3. 11-20 The Review.
         a. 11-16 Nehemiah's examination.
         b. 17-20 Nehemiah's exhortation.
            - 17 The Report.
            - 18 The Recommendation.
            - 18 The Response.
            - 19 The Ridicule.
            - 20 The Rebuke.

III. **Nehemiah Chapter Three: The Repairs**
   A. **1-2 The Sheep Gate:**
   B. **3-5 The Fish Gate:**
   C. **6-12 The Old City Gate:**
   D. **13 The Valley Gate:**
   E. **14 The Dung Gate:**
   F. **15-25 The Fountain Gate:**

G. 25-27 The Water Gate (The 18 Missing Minutes):
H. 28 The Horse Gate:
I. 29-30 The East Gate:
J. 31-32 The Inspection Gate:
K. Demonstration of the work ethic of these people. Shows unity in the labor. Not all the doing of the same exact work, but all working together to the same end. Not all as esteemed, but all are important. Historical perspective, shows the accuracy of the scriptures.

IV. Chapter Four: The Ridicule and Threat of the Wall Builders.

Handling Threats, Easing Financial Burdens. There will always be opposition. We will face troubles as preachers, but it is the best job ever. We will have days we want to quit. Don't make important decisions on blue days. How easy would it have been for these people to leave the work in discouragement!

A. 4:1 – 6:14 The Troubles:

1. 4:1-6 Ridicule:
   a. They ridicule God's people. If a fox ran up these walls they would collapse.
      - If this was really the case why are you so worried about it.
      - Gamaliels Advice?
   b. People will use ridicule to stop us from doing the right thing.
      - How often are our people ridiculed for holding Christian morals and principals!
      - We need to be careful not to mock people for trying to keep morality, though it often seems foolish in the sight of the world.
   c. You cannot slow down a group of people who have a mind to work. We have to set our hearts on it! Work requires an attitude of work.
      - If we have the mind to do it we can be successful.
      - When we work with a congregation, this is our life, we must have a mind to work with them, we have to want to help and labor with these people.
      - Some people are disciplined enough to have a study at home, we must be disciplined enough to work in the environment to work in.
      - Sometimes we need to be able to be seen working by the congregation.
      - To get someone to WANT to do the work, we must to show them the NEED to do the work.
      - If we just go along where we are pushed and do not put our heart in to it we loose.
      - If we don't do the work we will loose out, and will be found wanting later on.
      - When we fail to reach our full potential we will fail to bring others to their full potential.
      - We need to do it now, if we will not get a work ethic now, how then, will we get it then.
   d. Understand as students in marriage, we limit ourselves in our studies, making self discipline all the more important.
      - We have to talk to and share things with our wives as far as scriptural study.
      - If we can, let our wife be our secretary, this helps her get involved.
      - Include her, we should not have to go beyond them.
      - They will give a woman's point of view in a thing which can help us in our ministry. They will not always react the way a man will react. BE SURE TO LISTEN TO THEM.
      - IF your wife tells you a young lady is after you, NOTE She is probably right...
      - We have to be careful about this for our wifes sake, as well as for the young

lady.
- We have to be careful, we are not there to help people go to hell while we are preaching.

e. When we get good new information share it with people!
f. V6, Ref 8:8

2. 4:7-9 Conspiracy:
   a. The Plot and the prayers.
   b. The enemy is coming together against the Church. They laid aside their difficulties to fight against God's people.
   c. The benefit of prayer. We cannot leave prayer out of our ministry.
   d. Do not ever forget, no matter who it is, or what they are doing to us, pray for them in sincerity.
   e. Do not ever reach a point where we would be pleased to see a person, ANY person in hell. We are in the soul saving business DO NOT FORGET IT!
   f. Rom 12:20
   g. If we fail at this point we will have front row seats with them.
3. 4:10 Discouragement:
   a. Much Rubbish, whatever we start to do there is going to be much rubbish.
   b. You cannot build a house without making a mess.
   c. It cannot stop us, in our spiritual work, we will run into it.
   d. If you clean up after each job that you do, and sometimes take time just to take care of the junk that is there, we will be able to do the work, and effectively.
   e. They could have allowed all the junk to stop God's word, instead they got rid of it.
   f. It is important.
4. 4:11-23 Intimidation:
   a. The Craftiness of the enemy.
   b. The Challenge of the prophet.
      - 10 Times, the persistent reminder.
   c. The Commitment of the workers.
   d. God is going to fight for us. We will win out, there will be some valleys, but we will wind up on top.
      - We still have to do our part.
      - God is going to fight for us.
        1. SO TAKE UP YOUR SWORD!
        2. You have to pray as if everything depended on God and work as if everything depended on you.
5. 5:1-19 Internal Strife:
   a. 1-5 the Ruthlessness:
      - We have to be able to deal with complaints.
      - We have to try to be good peace maker.
        1. This does not mean compromise.
        2. This may require us to take a strong stand for what is right.
      - There are some complaints that are invalid. But some will be valid.
        1. We as preachers need to take every complaint seriously.
        2. We need to deal fairly with the humble, meek, and lowly.
        3. Treat all men with fairness.
   b. 6-11 The Reprimand:
      - There is not a problem with proper anger.
        1. I sat down and thought about it.

2. They were silent before his argumentation.
3. People were often silent before the Christ.
- Should we not walk in the fear of our God because of reproach.
  1. Do we bring reproach upon God's people by our example.
  2. What does this do to God, what did Christ say to Saul of Tarsis.
     1. When we bring reproach upon the Church, we bring reproach upon God.

c. 12-13 The Repentance:
- Shook off
- Not taking from the people.
  1. I deserve it, I have the right to, but I did not. Paul anyone.
  2. This was the attitude of Uriah!
  3. We have to have such a moral attitude toward our countrymen that we are willing to give up for our brethren.
  4. Nothing put off save for washing, weren't looking for a chance to go take a nap and relax.
  5. We do not hire a preacher to do this so we can set back and watch.

d. 14-19 The Role Model:
- Remember me my God for all the good that I have done for this people.
- Neh 13:14
- Mat 6:1, Looking for his reward from God, not requiring from man.

6. 6:1-4 Evil Plot:
   a. v.3 The Grecian widows in Acts 6.
   b. We have to be discerning not take every offer lightly.
7. 6:5-9 Slander:
8. 6:10-14 Treachery:
   a. Remember Tobiah.
   b. God will remember, He will not forget what we do.
   c. V11. Should such a man as I flee.
   d. Wolves in sheep's clothing.
9. 6:15-19The Triumph:

B. 7-10 Census, Reading Book of the Law, Festival of Shelters:

1. 7:1-3 The City of God:
2. 7:4-73 The People of God.
   a. 4-65 The Names
      - 12 Key leaders.
      - Clan Leaders.
      - Singers
      - Temple Servants
   b. 66-73 The Numbers
      - 66-69 Camped
      - 70-73 Contribution7:1-3

1. 7:4-73 The Festival of God
   a. 1-6 Communication
   b. 7-8 Clarification
      - Reading and hearing of the word of God.
      - Verse 8 Sounds like a good verse.
      - Pentecostal hand waving is OK. But only under the old law, therefore they are Adventicostals.
      - Reaching out for guidance and help.

c. 9-12 Celebration.
d. 13-18 Festival of God.

