

**THE  
RESTORATION  
ERA**

*A Study of Ezra and Nehemiah*

Version 1.0

Dr. Brian J. Bailey

*“The Restoration Era”*

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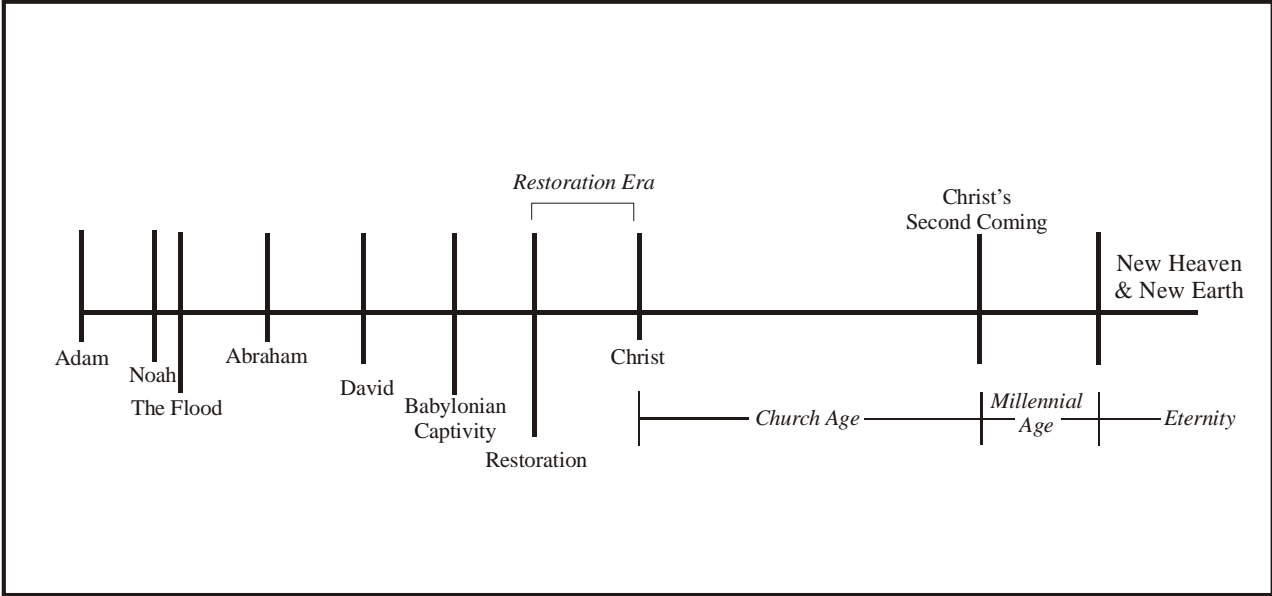
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# Overview of the Restoration Period



## ***PREFACE***

The theme of restoration is the universal message of the Holy Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation. The purpose—to restore man unto God after the fall of Adam—was accomplished through the death of Jesus, the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. God fervently desires that those of His people who have fallen from their redeemed positions after salvation (or have erred from the truths that they have received) may again be placed back upon the path of righteousness and holiness.

Nonetheless, as ever, the Lord needs those who will cry out for the restoration of His people. The hand of God is always moved through the prayers and intercessions of His people, although we must bear in mind that the Lord has His divinely appointed times for restoration. This is true in the destinies of nations as well as individuals.

Daniel understood by the writings of Jeremiah (Jer. 25:11-12) that 70 years of captivity were determined upon Jerusalem before it would be restored (Dan. 9:2). This truth was quickened to Daniel in the first year of Darius, the king of the Medes who took Babylon. The timing would have been just three years before the 70 years had been fulfilled. Thus, Daniel started to pray at this appointed time. Ecclesiastes 3:3 states that there is a time to break down and a time to build up. There is a time for everything!

Restoration is definitely on the heart of God. It flows through the whole of the Word of God, from generation to generation.

In actuality it is the meaning of religion, which is basically the binding together again of that which was once joined. We have to realize that it is the supreme goal of God to bring about restoration. It originated in the heart of God, who knows the end from the beginning. He knew when He created man that man would fall, and restoration would be necessary through His Son.

For that very reason, before the foundation of the world, He revealed this to His beloved Son. We find in Romans 8:29-30, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." God, in His foreknowledge, knows exactly who will respond to Him and what is going to happen in our lives.

There are four main areas of restoration: the restoration of man, the restoration of the nation of Israel, the restoration of the Church, and the restoration of this creation, meaning this earth in the natural realm (Rom. 8:22).

When we look very carefully into the Word of God, we find that Adam was called "the son of God" (Lk. 3:38). Adam was formed in the image of God and in His likeness. This means that Adam was made like God. Therefore, if we are looking at man we are, in a certain sense, looking at God. God wanted fellowship with Adam, but in order for Him to have fellowship with man, there had to be a test. Adam was created in a state of innocence. The difference between innocence and holiness is that innocence has



not been tried. We often speak of the innocence of a child, which is very wonderful indeed. A child is innocent simply because he has not been given opportunities to do evil. However, God does not want innocence; He wants holiness. Holiness is only possible through trials and testings, whereby one chooses the good and refuses the evil. Adam was tested in the very area that reveals the heart of God—love. He was tested to see whether he would love God first, above everything else. Adam failed this test for when Eve took the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil and became sin in disobedience to God, Adam chose Eve over God.