C. Chapter Nine: The Confession to God:

1. The Leity and the Levites.
2. 9:1-3 Leity
3. 9:4-38 Levites
   a. 1-8 Recount Abraham to Moses
   b. 9-23 Moses to Joshua
      - God's faithfulness.
        1. Delivered.
        2. Guided day and night.
        3. Provided the law.
        4. Provided food and water.
      - Israel's unfaithfulness. 16-18
      - 13-14 Crucial for 7th Day Advent.
        1. The Sabbath was made known on Sinai.
        2. Adventists say it was on the seventh day when the Lord rested from the works of it.
        3. They are putting the effect before the cause when they do this.
        4. Moses is looking back when Genesis is written.
        5. God says that on Sinai is where the Sabbath was revealed to them.
        6. Either God did or didn't, if He did, they did not have previous knowledge of it.
        7. Moses did not, and could not have written the Gen 1 account during the actual time of occurrence! It was looking back.
        8. No record of any gentile, ever, keeping the sabbath.
           1. Cornelius righteous under the law, no mention of keeping the sabbath day.
           2. Exodus passages of the 10 Commandments.
        9. Deu, Exo, Neh, Eze, Num, He did not make known these commandments to your fathers as unto you. Sign of Covenant between Israel and God.
           1. The man collecting sticks, why did they not know what to do when one broke the sabbath.
           2. How do you keep the Sabbath?
              1. They have the way they kept it in the old testament nailed to the cross.
              2.
   c. 24-26 Joshua Judges
   d. 27-31 Judges to Ezra
   e. 32-38 Ezra to Nehemiah
      - This is some good preaching.

D. Chapter Ten:

1. 1-39 The Vow of God.

Esther Introductory Matterial:

I. **Esther Intro:**

A. The Keys to the book of Eshter.

1. Key Phrase: For such a time as this.
2. Key Chapter: 8
   a. Record event following Haman's death, preparation and honoring of Mordecai.
3. Key Words: Protection and Providence.
4. Key Verses: 4:14, 4:16, 8:17

B. Message of the book: Provides the only Biblical portrait of the many Jews that chose to remain in Persia.

C. If the name of God is not here, then His finger is.

1. Appeal, the modesty of the Queen is an example to all women.
2. If you want to be modest, you can be modest, but it will cost you something.
3. 1Ti 2:9-12
4. 1Pe 3:1-4
5.

I. **Esther Chapter One:**

1-2 The Feast of Ahasuerus

3-7 The Feast of Esther

8-10 The Feast of Purim

A. In Nehemiah 2, the 12th year of Artaxerxes, Xerxes the first, in the 3rd year Vashti is banished from the kingship.
   1. Esther becomes queen.
   2. When Nehemiah is desiring to go into Jerusalem and make his return, it is the 12th year.
   3. In verse 6 when Nehemiah speaks to Artaxerxes, it says, the Queen also sitting by him.
   4. If all is understood, this mentioning of the queen, this could be Esther.

B. The Feast of Ahasuerus, that is Xerxes.
   1. 127 Provinces from India to Ethiopia.
   2. Laws had previously been changed by "swift lawyers" but now they could not be changed under the law of the Medes and Persians.
   3. Lasts for some 180 days.
   4. The purpose was to display the king's glorious kingdom and wealth.

C. Banquet for Citizens 5-9

D. Verse 5
   1. Feast in the Hebrew, it was a drinking feast.
   2. The author describes in detail the magnificent setting.
   3. Gives the idea of being an eye-witness.
   4. The royal wine was plentiful, the drinking was done according to the law.
   5. Simultaneously queen Vashti was hosting the women in the palace.
   6. Herodetus

E. The Influence of Ahasuerus and Vasthi.
   1. If this is let go, other will become rebellious as well.
   2. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.
   3. If discipline is not administered others will do the same.
   4. If we let one violate God's law and it go unpunished, what then do we say to the others.

F. Better than she.
   1. Someone obedient to the king no mater his request.

G. Memucan one of the wise men.

II. **Chapter Two:**

A. Kish had been

B. Jeconiah =Jehoiachin No son of his would reign on the throne of David

C. Mordecai took Esther as his own daughter.
   1. Myrtle.
   2. Esther
   3. Star

D. Why does Mordecai not to reveal her people or family.
   1. Because they are a captive people.
   2. We are dealing with the Persians.
      a. They could be viewed of as captives.
      b. Or of lesser quality.
   3. This was to benefit and protect her.

E. Esther found favor in the eyes of Hegai.
   1. Mordecai paced in front of the house of the women daily.
   2. He cared for her as a loving father.
   3. Mordecai has a way of finding out what is going on.

4. December 479 BC

F. The Feast of Esther.

G. Verse 21
   1. Mordecai was able to find things out.
   2. Mordecai was sitting at the kings gate, 5 times in the book.
   3. Appointment as a Royal officer.
   4. Might have been effected through the influence of Esther.

H. Second Gathering of Virgins.
   1. Finalization?

III. Chapter Three: The Plot of Haman:

A. Some four years after Haman made prime minister.
   1. Agagite from the province called Agag.

B. Haman
   1. Haman does not get mad because of the breaking of the kings law.
   2. He gets mad because of his pride.
   3. We have to work within the law so much as is possible, but we cannot transgress the law of God to fulfill the law of the land.
   4. When man's law violates God's law, then we cannot hold to man's law.
   5. Like unto homage to the pope.
   6. JFB
   7. Avoid all appearances of evil, if it looks to be worshiping this man.

C. Haman's Law
   1. 8:1-9 Overturned.
   2. Countered.

D. 7-11 The Authority of the Plot.
   1. Deu, Laws and States that no other nation has.
   2. Hatred and attack and perversion of many of the laws.
   3. Lie and truth mingled in Haman's plot.

E. 12-15
   1. The implementation. The 13th day of the first month.
   2. Sealed with the kings seal, dispatched throughout the empire.
   3. All Jews regardless of age and sex were to be slaughter. Their possessions sieged and plundered.
   4. Many were thrown into confusion by the edict.

IV. Chapter Four:

A. When Mordecai learns of the plot he puts on sackcloth.
   1. He sets into motion to understand the decree.
   2. What is behind this decree, why?
   3. Esther can look into it because of her relationship with the king.

B. Reaction to the plot.
   1. They sent account due to refusal to bow.
   2. The amount of money paid.
   3. Text of the royal edict.
   4. Request for Esther to go before the king and plead for the lives of the Jewish people.

C. Counter-plot 9-17
   1. Recognition of God's providence.
   2. God's plan will not be overthrown if we fail.
   3. God will provide another way.
   4. We will be overthrown in our folly.

5. We need to do what we have opportunity to do, else we stand against God.
    a. We do not have to say I stand with Satan to stand with Satan, all we need is not say we stand on God's side.
    b. There is a time to remain silent.
    c. There is a time to speak.
6. If I perish, I perish.
    a. We need resolve to do God's will no matter what. Rev 2:10
    b. If we go out fighting for God then we have gone the right way.
    c. IF ye suffer for sin, But if ye suffer for the cause of Christ.

V. Chapter Five:

A. 1-3 The King's Promise:
1. The promise that was made by the king.
2. Very little limitation on this promise, up to half of the kingdom.
3. Shows his favor toward her.

B. 4-8 Esther's Plot:
1. Set forth by Esther.
2. Why is she doing this?
    a. Haman had sent out for the execution of the Jews in 1yr.
    b. That which may bring the greatest amount of pleasure, can turn out to be a curse.
        - Haman's plot.
        - The gallows.

C. 9-10 Haman's Pride:
1. In essence he is not being payed the homage he expects of Mordecai.
2. Pride goes before the fall, (Gallows).

D. 11-13 The Price:
1. He's got everything he wants and is an unhappy man.
2. The one thing he doesn't have is bothering him.

E. 14 The Pleasure of Being Pleased:
1. Following the suggestion of others.
2. Sounded like the right thing to do.
3. We see later, when people do the right thing, they will prosper.
4. Build a gallows 50 Cubits. 75' high.
5. Doing again that which brought him the most pleasure.

VI. Chapter Six: Pronouncement of the King.

A. 1-3 Providence and an Act from the Past.
1. You will not be immediately rewarded always.
2. Don't underestimate the power of a letter.
3. The power of the written word! Again displayed.
4. The providence of God, what if the king had slept in peace.
5. God doesn't forget, just because no one here does anything, God still knows.
6. If you can't sleep, read, get your Bible down.

B. 4-9 The Parade:
1. Haman was considered one of the kings most noble princes.
2. Haman would honor himself.
3. Pride before the fall again.
4. He wanted to be the man the king delighted to honor.
5. When you have a heart full of pride you have a lot of misconceptions.

C. 10 The Precision:
1. If one ought to give this much heed to a physical king, with what precision must we

keep God's commandment.

D. 11
   1. Haman did this.
   2. HE didn't want to.
   3. There may be things at times that God commands us to do that which we don't want to, but we need to do and we must do it out of love and respect for God and who He is.

E. 12-14 Haman will not prevail.
   1. You will not prevail.
   2. Shows the winds of change.
   3. His pride is dwindling down.
   4. 2nd highest position in the land, and another man was given honor above him.
   5. Had he already been late for the chamberlains to come for him.

VII. Chapter Seven:

A. 1-4
   1. She gives the petition.
   2. At first she had not revealed her nationality.
   3. Sometimes a point can be made more powerfully later.
   4. Not everything needs to be revealed at first.
   5. Now is the time to reveal what has been done, who Haman, she, and Mordecai are.

B. 5-8
   1. Now he is pleading for his life.
   2. He is making a mistake, but he is desperate to save himself.
   3. The feast of Purim.
   4. The king did not just fly off the handle, he thought about what he did before he did it.

C. 9-10
   1. While prepared with such pleasure at one time would be his downfall.
   2. If we take pleasure in evil we will fall in that evil.

VIII. Chapter Eight:

A. 1-2 Promotion:
   1. The protection of the Jews

B. 3-6 Persistence:
   1. She again pleads her case, which had been done before.
   2. Re-emphasizing the matters and the seriousness of them.
   3. All Esther is trying to do is keep it where her people will be treated fairly.

C. 7-8 The Payoff:
   1. Doing the right thing payed off.
   2. We have to respect the laws of the land as much as is possible, and work within it.

D. 9-14 Published Decree:
   1. What is the significance of the kings ring.
      a. Shows the king's authority.
      b. Cannot be disannulled.

E. 15-17 Position:
   1. All of Haman's plans turned around.

IX. Chapter Nine:

A. 1-4 The Power:
   1. The power and prominence of Mordecai increase.
   2. I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee.
   3. May not always seem like it at the time, or like it will ever happen, but it can be done.
   4. Things can change for the good or bad, very quickly.

B. 5-10 The Punishment:
C. 11-15 Posterity of Haman:
   1. If it pleases the king, if this fits your will.
      a. How do we pray to God.
      b. He has given her tremendous leeway, and given her much.
      c. Yet, she always seeks that things be done according with the king's will.
   2. If we pray to God we must ask according to His will.
      a. We don't simply make "bold" requests of God, but pray His favor and will be done.
      b. The king was happy to grant her request.
      c. It is human nature to respond more favorably to such a request.
      d. God does not want us to ask to use amiss, or in an evil manner.
D. 16-19 The Presents:
   1. A great period of time in the history of the people of God.
   2. Half way through the book of Ezra this takes place.
   3. The significance of not taking the prey.
      a. Their attitude toward what had been done.
      b. They were under threat of annihilation and were defending themselves.
E. 20-28 The Day's of Purim:
   1. Verse 22, Was turned from sorrow to joy.
   2. What day of the month should we use to celebrate sorrow turning to joy?
   3. 1st day of the week?
   4. Every day we have to be thankful for the remission of sins.
      a. The gloom, sin, separation from God, you can't get back on your own.
      b. Now, that Christ has come on the scene, He has bridged the gap, and can bring us back.
      c. Everyday, we should never forget, the sorrow had, now turned to joy, and all those missing out on it.
   5. The Pur represent the lots that had been cast.
      a. There was a plot now turned back on it's devisers.
F. 29-30 Peace
   1. Peace brought about for God's people.
   2. Peace of mind and peace of heart.
   3. Christ is the prince of peace.

X. Chapter Ten: Prominence:

A. He got a place of prominence and a good promotion.
B. Mordecai used his position to do good for the people.
C. Who will be exalted, the one's who humble themselves.
D. Mordecai humbled himself and was exalted and promoted.
E. Daniel Chapter Three:
   1. If you want to be greatest in the kingdom become a servant.
   2. Let God lift you up.
   3. Meekness is not weakness but the following of the teachings of the word of God will bring about the promotion which one needs.

XI.

Adam R.

Title: The Roll of Cyrus

Text: Ezra 6

Thesis: There is much importance in the temple of God.

Purpose: To encourage the upbuilding of God's Church.

I. The Setting:

A. The rebuilding of the temple of God, and of the city of Jerusalem had been delayed because of the opposition of ungodly men within the land.

B. Now the rebuilding had resumed by the hands of the prophets and of the people, yet again were the hands of the people moved against them.

C. Tatnai, Shetharboznai and the Apharchites set their hands against God's people to hinder the work.

D. However, the people of God did what they did according to the word of king Cyrus of Persia and by the will of God, and so search was made for the word which Cyrus had spoken.

E. The scroll which Cyrus had written his commandment in was found, and Darius would give his edict concerning the rebuilding of the temple.

II. A record thus written: 1-2

A. There is an importance in the written word. There is a reason why it is so important for us to have documentation.

B. 3. More generally, in present usage, written instruction, evidence or proof; any <u>official or authoritative paper containing instructions or proof</u>, for information and the establishment of facts. Thus, the president laid before congress the report of the secretary, accompanied with all the documents. (Noah Webster)

1. The scroll which Cyrus had written with his commandment on it was authoritative, it

was the will of the king.; it contained instructions, the direction for the building up of the house of God and of the city of God; it was proof of His decree.

2. The word of God is a document brethren, this is important. We don't just go playing with official documents, you don't just interpret them any old way you feel like.
3. The Word of God is as a document to be treated with the same if not FAR GREATER respect and responsibility of any other document, especially because it is not only authoritative, but because it comes form the highest authority, God Almighty!

III. The Roll of Cyrus king of Persia: 3-5

A. The place where they offered sacrifices:

1. In the Old Testament, under the law of Moses the people were to worship God and offer sacrifices to God in the place of the temple of God which was at Jerusalem.
2. Today the members of the Church are the temple of God. 1Co 3:16

B. Let the foundations be strongly laid:

1. 1Co 3:10-11
2. The foundation of our temple, of the Church, is Christ.
   a. For us to succeed as Christians, for converts to succeed as Christians we must lay in them the foundation of Christ, and that strongly, lest they being weak are over thrown and cast down.
   b. Strongly 2. Firmly; in a manner to resist attack; as a town strongly fortified.
   c. We have to build up ourselves, we have to build up one another, we have to build up our new converts in such a way that the foundation of Christ will be strongly laid in them.
      - When we do this we must build them firmly, we cannot lay a flimsy foundation.
        1. Christians cannot be a waivery people.
        2. As God's people we are to decline as Josiah neither to the right hand nor to

the left.

1. Pro 4:27
2. 2Ch 34:2

- When we lay the foundation we must build ourselves and one another up in such a way as to resist attack to fortify them against assault.
  1. We are attacked day by day with temptations.
  2. To do evil and to sin against the Lord.
  3. To turn from the keeping of the commandments of the Lord.

C. The height and breadth and building:

1. The building was to be built according to the plans which God had laid out for it, and so the temple of God today must be built according to the plans which God has laid out for us.
2. God has laid out for us as Christians a pattern in the new testament after which we are to be built up upon that foundation which is Christ.
3. Not only must the proper foundation be laid for the Christian, but the proper building must be built upon that foundation.