As we read through the beginning chapters of Genesis, we usually do not consider God in this matter. We consider Adam making the wrong choice, Eve's disobedience, and the serpent's cunning trickery, but we forget that God's heart was completely broken because Adam chose Eve over Himself. God must come first in our lives, over everything, including other people. In actuality, Adam rejected God, yet God did not reject Adam. This same experience will happen many times in our lives. We will be rejected by loved ones, but we must not reject them.

There are three parables given in the Word of God that specifically deal with restoration: The Parable of the Lost Sheep, The Lost Coin, and The Lost Son. Each of these parables describes a category of believers who need restoration.

The first is found in Luke 15:4-7: "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders,

rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.”

Let us consider sheep for a moment. We are likened to sheep in the Word of God. Isaiah 53:6 says, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” In this parable, we have the thought of being lost through ignorance. A sheep often turns aside through ignorance, not realizing that it should follow the shepherd. In like manner, a believer also can be lost through ignorance.

The next parable is found in Luke 15:8-10: *“Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.”*

A coin cannot wander off and get lost by itself but a sheep can. A coin is lost through neglect. In this case, it must be searched out diligently. We, as pastors and leaders, are responsible to look after and care for some believers because they can be lost through neglect. Thus, some can be lost through ignorance on their part and some can be lost through neglect on our part. Then there is the third category.

Luke 15:11-32 relates the story of the Prodigal Son: *“And he said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living”* (Lk. 15:11-13).

The younger son asked for the portion of his inheritance that he might have it and go on his own. Here is a case of self-will. The younger son decided to go. It was neither neglect nor ignorance but self-will. He determined to leave his father’s house. There are so many young people and older people, too, who determine to leave the paths of God. They make up their mind that they are going to leave, and nothing can be said to stop them. As with the first two parables, it is only through God’s mercy that this backslider is restored.

*“And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants”* (Lk. 15:14-19).

What is interesting is the fact that the father did not go and look for him. He waited until the son had come to himself. Those who leave through self-will often have to go on a very dangerous path. It is said that the path of the backslider is very hard. They often go down into the pits of the deepest, grossest sin, and are afflicted by ill health, sorrow, and hardship. Only when they are right down at the bottom do they come to their senses. Regretfully, not everyone comes to his senses, but I do believe there is far more hope for the backslider than we think.

As we study revival in the Word of God, we see that one of the features of revival is the restoration of the backslider. Therefore, when we look at these three parables, we see that one person backslid through ignorance, and was found by the shepherd; another was lost through neglect and had to be sought; but the third, which was lost through self-will, was not restored until he came to his senses.

*“And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these*

*things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found” (Lk. 15:20-32).*

The father did not think twice about the welcome he would give his son upon his return. He prepared a wonderful feast and welcomed the prodigal home with open arms. However, the elder brother was furious, as he had been faithful while his younger brother had squandered his entire livelihood. Then when his younger brother came home, he was expected to welcome him back as well. The elder brother did not have a father’s heart. The father knew so very well that if the prodigal had not come back, he was dead, lost in trespasses and sins, and he would go to hell. The father had undoubtedly been praying and crying out to God for restoration. The father had no illusions whatsoever about this younger son being dead to God. In a very real sense, we must realize that unless the backslider is restored, he is already lost.

In the past, I have been amazed at what some people have done, and I would have thought there was no hope for them

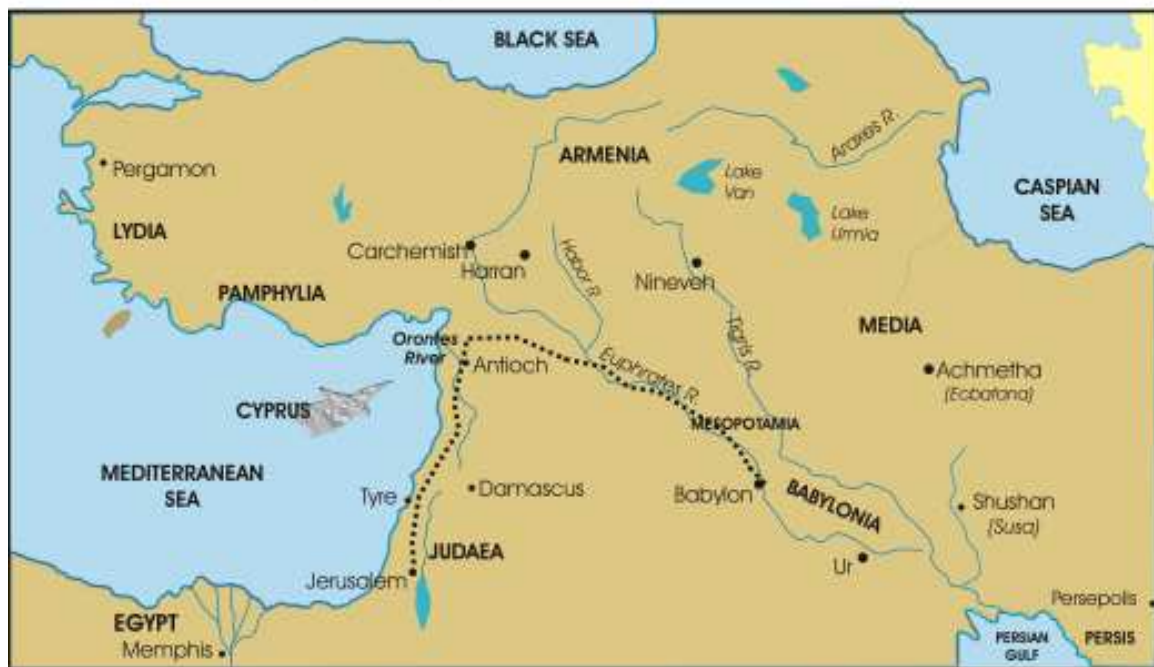
whatsoever—yet the amazing thing is that they have come back to the church, restored. Therefore, it depends upon our prayers. The Lord desires restoration. God wants us to realize that He is married to the backslider (Jer. 3:14) and longs to restore the backslider to Himself.