D. The provision for the building:

1. The rebuilding of the temple was to be provided for out of the king's treasure and out of the revenue this side of the river.
   - Ezra 4:13,16 these men who sought to stop the rebuilding said it was to the damage of the kings revenue and that he would no longer receive tribute from this side of the river, yet now, the very tribute which they had attempted to use to stop God's people, was helping them!
2. Brethren, the work doesn't do itself when it comes to building up the house of the Lord, nor does the building pay for itself. It requires material provisions and funding to do the

work, even today.

a. We do not have, as in the days of Cyrus, and Darius, kings of Persia, a government that will provide for the Church to do its work.

b. God requires today, that Christians give of their means, as He has prospered them, laying by in store on the first day of the week.

- It takes money to support gospel preachers in the work.
- It takes money to support evangelists who go out into the world.
- It takes money to do the benevolent works which the Church is responsible for.
- It takes money to see that the needs of some members are met.

Ada R.

Title: The Promises of God

Text: Ezra

Thesis: God keeps His promises.

Purpose: To give men a true hope in the promises of God.

I. The Prophecy of Cyrus King of Persia.

A. Jer 25:9-12; Jer 29:10

1. Jeremiah began was called at around 628BC
2. He prophesied, he gave the Word of the Lord concerning Israel.
   a. That they would both enter into captivity and the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, who do God's will concerning this matter.
   b. And, that after 70 years of Captivity were completed God would restore them, cause them to return to the place which He had given them.

B. Isa 44:28 – 45:1-6

1. Isaiah, by the Word of the Lord prophesied that the Lord was going to deliver into Cyrus's hand all nations of the earth, He would give decree that God's people would build again Jerusalem and that the foundation of the temple, even the temple of God which is at Jerusalem should be laid and built again.
2. God even went so far in this prophecy as to name the deliverer of Israel, and his name, which God spoke by the moth of Isaiah the prophet was Cyrus.
   a. God evoked Cyrus's name for the very purpose that both he and Israel would know that it was God's hand that delivered to Cyrus all the nations of the earth, and that it was by God's hand and His decree that Cyrus would restore Israel to Jerusalem and to the temple.
   b. This was that they might know that the Lord is God and there is none beside Him.

- No other God could make these prophecies.
- No other God could fulfill these prophecies.
- The Almighty alone was and is able.

3. Isaiah began his ministry in the area of around 740BC
   a. He may have prophesied for as many as 64 years.
   b. Meaning he may have lived to prophecy as late as 686 BC

C. Dan 1-2

1. Daniel and his companions were taken into captivity around 600BC
2. Around 530BC Cyrus orders the restoration of the house of the Lord.
3. 70 years were indeed fulfilled before Cyrus gave commandment to rebuild the temple.

D. Ezra 1:1-4

1. How many years from prophecy to fulfillment?
   - Cyrus had been prophesied to do all these things approximately 200 years before they came to pass!
2. God had made plans to punish His people to teach them not to commit spiritual adultery against Him, that they would not worship graven nor molten images, that they should turn from idols.
3. He also planned to bring them out again after a set time, God made His people a promise, He gave them His word.
4. God keeps His word, no matter how long.

E. Summation:

1. So we see what God has therefore done for Israel.
2. When they became rebellious, serving other gods, the Lord sent among them prophets.
   a. Isaiah and Jeremiah.
   b. Jeremiah warned them that they would be taken into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar

God's servant of chastisement..

c. Jeremiah told them that they would be 70 years in Babylon.

d. Isaiah told them how that God would raise up Cyrus, and deliver all nations into his hands, and he would be God's servant of restoration to the Jews.

e. He told them how that this was all that they might know that He the Lord was Lord of Lord's and God of gods, and that there is none other beside Him.

3. God's prophecies here, the record of them, and of their fulfillment show us several things.

a. God is not a deist, God indeed has ceased from the works of creation but, yet has worked with His people.

b. God chastens the disobedient that they might learn not to sin against Him.

c. God will restore His penitent servants from captivity.

d. God's promises, God's prophecies were and are both kept and fulfilled according to the Word which He has spoken.

e. God had a plan for His people, and that plan was executed, to the very letter, according to His word.

II. This is not the only example we have.

A. Gen 3:15

1. The first recorded prophecy of the Messiah, made close to 6000 years ago. No more than 130 years after creation. (Gen 5:3)

2. God had planned from before the foundation of the world to give Christ a sacrifice for the sins of man. Yet, man was of enough value, that God in infinite and perfect wisdom, created him, despite knowing what it would cost the Godhead to redeem him. (Rev 13:8)

B. 4,000 years, and many prophecies later...

1. Christ was born, according to prophecy.

2. Approximately 33 Years after Christ had lived according to prophecy, He died, according to prophecy.
3. And 3 days later, He rose up from the grave, victorious over sin and death, according to prophecy.
4. And some 40 days late, He ascended to heaven, to sit at the right hand of the Father, to reign over His kingdom until He come again, according to prophecy.
5. All this was planned, all this was written, and all this was done, according to the prophecies and promises of the Lord our God.

C. 2Pe 3:8-13

1. We see therefore the faithfulness of God in the keeping of His promises, from creation, on to this very day, that there has not been left unfulfilled any prophecy of scripture, save those which are left to us yet, the promises of God.
   a. The promises which God has abundantly displayed, that He is able to fulfill.
   b. Which God has abundantly displayed, time will not prevent Him from fulfilling.
   c. Which God has abundantly displayed that He will fulfill.
   d. We see that God's patience and longsuffering, in the fulfillment of His promises, is indeed salvation. (2Pe 3:15)
2. But what promises are left us?
   a. We have in the very verses which have just read...
      - The promise of the Lord's second coming.
      - The promise of the destruction of the earth.
      - The promise of a new heaven and new earth.
      - We have also a promise of rest (Heb 4:1)
   b. We have others as well.
      - We have promise of the persecution of God's people. 2Ti 3:12

- We have promise of help for God's people. Mat 28:20
- We have promise of Judgment. 2Co 5:10
- We have promise of punishment if we are disobedient. 2Th 1:5-9
- We have promise of Salvation. Mar 16:16

c. God has made His promises, God will keep His promises. But, we must meet certain conditions to receive those promises!

- Praise be to God that after man had sinned He set in action and began to make known His plan of salvation.
- Thanks be to God for our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who paid the price of atonement for our sins with His own sinless blood.
- Glory be to God for the salvation which He hath wrought for man, and the promises which He hath left the faithful who love Him.
- We cannot be counted faithful if we will not keep the commandments of God, we will not receive those most desired of promises if we are not faithful. Let us therefore consider ourselves, what manner of persons we ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness.
- Knowing that God's promises are sure and will be kept, for He the Lord hath spoken it, and it shall be done, though many years may come to pass, the promises of God are a reality, are truth, are inescapable, just as is the Lord our God who made them.
- Let us keep the commandments that we may receive those promises.

Adam R.

Title: After all that has come upon us.

Text: Ezra 9:10-15

Thesis: The grace of God and the unworthiness of man.

Purpose: To build faith in the grace of God, and encourage to obedience.

I. The Setting of Ezra 9:

A. Ezra had at the beginning of this chapter come to find out that the people of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, had taken to themselves wives, and allowed their sons and daughters to marry the people of the land.

B. God had specifically forbidden this because of the idolatry of the people. Deu 12:30-31

C. Israel was to be to God a holy people.

D. And so now, Ezra is greatly vexed because of the sin of Israel, and that after God had given them reprieve from their bondage, they because of the magnitude of this sin could not restore the service of God in the temple.

E. This now is the second half of Ezra's prayer to the Lord God.

II. We have forsaken thy commandments. 10 – 11

A. In order for this statement to be true, God MUST, have given them a commandment to forsake, and indeed such is the case.

1. Exo 34:11-17
2. Deu 7:1-7
3. God indeed gave Israel a commandment. Israel forsook that commandment.
   a. To leave entirely.
   b. To abandon.
4. We can see in this verse, and in verse 14, that:
   a. God has given man commandments which are to be adhered to.

b. It is possible, to both forsake, and to break the commandments of God.

B. One thing that we can see in these verses is the very importance of whom we marry as God's people.

1. Husband's and Wives have significant influence over one another, for better or for worse.

2. God puts focus on, and I don't doubt that it is for a reason, the men here to take heed to this commandment.

3. Men, we can see in the Bible, have been affected by their wives, and unfortunately, a good number of them to their hurt, because of ungodly wives.

- Even the divinely, wise Solomon was turned away from God, because of his many idol worshiping wives.

III. The Reason for the commandment. 12

A. We see part of the reason for the commandment in verse eleven, that being because of the wickedness and idolatry and abomination of the people of the land, the very uncleanness thereof.

1. God had given Israel laws concerning things which would make them clean and unclean.

2. These laws were to keep the people of God holy, separate from the heathen world around them.

B. But there is reason other than this, it is because it is to the benefit of those who keep the commandments.

1. That ye may be strong.

2. That ye may eat the good of the land.

3. That ye may leave the land for an inheritance to your children after you.

C. God's commandments from the very first to the very last are for the good of all those that

keep them.

1. The commandments of God are:
    a. The commandment is life — John 12:50
    b. The rain-like quality of God's word — Deu 32:1-2
    c. Man shall live by every word. — Deu 8:3
    d. The Truth of the word. — John 17:17
2. If God is:
    a. Good, are His commandments evil, and a source of evil?
    b. Righteous, are His commandments unrighteous, and a source of unrighteousness?
    c. Holy, will no his commandments make those who keep them unholy?
    d. Life, will not their keeping be unto life?
    e. Truth, are not His commandments truth, and is not the truth then absolute?
3. So we see can that the commandments of God are not good, but they are for the good of those who keep them.
    - There is not one commandment of God that is to the hurt of those who keep it.

IV. Thou hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve. 13

A. After all that has come upon us for our evil deeds.
    1. We can see that God will indeed punish evil deeds, they do not escape Him.
    2. God will recompense. Deu 32:35
    3. God will punish the wicked. Isa 13:11

B. God indeed chastens His people, but, it is to their own good if they will turn again from their evil unto Him.
    1. Job 5:17
    2. Pro 3:11
    3. Heb 12:5-11

C. But despite all that God had put upon them, destruction and captivity, God had had not punished them as their iniquities deserve. And, God indeed today, has not punished any of us as our iniquities deserve.

1. Rom 6:23

   a. The wages, the hire, the reward of sin, is death. It is what we deserve for laboring in the field of sin.

   b. However, the gift of God. That's something which we have neither earned, nor do we deserve, but that which is freely given to us by God out of love and grace toward us. That gift, is eternal life, which is in Jesus Christ.

2. Our iniquities deserve death, complete and total, physical and spiritual, with the first sin we place ourselves in the condemnation of hell, by the first transgression of God's commandment.

3. God however has made provision to redeem His people, by that gift of the sacrifice of Christ who payed the price of our sins, being Himself sinless. Thanks be to the eternal and longsuffering God, knowing that His longsuffering is salvation. (2Pe 3:15)

4. No matter how severely God chastens us in this life, we must remember, it is NEVER more than we deserve, but indeed, all that we suffer here, is far less. Let us therefore be thankful for the mercy and longsuffering of God.

V. Should we again break thy commandments? 14-15

A. When God chastens His people, and then, looses the bonds of chastisement from them, He has done so that they might be turned again unto Him.

1. How often, as we see here, have God's people been delivered from their chastisement, again brought into good, and they then turned their back on Him.

2. How often do we do this to the Lord our God today?

3. We must be wary, after all that God has done, after chastening us according to His good

will, and after doing so far less than we have deserved, do we then turn right back to affinity with the abominations which He has sought so diligently to deliver us?

a. God had labored to turn Israel from the abomination of idolatry by this captivity, they had steeped themselves in it and would not come out, therefore He gave them over into the captivity of a people of idolatry, that they might learn that He alone is the Lord and God and that there is none other beside Him. Yet for all that, they had now put themselves in affinity with the very abominations from which God would have turned them!

b. God labors with us likewise today, chastening us that we might turn ourselves completely unto Him and His service and learn not to serve the sins of this world, but Him and Him alone. Yet, when God has chastened us, and then loosed His hand from us, do we then turn ourselves again into the condemnation and abominations from which we were delivered?

4. If we follow this path, we will indeed be dealt with as Ezra spoke of in his prayer.

- If we will not repent, but instead turn again into the ways of ungodliness and abomination God will be angry with us until we are consumed, and we shall neither remain, nor escape, but be consumed.

B. O Lord God of Israel, thou art righteous.

1. Ezra recognizes the righteousness of God in his prayer.

a. He says that God is just and equitable.

b. But why?

- They had not been punished as their iniquities deserved.
- They had again trespassed in the abomination of affinity with idolatry.
- They could no longer stand before God and worship Him for their great iniquity.
- But, despite all of this, they were still escaped from the captivity.

c. Ezra was recognizing God's great grace and mercy toward Israel in this matter, and we should always be thankful to God for His great grace and mercy towards us!

C. We are before thee in our trespasses.

1. We must note, that our sins, our very trespasses are known before God, they are not hid from His sight.
2. Hid from man, but all revealed before God. 1Ti 5:24-25
3. Nothing escapes the sight of God. Heb 4:13
4. Not only does God know all of our trespasses when we sin against Him, but, our trespasses are what stand between us and God, and will as here prevent us from doing our due service before Him.

Adam Rymer

Title: Supporting the Work of God

Text: Neh 13:10-14

Thesis: We must support God's workmen.

Purpose: To encourage the support of those who's lives are dedicated to serving the Lord.

I. The Levites and the Singers were fled every one to his field. 10

A. The work of the Lord, the work which needed to be done in the temple was not getting done.

1. Sacrifices were not able to be made unto God.
2. Worship would not be properly observed.
3. There was no one to offer the morning and the evening sacrifices.
4. There was no one to offer up sacrifices for the atonement of sins.
5. There was no one to offer up to God the service which He required of them.
6. Those whom God had set apart for Himself, for His service, were busy about taking care of their own needs.

B. Why was all of this done?

1. God's servants, the Levites, had not received their portion, the offerings which they were to receive, the portion of their food, for they and their families, the moneys and goods which were to support them were not being given according to the law and the commandment of the Lord to Israel by the mouth of Moses the prophet.
2. It was important that the Levites were supported, they were to endeavor themselves full time to the service of the temple, so that the people could keep the law.
3. However:
   a. This people was of a slack hand.
   b. They did not keep the commandment of the Lord in providing for these.

c. They gave not to God that which was due to Him.

d. They were hindering the work of God.

C. Let us be thankful this never happens today!

1. Too often it seems that the Church of Christ is wanting for good works because of a failure on the part of the members of the body of the same to give as God has commanded us.

2. We are to:

a. Give as we have been prospered. 1Co 16:2

- Are we giving God the leftovers or the crumbs of our life?
- Has God given to us so sparingly that we give to Him in such a manner?

b. Give on the first day of the week.

- Every first day of the week we are to lay by in store.
  1. Giving is not once a year.
  2. Giving is not once a month.
  3. Giving is not once in a while.
  4. Giving is not when we feel like it.
- Giving is once a week.

c. Give as we have purposed. 2Co 9:7

- We are to give to God and to the Church in such a way as to have planned for it.
- Giving is not something that should sneak up on us.
- We should not be grabbing whatever loose change we have and giving that to God.
- Giving is an act of worship, not an afterthought!

d. Giving is necessary to keep the commandments of God.

- It is something that we must do if we are to be right in the sight of God.

- It is no more or less significant than the keeping of any of God's other commandments, and as we know it is important how we purpose to give to God.
- We must keep the commandments of God cheerfully, and as abundantly as we have opportunity to.