It is so important to realize that when God lays someone upon our hearts, we must be faithful in praying for them. If they have been lost through ignorance or neglect, we can do our part in leading them back to the Lord, but if they have willingly gone off the path, the only thing that we can do is pray for them.

Many years ago, I attended a church that was full of well-redeemed drunkards. They used to love to jump up and give testimonies about how God had redeemed them. Oh what joy God has when those that chose to go astray come back! There is such joy in heaven. But there was another person in that same church who stood up to give his testimony after these others saying, “My testimony is greater than all of yours, because He preserved me from drinking.” The greatest miracle is to be preserved. Thus, we should cry out for mercy to be kept. Yet if one has fallen, we can place our hope in the God of restoration. God wants to restore!

# **THE BOOK OF EZRA**

*The Return from Babylonian Exile under Zerubbabel*



..... Return Journey under Zerubbabel



# ***THE BOOK OF EZRA***

## **Introduction**

Due to the disobedience of King Solomon, the son of David, the united kingdom of Israel was divided after his death. Israel was divided into two parts: the Northern kingdom (comprising ten of the twelve tribes) and the Southern kingdom of Judah.

The Northern ten tribes, under their king, Jeroboam son of Nebat, soon fell into idolatry. After 20 successive kings had ruled – nearly all of whom were evil – the kingdom fell to the Assyrians under Sargon in 722 B.C. Under the kings that succeeded Sargon (Sennacherib, Ezarhaddon and Ashurbanipal), Israel experienced successive deportations into the lands of the heathen.

The Southern kingdom was faithful during much of its early existence, but eventually it too became evil, particularly under King Manasseh. Therefore, God pronounced 70 years of Babylonian captivity upon them. This captivity began in 606 B.C. and ended in 536 B.C. with the decree of Cyrus the Great, King of Persia, to rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem. Those who initiated this task were Zerubbabel the governor (a descendant of David in the lineage of Christ) and Joshua the high priest.

The Restoration Period began 500 years before Christ and served to prepare Israel for His coming. This period in Israel's history is analogous to the Reformation Period, which began 500 years ago to prepare the Church for the Second Coming of our Lord. It

is doubtful if one can overemphasise the importance of this era in the history of mankind. It saw the rebuilding of the physical temple, the restoration of temple worship, the resurrection of the truths of God, and the teaching of the Law under Ezra. Through Ezra, the teaching priest, the Scriptures were assembled, and many psalms, as well as the historical books of Chronicles and Esther were written. So great was this man that the Jews allude to him as the “Second Moses,” because of his devotion to the law.

Satan obviously recognised the danger of this era to his own kingdom of darkness, and therefore, he raised up three main protagonists during this time:

1. Gautama Buddha (560-480 B.C.) was in India birthing the diabolical teaching of Buddhism.
2. Confucius (551-479 B.C.) in China gave birth to Confucianism, the teachings of a man who knew not God.
3. Socrates (470-399 B.C.) was in Greece propagating philosophy, of which Paul warned the Colossians to let no man spoil the believers by these vain deceits (Col. 2:8). Plato (428-347 B.C.) continued the teachings of Socrates. His greatest pupil was Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) who, in turn, was the tutor of Alexander the Great.

The Restoration Period is covered in Scripture by six books: the Historical Books of Esther, Ezra, and Nehemiah, and the prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. In this volume we will be concerned only with the books of Ezra and Nehemiah as the book of Esther has been published earlier in a separate volume entitled *Esther*, and the prophets are included together in the book

entitled *The Minor Prophets Book Three*. This volume contains the books of Ezra and Nehemiah and covers the period between 536—425 B.C.

The chronological relationship of these books, together with Esther and the prophets is as follows:

## The Historical Background

### Chronological Data

<u>Books</u>	<u>Characters</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Events</u>
<b>Ezra 1-6</b>	<b>Zerubbabel</b>	<b>536 – 516/5 B.C.</b>	<b>The First Return</b>
<b>Haggai</b>		<b>520 B.C.</b>	
<b>Zechariah</b>		<b>520 B.C.</b>	
<b>Esther</b>	<b>Esther &amp; Mordecai</b>	<b>483 – 473 B.C.</b>	
<b>Ezra 7-10</b>	<b>Ezra</b>	<b>457 B.C.</b>	<b>The Second Return</b>
<b>Nehemiah 1-13</b>	<b>Nehemiah &amp; Ezra</b>	<b>444 – 425 B.C.</b>	<b>The Third Return</b>
<b>Malachi 1-4</b>	<b>Malachi</b>	<b>432 – 425 B.C.</b>	<b>The Last Prophet</b>

In the times when Israel dwelt in her land, the following nations ruled over or afflicted her:

**Egypt** – During the days of Rehoboam, Shishak, king of Egypt, came up against Jerusalem and took away all the treasures of the house of the Lord (1 Ki. 14:25-26).