D. But what if we don't give:

1. We defraud God of what He is due, and what He has commanded of us.
2. We cheapen God, declaring by our giving He has indeed prospered His people in a most sorry manner, and spit in the face of His abundant blessings to us-ward.
3. We hinder the work of God, making it difficult, if not impossible, for the Church to do the benevolent works which God has designed for it to do.
4. We hinder God's workers requiring them to spend time which should be in the service of the Lord in meeting their physical needs.

II. The Simple Solution:

A. The people began to bring what was needed for the support of the priests and Levites.

B. Nehemiah set responsible people over the goods to distribute them.

C. We as God's people, can solve such problems in the same way, by adhering to the commandments of the Lord, by giving according to our prosperity and purpose, and at the time appointed.

D. We can handle the matter by setting over the money good and faithful men who will be able to distribute it to those who are in need of it and work to put it to good and wise use in the kingdom of God to the glory of the Lord and to the increase of His kingdom as it should be.

E. Then, when we give as God has given unto us and as God has commanded us can much work be done in the name of the Lord.

Adarkyma

Title: That I should be afraid...

Text: Neh 6:10-13

Thesis: Fear is a device of the devil.

Purpose: To encourage brethren not to let fear keep us from God's work.

I. The Trouble Makers:

A. Tobiah and Sanbalat these men had:

1. Spoken ill of Nehemiah and the builders from the get-go.
2. Ridiculed the Israelites.
3. Threatened to attack the city.
4. Slandered God's people.

B. There have been of men enemies of God for ages upon ages.

1. There have been those who would not themselves keep the law.
2. Then there are those that openly and actively labor, working to hinder His kingdom.

C. We must be ready brethren, Satan is always looking for ways to do hurt to God's kingdom.

1. Satan is looking for us, watching for opportunity to destroy our souls. 1Pe 5:8
2. However, by God's word, we are not ignorant of His devices. 2Co 2:11
3. He may be on the lookout for us, but, thanks be unto God that we can be on the lookout for him!
4. God has given us the knowledge the wherewithal and the commandment to be aware, and so beware we must.

D. We must always remember... 2Ti3:12

II. The Prophecy and Nehemiah's Response. 10-11

A. The "prophet" tells Nehemiah that they are on their way to slay him in the night.

1. These people who opposed the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem, as we have

already seen, are not only an underhanded, but also, a determined bunch of reprobates.

2. They have tried everything under the sun it seems to keep the wall from being completed.
3. It would not seem too unlikely that these men would do such a thing as to try and come in the night to take Nehemiah's life.

B. Should such a man as I flee?

1. Brethren, we need to consider our actions and the effect that they have not only on us, but on others.
2. These conspirators against God and His people were not offering any kind of helpful advice, but instead seeking their hurt.
   a. It was Nehemiah who set the men to work upon the wall.
   b. It was Nehemiah who gave the commandment for the defense of the wall when they were under the threat of attack by these ungodly men.
   c. It was Nehemiah who said unto them "Remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses." Neh 4:14
   d. After all of the courage which He had shown in the face of these ungodly men, and of all the exhortation of his brethren to trust in the Lord, to do the work, to defend themselves and their brethren, and the city of God, what would it have said of him when he was found hiding in the temple.
3. What does it say to the world, to the brethren and to God when we flee from before such men as these?
   a. Our convictions are not that strong.
   b. We don't really trust in God.
   c. We believe that men are more powerful than God.

d. The work of God is not worth it.

e. The work of God is not important enough.

f. Brethren, Christians are nut such that we should flee before such wicked and idle threats.

III. I perceived that God had not sent him: 12-13

A. Unfortunately, there will be times, when we are going to have to face troubles not only from without, but also from within. We will have to deal with members of even the Lord's Church who will fight against God's cause.

1. This has been for many years, and unfortunately, such ungodliness seems as if it shall not cease while the world yet stands.

2. But, we cannot let false brethren deter us from the work of the Lord, to discourage us from good works.

3. We must know the scriptures, we must know the word of God that we might do it and keep it, and that we might be able to discern for ourselves the false and the true.

a. It is our responsibility when one comes before us seeking to turn us from a work to discern whether the matter is of God or of Satan.

b. If they of a truth are speaking where God would have them speak, and according to His will, then we should indeed leave off if scriptural reason be found.

c. But, if the matter is not of the Lord, and they speak of their own, indeed of Satan, that the work of the Lord might be hindered, we must know it, and we must not bow ourselves down to it, nor give any heed to it, nor fear that false prophet, knowing that the Lord shall recompense such in the day of judgment lest they should repent of their evil works, and turn unto God.

B. Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so , and sin.

1. Fear is a normal reaction to such threats, no man desires to loose his life to violence, nor

to violent men, let alone such as hate God.

2. However, such. fear cannot be the governing factor in the child of God's life.
   a. We are to indeed fear, but, whom are we to fear, is it not God, and God alone that we should fear, of a truth it is.
   b. Ecc 12:13
   c. We have indeed been commanded not to fear men, knowing that though they might destroy this fleshly vessel, yet can they not destroy our souls, but our souls are commended to God's keeping if we obey Him, and we know that He is faithful and has the power to keep our souls from all harm.
   d. Mat 10:28
3. It is sin if we fear man more than God, God must come first, God's service must come first. We must give no opportunity for men to reproach God in us. For, if indeed Saul of Tarsus was condemned of the Lord, saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest though Me?" Then indeed if persecution of God's people is an affront to God, then, would not it be said, that bringing reproach upon God's people is to bring reproach upon God, and that is abomination! Why then should God's own people be a reproach and an abomination to Him?

Adam K.

Title: The Lord God of Israel

Text: Neh 9:4-15

Thesis: God has done great good for His people.

Purpose: That we might all remember the good which God has shown to man.

I. The God of Creation: 4-6

A. As verse five ends, we see the beginning of the speech.

1. Israel is commanded to bless the name of the Lord God forever and ever.
2. We as God's people have the privilege of worshiping the most high Lord God.
3. We indeed, if we are faithful have the great opportunity to bless the Lord our God, that is to praise and worship His holiness forever and ever, in eternity.
4. God is exalted above all blessing and praise, God's greatness, majesty, holiness, righteousness, perfection, sovereignty, all are perfect, all are infinite, all are beyond and above the words and praises of men.

B. Thou art Lord alone:

1. The Lord our God is one God, and there is none other beside Him.
2. Many subscribe to false deities, gods of their own design, of the making of men's hands, which are no Gods.
3. The Lord our God is God alone, He alone is life. He alone has the power of creation. He alone Has created all things. And He alone continues to uphold all things by the Word of His power.
4. Indeed the deity of God is seen in creation, as well as the singularity of God, in that there is no other god beside him, no little 'g' has the power to live itself, let alone to give life, and that to all the creation.

II. The God of Abraham:7-8

A. God chose Abraham, to give him the promises, to make of him a great nation through which God would bring about the Messiah.

B. God changed Abram's name to Abraham, the father of a multitude.

1. Not only did God change his name, but God promised him that he would indeed be the father of a multitude, and God kept that promise.

2. Abraham would become the father of the nation of Israel, to whom every Israelite would trace their lineage, and to him was the covenant of circumcision first given.

C. Abraham evokes to us:

1. God's faithfulness in the keeping of promises.

2. God's ability to keep His promises through the passage of much time.

3. That God is a covenant God, wherein God made His covenant with Abraham.

III. The God of Deliverance: 9-11

A. God is a God who knows the sufferings of His people. Things do not just slip up on God, He is aware when His people are suffering.

- Exo 3:7

B. God is a God who is willing to show abundantly His care for His people and is willing to do what it takes to deliver them from bondage, no work is too great for Him to deliver them it seems.

1. God was willing to work miracle after miracle that He might glorify Himself upon Pharaoh, displaying to His people, and to His enemies alike, that He is the Lord God and that there is none other beside Him.

2. We see that God is a determined God, God is not a God who gives up, but who will persist on until His goals are accomplished.

3. God displayed in those plagues not only His persistence, but, His dominion over all those "gods" of the Egyptians, with each of the plagues which He wrought.

C. God demonstrated His commanding power over the mightiest army in the world, and perhaps one of the most untamed of elements, the waters themselves.

1. God parted the waters of the Red Sea, caused Israel to cross it on dry ground.
2. God crushed with the very same waters the army of Pharaoh, and Pharaoh himself.

IV. The God of the Way: 12

A. God is also the God of the way. God did not simply leave His people on their own after that He had delivered them, but that He might fulfill His promise to Abraham completely, He then began to bring them on their way to the land of Canaan which He had promised them.

B. God has ever been willing to lead His people to the promised land, to show in Himself the way in which we must go.

1. The Lord indeed led Israel day and night through the wilderness, in the pillar of cloud and of fire.
2. But today, He has shown us the way as well, as our Lord Jesus Christ who has gone on before us, who has not only shown us the way, but He Himself being the way, testifying to us, I am the way, the truth, and the life, and that, no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.
3. God has ever so abundantly shown unto us the way.

V. The God of the Law: 13-14

A. God is a God who has given man laws, that he might know what is right in the sight of the Lord and do it.

B. Since sin had entered into the world, God did not give up and leave man to his own devices, but has rather, more abundantly shown unto him His ways, teaching laws and commandments that man might obey his God and become more like his Maker.

C. The laws and Judgments of God are true, and not false, as the many ways of the world are.

D. God's statutes and commandments, they are good, every commandment of God is good, for

the commandment is life we know.

E. God taught man precepts, that is moral laws. Were it not for God, man would not know, let alone have a morality, but God being willing to show His abundant grace toward us gave us morality with the law.

VI. The God of Provision: 15

A. God is a God who provides. Indeed as a father for his children, so the Father for His children, and not them only but for all men, for He indeed sends rain upon the just and the unjust.

B. Not only does man owe to God his very existence, his promises which he has received, his deliverance, and his laws, but he owes God for the very breath which he draws, for the food which he may eat, the water that he may drink it, all is owed to God, for God is all in all.

C. Without God, man is nothing.

1. Without God man is not, for He created man.
2. Without God man hopes not, for without the promises of God what does man have to hope for.
3. Without God man is in bondage, for God is his deliverer.
4. Without God man knows no law, but God has instructed his very conscience, shown unto us His very mind.
5. Without God man does not continue, for we are sustained not only spiritually by God, but He makes man's physical provision as He did for Israel in the wilderness.

Adam K.

Title: The Folly of Pride, Part One:

Text: Esther

Thesis: If pride is the focus of our life, pride shall be the cause of our trouble.

Purpose: To encourage the service of God and not self.

I. The Trouble Begins: Esther 3:1-6

A. Haman was promoted above all the princes that were with him, a most worthy promotion.

B. All the servants in the kings gate bowed down to Haman according to the kings commandment.

1. All Except for Mordecai the Jew.
2. The Explanation for Mordecai's actions, He was a a Jew.
3. It seems that this action of bowing down which the king commanded was some manner of worship, which being such, Mordecai could not do.
4. We know that Mordecai was a man lawful, and not rebellious against his captors. (Est 2:21-23)

C. One man vexed Haman, one man troubled him more than anything else.

1. Haman had been promoted above all the other princes!
2. All the men in the king's gate bowed down to Haman!
3. All except this Mordecai, the Jew...
4. Haman was a man so proud that He was not happy if everything was not going his way.
5. This one man vexed him so greatly, that he would not be satisfied by Mordecai's death alone, but, would seek that of the entire Jewish nation.

II. The Plot Against the Jews: Esther 3:7-15

A. Haman's portrayal of the enemy:

1. Haman depicts God's people as a people who are diverse from all people, which is not

untrue, God's people, were not different by accident, but, God had given them commandments to keep them holy and diverse from all people.

2. He goes on then however to depict the Jew's as those who do not keep the king's laws.
   a. The Jew's were scattered abroad throughout Ahasuerus's kingdom and there is no indication given throughout the book of Esther that there was any tendency of them at this time of rebellion.
   b. Mordecai would not bow down to Haman, obeying man over God, and so now Haman painted the Jews as a group of rebels who would not listen to the king.

B. Haman offered to PAY to have the Jew's killed, because of his deep hatred of them, all because one man would not bow down to him.

C. Haman's plan worked... This far.
   1. Haman got the king's approval to destroy the Jews on the time appointed by the casting of lots, that being th e13th day of th e12th month.
   2. The absolute insanity of Haman's slanderous assault and absurd actions against the Jew's is evidenced by the bafflement of the people in the city of the king's very palace.
   3. Haman was being driven by pride, not by reason, nor by concern for the king, all this because one man would not bow down before him.

III. The Trouble of God's People:

A. We can see what pride has done to a good man, even to an entire nation.

B. Mordecai was so troubled by this wicked decree that he wept and and rent his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes.

C. Not only Mordecai, but all the Jews who heard of this awful commandment which the king had made at Haman's behest.

IV. The Problems of Pride:

A. Pride Causes one to think irrationally and to overreact to small matters that really are not a

problem.

B. Pride Causes us to trouble ourselves over the tiniest thing, even when everything else is truly going well for us.

C. Pride Causes pain to those around us when we let it run our lives.

D. Pride will only ever cause damage and hurt to God's people, with whom it has no place.

Adam R

Title: The Folly of Pride, Part Two:

Text: Esther

Thesis: If pride is the focus of our life, pride shall be the cause of our trouble.

Purpose: To encourage the service of God and not self.

I. A godly plan in the face of proud enemies. Esther 4:4-17

A. Mordecai makes it known to Esther what Haman has planned and asks Esther to take the matter before the king.

1. Initially Esther declines, knowing that she could be put to death, if she comes before the king without being summoned to his throne.
2. Mordecai however argues that:
   a. She will not escape the destruction being in the king's house but will perish with the rest.
   b. If she does not, God would provide another way of deliverance for His people, and she would not be spared, nor her father's house.
   c. This may be the reason that God has put her in this position to help to deliver up God's people from Haman's folly.
3. When God puts us in a position to help His people, to help His cause, we have to take advantage of that position.
   a. If we do not:
      - God's arm is not shortened that He cannot save by some other means.
      - God will not deliver us for our slackness and unfaithfulness toward He and His people.
   b. We must use that which God has given us to His service.

B. Esther accepts Mordecai's plan.

1. She asks that the Jew's at Shushan fast 3 days.
2. She and her maidens will do likewise.
3. She will do what she can for God's people, hazarding her own life, and will accept the consequences whatever they are.

C. We need to be so bold as to hazard our lives for the greater good.

1. Haman's plot is based upon pride and self.
2. The plan of God's people to defeat his ungodliness, is one of service, humility and self sacrifice, we shall see, which shall triumph in the end.

II. Another Bad Day for Haman. Esther 5:9-14

A. Haman is having a wonderful day, HE got invited to dine with the king at the queens request, and HE had a personal invitation for another such meal.

B. Haman's day however is about to turn sour.

1. As he is going forth, he passes through the king's gate, and, there he sat, the bane of Haman's existence, the thorn in his side, the mote in his eye, the offense which is above all others.
2. It was Mordecai the Jew, who would just not bow down to Haman!
   a. He had talked to Mordecai about it.
   b. He had talked to Mordecai's co-workers about it.
   c. He had talked to the king about it.
   d. He was going to annihilate Mordecai and his people because of it, but the infernal Jew would not budge a finger in worshiping Haman. What is it with this guy!