**Assyria** – There were progressive Assyrian invasions as follows:

1. Pul, king of Assyria, came against Israel during the reign of Menahem, king of Israel.

2. Tiglath Pileser, king of Assyria, took the region of Galilee and all the land of Naphtali, during the reign of Pekah, king of Israel.
3. Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, besieged Samaria, the capital of Israel in 725 B.C.
4. Sargon, king of Assyria, took Samaria in 722 B.C.
5. Sennacherib, king of Assyria, invaded Judah and took (according to what was written upon his prism) 46 strongholds in Judah before besieging Jerusalem, where his army of 185,000 men was slain by the sword of the angel of the Lord (Isa. 37:35-36).
6. Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, ordered the deportation of the twelve tribes of Israel.
7. Asurbanipal, king of Assyria, ordered further deportations.
8. Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, fell to the Babylonians in 612 B.C.

**Babylon** – There were three principal sieges and deportations of the Jews to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar:

1. During the third year of Jehoiakim, king of Judah (606 B.C.), the prophet Daniel and others of the nobility were taken into Babylonian captivity.
2. In the third month of the reign of Jehoiachin, king of Judah (597 B.C.), Ezekiel was deported with the captives. These were the “good figs” referred to in Jeremiah chapter 24.
3. In the eleventh year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah (586 B.C.), Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed.

There were also three returns from Babylon to Jerusalem:

1. Zerubbabel 536 B.C.
2. Ezra 457 B.C.
3. Nehemiah 444 B.C.

### **The Mede and Persian Empire**

Darius the Mede took Babylon 539 B.C.

Cyrus the Persian reigned 536 - 530 B.C.

Cambyses 530 - 522 B.C.

Smerdis 522 B.C.

Darius I 522 - 486 B.C.

Xerxes (Ahasuerus) 486 - 465 B.C.

Artaxerxes I 465 - 423 B.C.

Darius II 423 - 404 B.C.

Artaxerxes II 404 - 359 B.C.

Artaxerxes III 359 - 338 B.C.

Arses 338 - 336 B.C.

Darius III 336 - 331 B.C.

### **The Greeks**

Alexander the Great 331 - 323 B.C.

(He reigned over Persia after having defeated Darius III)

### **Outline**

1. The First Return to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel; 1:1-2:70
2. The Building of the Temple 3:1- 6:22
  - a. Foundations Laid 3:1-13
  - b. Construction Ceased 4:1-24

- c. Year of the Prophets 5:1-17
- d. Completion of the Temple 6:1-22
- 3. The Second Return to Jerusalem 7:1-8:36
- 4. The Restoration of the People 9:1-10:44

## PART ONE

### *The First Return to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel*

In the Restoration Period we are introduced to men of extraordinary character and godliness:

- Cyrus, the Persian King and a type of Christ as the great King over all the earth (Isa. 44:26-45:6)
- Zerubbabel, the leader and builder of the Temple, who was promised that he would be as a signet, or ring because the Lord had chosen him (Hag. 2:23)
- Joshua, the high priest, who was given a change of clothing (Zech. 3:1-10)
- Haggai, the prophet
- Zechariah, the prophet
- Ezra, the teaching priest
- Nehemiah, the governor of Jerusalem

These men became a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of their God (Isa. 62:3).

This must also be our desire – to let the Lord work deep within our hearts that we may likewise become crowns of beauty and glory in the hands of our God and His Christ, and bring eternal pleasure to the Godhead. In this book, we will look only at three preeminent men: Cyrus, Ezra, and Nehemiah. The others are mentioned in their respective books; Zerubbabel is included in *Haggai*, and Joshua is mentioned in *Zechariah*.

## Chapter 1 — The Decree of Cyrus

**1:1-2** - *“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, 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.”* Cyrus, this beautiful man of God, is one of the two kings (the other being Josiah) who are mentioned prophetically in Holy Scripture before their birth. God spoke of Cyrus about 100 years before he was born (Isa. 44:28), and of Josiah nearly 350 years before his birth (1 Ki. 13:2). Ezra 1:1-2 suggests that Cyrus gave glory for his military prowess to the One and True God. This confirms Isaiah 45:1 which says, *“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...”*

Apart from being a brilliant general, Cyrus was called “the Righteous Man” in Isaiah 41:2, *“Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings? he gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow.”*

Xenophon, the Greek soldier and author, described Cyrus as being a tolerant ideal monarch in one of his works, *Cyropaedia*. Cyrus



was called “the father of his people” by the ancient Persians. He certainly treated his foes with magnanimity, and was held in high esteem not only by his own people, but also by other nations, including the Greeks. He was acclaimed as an able administrator, whilst possessing the qualities of bravery and daring. Therefore, he was held up to be the model of a ruler *par excellence* to the Greeks, both by Heroditus, the historian, and by Xenophon.

God called Cyrus “His shepherd” in Isaiah 44:28, indicating his caring nature for those under his rule. In the first year of his reign (536 B.C.), Cyrus gave the commandment to release the Jewish captives, and ordered that the Temple in Jerusalem should be rebuilt to fulfill both Isaiah 44:28 and Isaiah 45:13, “I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the LORD of hosts.” This last phrase indicates the magnanimity of Cyrus in that he sought no reward from the Jews for their release.

*1:3 - “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.” Cyrus, in giving this order of release and command to rebuild the Temple, adds his own blessing upon those who will go.*

Let us note his declaration of faith in the one and only, true and living God, the God of Israel. This was very unlike the heathen kings before and after him who worshipped idols. Cyrus was willing to give of his own substance. He ensured that all the

needs of the Jews would be met by putting at their disposal the unlimited hospitality of all the kingdoms under him through which they might pass.

**1:4** - *“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.”* Again Cyrus makes it clear that he believes there is only one house worthy to be called the House of God in that dispensation, namely, the place designated by God as His city, Jerusalem.