C. Haman goes home to friends and family.

1. Haman has it all going for him.
   a. Haman has glorious riches, he's got it made in the shade.
   b. Haman has a multitude of children, he has offspring to spare, his seed is prosperous.

c. Haman has been promoted by the king, He's running a close second to ruler of the known world, He's got himself a pretty good job.

d. He has personal invitations to the most private banquet with the 2 highest people in the kingdom besides himself.

e. So what's wrong?

- Mordecai the Jew is sitting in that gate.
- He's still drawing breath.
- He still won't worship Haman.

f. What a way to ruin a day.

- If our focus in life is pride, we will never enjoy it.
- One small problem, the most microscopic molehill will turn into a mountain before us that would make everest feel insufficient standing next to it.
- Pride has elevated this man so much in his own eyes that poor old Mordecai has ruined him for days on end now!

2. Don't take bad advice.

a. Haman's Got his friends and family plan to help him problem solve this one, and boy o-boy, these guys are on the ball and thinking outside the box.

b. This is an easy one Haman, I can't believe you haven't thought of it.

c. Here's the plan.

- Step one, Build the largest set of gallows this side of God's green earth.
- Step two, ask the king if you can hang his faithful servant Mordecai.
- Step three, have a nice dinner tonight.

d. Haman wasn't the sharpest tool in the shed, and, it seems that it might not have helped him keeping company with this box of rocks.

- Where in the world did these people get the idea that the king would simply turn

over a faithful servant like Mordecai to be hung on a whim, by Haman.

e. We need to be careful where we get our advice and what advice we take.

- We cannot simply listen to every word that tickles our ears.
- Haman wanted nothing more than to see Mordecai dead, and so he was more than eager to take this advice but, it seems poorly thought out at best.
- As said, why in the world would the king simply turn Mordecai over for hanging?
- But this prideful bunch allowed their arrogance to cloud their judgment, and that we shall see, will sadly be to the downfall of their wicked house.

D. So within all this we can see:

1. As God's people, when the wicked turn their hands against us, it is not for us to respond in kind to them, deception for deception, nor evil for evil.
2. We are responsible to do what we can, put that gives us no license to respond in a lawless or ungodly manner.
3. Pride will ruin a person's best day. Though Haman had the whole world in his hands it seems, the only thing that really concerned him was that one thing that he could not have, and it consumed him.
4. We need to be careful about taking advice, we need to be sure that it is good and sound advice, and we can't just do everything that would please us to do, it can turn to our destruction.

Adar K.

Title: The Folly of Pride, Part Three:

Text: Esther

Thesis: If pride is the focus of our life, pride shall be the cause of our trouble.

Purpose: To encourage the service of God and not self.

I. Haman Gets One-Up on Himself. Esther 6

A. The Sleepless King 1-3

1. King Ahasuerus could not sleep, and ask for the book of the Record of the Chronicles to be read to him.
2. Fortunately for Mordecai, the incident, wherein he reported to the king concerning those would make a plot on his life, was recorded therein.
3. The king remembering Mordecai's good deed asked then what had been done for him, then, seeing that nothing had been done, sought to do well for Mordecai his servant.
4. There are some good lessons we see here in the king's behavior.
   a. We ought to as much as is possible for us, reward good for good.
   b. When it comes to our attention that perhaps someones good deeds have been overlooked, we ought to do what we can to make recompense for that.
   c. We should always do what we can to show gratitude for those who have done well for us.
   d. God's people are a people who ought to have an attitude of thankfulness, as the king here was seeking to show.
   e. We also see that we will not always receive our rewards immediately, it was some time ago that Mordecai had done this deed, yet, it seems by God's providence his reward would come later.
      - Mordecai was not embittered by this.

- Mordecai did not go seeking a reward.
- Mordecai's reward now, would not only be the honor which he deserved, but, also it would seem, that it may also have worked to the sparing of his life.

B. Mordecai's most wonderful plan. 4-6

1. Haman is all fired up and ready to get the king's permission for a lynchin'.
2. However, the kings question to him, takes him so off guard, he doesn't even ask the king this most important of questions.
3. Haman is set up with the perfect opportunity to show the world just how great he is!

C. Haman has had better days. 7-14

1. This was going to be the worst, and sadly last day, of proud Haman's life.
   a. Again it seems Haman is off to a good start, until he runs into Mordecai the Jew.
   b. Haman has all the good thing's going for him which he mentioned at the end of the last chapter.
   c. He also now has a superb plan to rid himself of that pesky Jew, and a gallows thats so big you could hardly shake a stick at it.
   d. Not only this but he has the PERFECT opportunity to just set himself up for the day of his life, He's going to get a ride through town on the kings own horse, wearing the crown, and in the king's royal apparel, and not only that but let the highest men in the kingdom array him!
2. Haman is payed perhaps the greatest left handed compliment any such man could receive.
   a. The king indeed honors Haman this day, according to Haman's word, the King orders him, the Most Noble prince, to go and do as he has said unto Mordecai the Jew.
   b. For what it is worth, the king considers him one of the, if not the most noble people

in the land.

c. However, the king's plan was to honor Mordecai this day, not Haman.

d. Haman, arrays Mordecai in the kings apparel, and leads him through town according to all that he said.

e. God brought proud Haman's plan to naught, this was a ruin of his day.

- IF we are constantly seeking to elevate ourselves, we will be disappointed at every turn where others do not think of us according to our lofty ideas.
- It will prevent us from appreciating some of the wonderful compliments which people truly pay us.
  1. Haman was very highly esteemed in the sight of the king.
  2. However, he was not able to appreciate this because he was so busy thinking so much more highly of himself. What a sad way to live.
- It will prevent us from rejoicing with others when they do well. Haman should have been able to rejoice that the king saw fit to honor such a good man and servant as Mordecai, this should have been a day of gladness, but yet, it was turned to mourning for his pride and evil heart.
- Let someone else do the honoring. Haman who sought to honor himself, was brought low in his pride. Mordecai, who sought not his own, nor to bring himself to honor, was honored above all.

3. Mordecai is now so disheartened that he returns home morning and covered for his shame at the day's events.

a. His family has no more good advice, but, now that these fair-weather friends, see that the Jew's do well in the kings site offer no kind words to him.

b. Now, after all of this, he has to come before the king and queen for the banquet which he had just the other day bragged over.

II. Haman's last supper. 7

A. Things falling apart.

1. Haman's not been having a good day, after doing such honor to such a hated man as Mordecai, when it ought to have been him who was honored.
2. Now, the Queen reveals that she is of the Jews and doomed with them by the kings command, having sold them over to death.
3. The king, incensed by the audacity of such a person who would do so wickedly, makes inquiry concerning the perpetrator of such a crime.
   a. The queen Esther now turns the king's attention to their companion at the banquet, Haman, the wicked and the prideful man. This is the one responsible.
   b. Haman it was not going to get away with working such evil against God's people.
   c. The king is furious over the matter, and knowing the law of the Medes and Persians, that it cannot be changed, goes to cool himself before making a rash decision.
4. However, when he returns, what he perceives is Haman trying to force the queen upon her bed, whereas, he may well have been, in desperation, pleading to her, perhaps somewhat hysterically, for his life.
   a. This is the end of the matter and as the King speaks the word his ready servants cover Haman's face and drag the doomed man away to be hung on his own gallows.

B. The Way of Pride:

1. Pride we have seen is a path that leads only to destruction and contention.
2. It caused strife between two men between whom there would have otherwise been no contention.
3. It caused a man to disregard the high honor which was truly paid him.
4. It caused a man to weep, rather than rejoice in the day of rejoicing.
5. It cause a man to seek the blood of innocent people, propagating all ungodliness.

6. It caused a man to give heed to foolish advice, simply because it pleased him.
7. It caused a man who was blessed in all to consume himself over one small thing.
8. It caused the man of pride to be humiliated to the utmost.
9. It caused a man to loose his life in the traps and devices which he had prepared to take the lives of others.
10. Pride is a dangerous thing, let us be wary as it is a device of the devil.