### ***Gifts from Judah and Cyrus***

**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.”* In this verse, we see the sovereignty of God. It fills us with awe that it is He who chooses our inheritance, and that His purposes are fulfilled by those whom He elects. At this appointed time of restoration, only those whom God chose could go back to Jerusalem.

This principle is the same today—only those whom God chooses will be restored. Hebrews 6:1-3 confirms this truth, “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God... And this will we do, if God permit.” Therefore, as we approach the time of the great restoration of the Church, we should realise that we must seek to

please Him in order to have a part in the move of God in the End Times. As we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God He will raise us up in due time. In particular, it is those who order their conversation aright to whom He will show His salvation and restoration (Ps. 50:23).

**1:6** - *“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.”* Here we see the second group of believers who decided to accept a lower calling: those who were not chosen to return to build the Temple, but were of good heart in that they recognized the times and the will of God and helped forward the work of God through their chosen brethren by giving.

**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.”* When God raises up the rulers of the lands, they are at His disposal. Solomon declares in Proverbs 21:1, “The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.” Thus God turned the heart of Cyrus to bring forth the vessels that were in Babylon from the time of the fall of Jerusalem.

Some of these vessels had been blasphemously used by the last king of Babylon, Belshazzar, in his drunken orgy as recorded in Daniel 5:2. As he tasted the wine, Belshazzar commanded the golden and silver vessels (which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem) to be brought out so that

he, his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink from them. It is worthy of note that we see the principle of restoration at work even here. Those vessels which had been used by the enemy were now restored to their original purpose for the service of God in the House of the Lord.

We could better explain this using an analogy of a dirty cup. If we filled a cup with mud and filth, we would say that the cup is no longer of any use. However it is possible for the mud to be taken out, and the cup washed with water, so that there is no trace of the mud whatsoever. That cup once again is fit to grace the table, and can be filled with coffee or tea.

We who are the living temples of God should be encouraged knowing that, by His grace, we will be restored to our place and service in the Last Days. In a sense, we are all living far below our privileges and purposes in God. Yet in these times we shall know His great restoration in our lives to the power, privileges, and positions that the Early Church experienced in the service of the Master.

**1:8** - *“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.”* The fact that Holy Scripture should record the exact numbers of these vessels is remarkable.

It shows us that there is a message and truth in these numbers for us. Scriptural numerology is fascinating and its study is rewarding as we find many important spiritual truths that apply to our own lives and the days in which we are living.

**1:9** - *“And this is the number of them: thirty chargers of gold, a thousand chargers of silver, nine and twenty knives.”* Thirty is the age when a Levite entered into the service of the Tabernacle (Num. 4:3), and it was the age when Jesus began His ministry (Lk. 3:23).

One thousand is the number of the Millennium; only those who have a part in the First Resurrection (Rev. 20:6) will rule and reign with Jesus during the Millennium. This could be likened to the small group that had been figuratively raised from the death of the Babylonian captivity and quickened by the power of God to enter into that new dispensation of grace – the Restoration Period. Twenty-nine is an unusual number, and is found only twice elsewhere in Scripture. It was the age of Nahor when he begat Terah (Gen. 11:24), and it is the number of years that Hezekiah reigned (2 Chr. 29:1).

Depending upon a person’s viewpoint, one could say that 29 is the sum of the numbers 14 and 15, since Hezekiah had 15 years added to his life. Fourteen speaks of spiritual perfection or the double portion blessing, whilst according to the law of first mention, 15 represents divine grace to preserve life.

We see that this is so because the ark floated 15 cubits above the earth (Gen. 7:20). However, another interpretation of 29 is the sum of 20 and 9. Twenty is maturity, and nine is fruitfulness since there are nine fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). Therefore, we could say that 29 represents the fruitfulness of maturity. Certainly both of these interpretations are applicable to the group that was preparing to return from Babylonian captivity.

**1:10** - *“Thirty basins of gold, silver basins of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand.”* As we said earlier, 30 is the number indicating the service of God. Gold is the symbol of Deity or the Divine. Four hundred was the price that Abraham paid for Hebron (Gen. 23:15) and has the spiritual meaning of faithfulness and also universal fruitfulness (4 x 100).

Ten is the number of the law (Ex. 34:28). Therefore, this number 410 represents those who will faithfully uphold the law. All of the other vessels, numbering 1000, had been resurrected figuratively for the new move of God.

**1:11** - *“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.”* Although the number of specifically mentioned items is only 2009, the total given here is 5400. This signifies that it is by grace (five being the number of grace), and grace alone that we can be a partaker of the First Resurrection, also that those who are in the First Resurrection are universally fruitful.

## Chapter 2 — Israel Returns to Dwell in their City

**2:1-2** - *“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; Which came with Zerubbabel: Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mizpar, Bigvai, Rehum, Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel.”*

The fact that 11 are specifically mentioned reveals another truth to us. Eleven is the number of the apostles who were left after Judas was removed. Therefore, eleven is the number of the purified. In a time of restoration, only those who have been purified will be in leadership in the new move of God.

### *The Sterling Character of Zerubbabel*

Zerubbabel was in the lineage of David, and thus was also in the lineage of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (Mt. 1:12-13, 16). He was the grandson of the last recognized king of Judah, Jehoiachin. His uncle, Zedekiah, had been appointed the twentieth king by Nebuchadnezzar, but was not deemed a king by the Jews. Zerubbabel commanded the 50,000 exiles upon their return to their native land and became the governor of Judah (Hag. 1:1).

Entrusted with the work of laying the foundation of the Temple, he finished it in spite of intense opposition that lasted 16 years. Zerubbabel not only accomplished the completion

of the physical building, but also the spiritual work of restoration. This account appears in Zechariah 4:10, where we are told that he was given the plummet or measuring line which was, in effect, the Seven Spirits of the Lord. He was therefore responsible to see that the children of Judah adhered to the law. So beloved was this man of God that the Lord promised that he would be as a ring on the hand of the Almighty in the millennial reign (Hag. 2:23).

The ring is a symbol of delight in a beloved one as a wedding ring, for example, testifies. The concept of God's people being an object of joy in His hand is also spoken of in Isaiah 62:3, "Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God." May we learn from this great man's life and seek to be just and faithful rulers, who will finish the work that the Lord has entrusted to us. May we be an object of joy and rejoicing for the Lord as He takes us in His hand and gazes upon the work He has done in our lives.

Now follows a list of those who came with Zerubbabel in the first return of the children of Israel from Babylon. These are included in Holy Scripture to aid the Jews in determining their genealogy (1 Chr. 9:1). However, for our learning we should realise that the Lord takes note of wherever we go and whatever we do. We should seek to be on the rolls of heaven and to have our own personal book filled with good things (Rev. 20:12-15). We want to be included, as these people were, amongst those who move on in God and receive all that God has them.



**2:3-59** - *“The children of Parosh, two thousand an hundred seventy and two. The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two. The children of Arah, seven hundred seventy and five. The children of Pahathmoab, of the children of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred and twelve. The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. The children of Zattu, nine hundred forty and five. The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and threescore. The children of Bani, six hundred forty and two. The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty and three. The children of Azgad, a thousand two hundred twenty and two. The children of Adonikam, six hundred sixty and six. The children of Bigvai, two thousand fifty and six. The children of Adin, four hundred fifty and four. The children of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety and eight. The children of Bezai, three hundred twenty and three. The children of Jorah, an hundred and twelve. The children of Hashum, two hundred twenty and three. The children of Gibbar, ninety and five. The children of Bethlehem, an hundred twenty and three. The men of Netophah, fifty and six. The men of Anathoth, an hundred twenty and eight. The children of Azmaveth, forty and two. The children of Kirjatharim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty and three. The children of Ramah and Gaba, six hundred twenty and one. The men of Michmas, an hundred twenty and two. The men of Bethel and Ai, two hundred twenty and three. The children of Nebo, fifty and two. The children of Magbish, an hundred fifty and six. The children of the other Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. The children of Harim, three hundred and twenty. The children of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred twenty and five. The children of Jericho, three hundred forty and five. The children of Senaah, three thousand and six hundred*

*and thirty. The priests: the children of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred seventy and three. The children of Immer, a thousand fifty and two. The children of Pashur, a thousand two hundred forty and seven. The children of Harim, a thousand and seventeen. The Levites: the children of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the children of Hodaviah, seventy and four. The singers: the children of Asaph, an hundred twenty and eight. 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. The Nethinims: the children of Ziha, the children of Hasupha, the children of Tabbaoth, The children of Keros, the children of Siaha, the children of Padon, The children of Lebanah, the children of Hagabah, the children of Akkub, The children of Hagab, the children of Shalmal, the children of Hanan, The children of Giddel, the children of Gahar, the children of Reaiah, The children of Rezin, the children of Nekoda, the children of Gazzam, The children of Uzza, the children of Paseah, the children of Besai, The children of Asnah, the children of Mehunim, the children of Nephusim, The children of Bakbuk, the children of Hakupha, the children of Harhur, The children of Bazluth, the children of Mehida, the children of Harsha, The children of Barkos, the children of Sisera, the children of Thamah, The children of Neziah, the children of Hatipha. The children of Solomon's servants: the children of Sotai, the children of Sophereth, the children of Peruda, The children of Jaalah, the children of Darkon, the children of Giddel, The children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattil, the children of Pochereth of Zebaim, the children of Ami. All the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon's servants, were three hundred*

*ninety and two. And these were they which went up from Telmelah, Telharsa, Cherub, Addan, and Immer: but they could not show their father's house, and their seed, whether they were of Israel."*

Being of the right genealogy was essential for the Jews to be included in the work of God and in the Temple service. However, for us, it is essential that our names are written in His Book of Life (Rev. 21:27).

**2:60-62** - *"The children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred fifty and two. 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: 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."* Herein is a very solemn warning: if our names are not found written in the Lamb's Book of Life when it is opened, we will not be able to enter heaven.

However, there is another aspect of truth—if God has not called us to the particular work that we are doing for Him, it will not be counted to our credit in that great day when the books are opened. These priests, because they were not recorded, were put out of the priesthood.

It is written in Hebrews 5:1,4-6: "For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things *pertaining* to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins...And

no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as *was* Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee. As he saith also in another *place*, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”

It is God who chooses our inheritance and our ministry (Ps. 47:4; Eph. 4:11). This was very evident in the rebellion of Korah against Aaron and Moses, as is recorded in Numbers 16:5, 9-10: “And he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even to morrow the LORD will show who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him... even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him. Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? And he hath brought thee near to him, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee: and seek ye the priesthood also?”

**2:63** - “*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.*” The governor, Zerubbabel, was here ensuring that he would not make the same error that David made when he brought up the Ark contrary to the Law of God, bringing it upon the ox cart instead of upon the shoulders of the priests (2 Sam. 6:1-17). He also wanted to be sure not to repeat the sin of King Saul who presumed to offer up the sacrifices himself, a prerogative of the priests (1 Sam.13:8-10).

**2:64-65** - *“The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore, 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.”* This was such a beautiful company! May God grant that in His Church, there will be many who have the ministry of music and song. If we are in this select group, may we use our talent to sing for the glory of God, and not for the pleasure of the world.

**2:66-68** - *“Their horses were seven hundred thirty and six; their mules, two hundred forty and five; Their camels, four hundred thirty and five; their asses, six thousand seven hundred and twenty. 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.”*

How beautiful it is when God has blessed us with the goods of this world, and we can freely give of our substance to bless the house of God. We must never forget that the Lord counts the percentage to which we give rather than the actual amount. This accounts for his recognition of the widow who gave her all above the rich men who poured in of their substance (Mk. 12:41-44). In addition, our attitude in giving is important, for the Lord loveth a cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9:7).

**2:69-70** - *“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. 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.*” Here we see a division of ministries. There were the priests who were of the tribe of Levi but more specifically of the sons of Aaron (Lev.1:5).

Then there were the Levites whose duty was to wait upon the service of the House of God. Numbers 1:50 reads, “But thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of testimony, and over all the vessels thereof, and over all things that belong to it: they shall bear the tabernacle, and all the vessels thereof; and they shall minister unto it, and shall encamp round about the tabernacle.” They were followed by the singers who were selected for that special ministry of singing praises to the Lord. Next were the porters who were of the companies of Levites (1 Chr. 9:18) chosen to do the work of the service of the Tabernacle gates, doors, and the entry into the Tabernacle and later the Temple (1 Chr. 9:22).

We are told also that for these Levites, the four chief porters were in their set office, and were over the chambers and treasuries of the house of God (1 Chr. 9:26). This office was considered very important, since David and Samuel ordained them in their set office (1 Chr. 9:22).

Therefore in the Church, these men of God would do the work of ushers and deacons, and so must be set into their office by God through the pastors. Their calling is very solemn. Finally, there were the Nethinims who served the Levites, the ministers of God (Ezra 8:20). Similarly for our day, the Lord raises up those who are to wait upon and facilitate the service of the pastors in the Church.

## PART TWO

### *The Building of the Temple*

#### Chapter 3 — The Foundation Laid

**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.”* Now the seventh month was the time of the three last feasts: the Feast of Trumpets, when there was the fresh call of God to His people to move on; the Day of Atonement, which was the time of deep cleansing for God’s people; and lastly the Feast of Tabernacles, which was the manifestation of God’s glory and power to bring in the Last Day harvest.

This third feast governed the Restoration Period, and therefore shows us that its spiritual fulfilment will indeed govern the Last Day Church. This feast is also a time when God’s people will move in the blessed Holy Ghost, united to accomplish His will through the Church in the days immediately preceding the Second Coming of Christ.

**3:2** - *“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.”* This act is a principle for forming a new work of God. The institution of worship will bring the presence of God to a field. His presence will enable His

people to carry out the work of building a church or a mission base. True worship is the key to restoration, for God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:23-24).

**3:3** - *“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.”* Even as the priests offered burnt offerings upon the altar unto God, we should offer ourselves upon the altar as a living sacrifice to the Lord in the midst of our enemies (Rom. 12:1).

Therefore, by His grace, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually giving thanks to His Name with our mouths (Heb. 13:15).

**3:4** - *“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.”* Numbers chapter 29 specifies the offerings that were required during the last three feasts. The Feast of Tabernacles was a feast of seven days. Essentially, the offerings were 13 young bullocks on the first day with the number of bullocks offered diminished by one each day.

***The First Day*** – Thirteen is the number of atonement for rebellion. For example, in the Tabernacle of Moses, we see the thirteen pillars that signify the same concept as the Tabernacle service: the power to atone for rebellion.



***The Second Day*** – Twelve is the number of government and administration. The Lord desires that all leaders be in perfect unity and at peace with Him so that His work in the realm of administration may function smoothly. It is noteworthy that the kingdoms of David and Solomon were divided into administrative districts (see 1 Chr. 27).

***The Third Day*** – Eleven means purity, or that the leadership had been purified.

***The Fourth Day*** – Ten signifies that the Law was written upon the fleshly tables of their heart.

***The Fifth Day*** – Nine speaks of the fullness of the Spirit, from the aspect of power and the nature of God, as well as the fullness of the gifts and fruit of the Spirit.

***The Sixth Day*** – Eight means that this was a new day and a new beginning to their spiritual lives. It was a time of entering into a new covenant with the Lord, and of intense spiritual union and communion.

***The Seventh Day*** – Seven young bullocks were offered up signifying completeness and perfection. Two rams were offered, representing consecration. Fourteen lambs without blemish signify twice seven (1 Ki. 8:65) and portray the testimony of the beauty and perfection of Christ, the Lamb of God without spot or blemish. One kid of the goats was given for the sin offering. This offering dealt with the nature of sin, and for us speaks of the crucified life.

All these were offered with their meal offerings (see Lev. 2) which speak of the second commandment, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” As Jesus said, if we have ought against our neighbour, we must first leave our sacrifice at the altar, be reconciled with our neighbour, and then come and offer our sacrifice (Mt. 5:24). Furthermore, “How can we say we love God yet hate our neighbour?” (1 Jn. 4:20).

The flour of the meal offerings must be mingled with oil signifying that it is only through the Holy Spirit that we can offer ourselves spotless before God. Even as Jesus offered Himself, through the Spirit, spotless and without blame before God (Heb. 9:14). These offerings must be offered with wine, speaking of the attitude of joy that we should have in the service of the Lord.

**3:5** - *“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.” Two lambs were offered each Sabbath day, speaking of a continual offering of ourselves unto God.* The Offering of the New Moons, at the beginning of each lunar month, was apparently ordained by God through Joseph (Ps. 81:3-4). It is associated with feasting before the Lord. The details are given in Numbers 28:11, “And in the beginnings of your months ye shall offer a burnt offering unto the LORD; two young bullocks, and one ram, seven lambs of the first year without spot...” The Scriptural significance of this is the witness of the fulfilment of the two commandments—to love God and to love our neighbour as

ourselves. Romans 12:1 speaks on consecrating the offering as is seen in the Lamb's beauty of perfection.

We continue in Numbers 28:12-14, "And three tenth deals of flour for a meat offering, mingled with oil, for one bullock; and two tenth deals of flour for a meat offering, mingled with oil, for one ram... And a several tenth deal of flour mingled with oil for a meat offering unto one lamb; for a burnt offering of a sweet savour, a sacrifice made by fire unto the LORD. And their drink offerings shall be half an hin of wine unto a bullock, and the third part of an hin unto a ram, and a fourth part of an hin unto a lamb: this is the burnt offering of every month throughout the months of the year. And one kid of the goats for a sin offering unto the LORD shall be offered, beside the continual burnt offering, and his drink offering."

The three tenth deal of flour speaks of God's love for man (Lev. 14:10). "Mingled with oil" speaks of the fact that we should be filled with the nature of God, allowing it to permeate every point of our being. The number three also speaks of our body, soul, and spirit. Thus, our whole being is permeated with love. A young bullock speaks of strength. We are commanded to love the Lord with all our strength (Mk. 12:33). The ram speaks of consecration—to keep those two commandments to love God and to love our neighbours as ourselves.

**3:6** - *"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."* These offerings are prescribed in Numbers 29:1-6: *"And in the seventh month,*

*on the first day of the month, ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work: it is a day of blowing the trumpets unto you. And ye shall offer a burnt offering for a sweet savour unto the LORD; one young bullock, one ram, and seven lambs of the first year without blemish: And their meat offering shall be of flour mingled with oil, three tenth deals for a bullock, and two tenth deals for a ram, And one tenth deal for one lamb, throughout the seven lambs: And one kid of the goats for a sin offering, to make an atonement for you: Beside the burnt offering of the month, and his meat offering, and the daily burnt offering, and his meat offering, and their drink offerings, according unto their manner, for a sweet savour, a sacrifice made by fire unto the LORD.”*

The trumpets that were ordained to be blown on the first day of the month are mentioned in Numbers 10. They are blown for the following reasons:

1. Calling of the assembly to come to the presence of the Lord
2. Journeying of the camp when God wanted them to move on
3. Assembling of the princes and elders
4. Going to war

Thus, in a sense, the blowing of the trumpets indicates that they were to move on in God on the first day of the seventh month. It was a fresh beginning. Thus, at this point in the history of Israel, it was a time of new beginnings. (For further study, please see our book on the *Feasts and Offerings*.)

**3:7** - *“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.”* This is a partial fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah 60:10, *“And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee.”* The kings alluded to were Cyrus and Darius, of Persia, although the complete fulfilment will not be until the Millennium.

**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.”*

The restoration of the temple began in the time of the second Passover, which was reserved for those who were unable to keep the first Passover. This in itself is interesting, for the former generation had not kept the law but now a second chance was going to be given to Israel. God is often the God of the Second Chance, but we must not presume on His goodness. Please note that it does not suggest that after divorce a person can expect a second marriage, which is adulterous, to be blessed.

Before they commenced the work of the foundations, the Levites had to organise and ensure that everything was in order.

When we have to build the house of God either physically or spiritually, we have to prepare the workmen. They must be well-trained and skilful to work in the house of God.

**3:9** - *“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.”* It is important to note that even the high priest rolled up his sleeves and prepared to work with his hands. This should be the attitude of ministers of God wherever possible, to show by example how to labour in the Lord’s vineyard.

**3:10** - *“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.”* A significant part had been finished. The children of Israel realised that the completion of the foundation was a major achievement. All who have been engaged in a building project know that the quality and depth of the foundation determines the height to which one may build.

Earlier, we mentioned the importance of the order of restoration. Before anything was started, the altar, signifying worship, was put in its place. The second step is the laying of the foundation. Foundational truths are very important indeed. It is no good speaking of going on to Zion if our foundation is not right. The foundations of a godly life are to be firmly rooted and grounded in the Word of God. With any building, you have to have a

foundation, which will govern how high the building will go. The deeper the foundations, the higher the building. This also applies to the life of the saint. The deeper his foundations are in the Word of God, the higher he can soar into heavenly places.

We want to pay great attention to the foundations of the Christian life and lay these foundations well:

1. Repentance from dead works
2. Faith toward God
3. Doctrine of baptisms
4. Laying on of hands
5. Resurrection of the dead
6. Eternal judgment

As we have said before, and as the Apostle Paul said, “this will we do if God permits” (Heb. 6:1-3). Let us pray that we might be a wise master builder like the Apostle Paul, who laid a good foundation in his congregation, in his own ministry, and in every life of those whom he shepherded (1 Cor. 3:10).

**3:11** - *“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.”*

It is wonderful when men and women acknowledge that all they do in this life is by the grace of God! As Paul states in 1 Corinthians 15:10, “But by the grace of God I am what I

am...” Certainly, the beginning of the restoration of the temple was possible purely by the grace of God, as He stirred up the heart of Cyrus to give the order, and then give the necessary provisions. As we shall see later, the completion likewise is only possible by His grace (Zech. 4:6-9).

**3:12** - *“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...”*

Here we see a very significant truth. Those who had seen the glory of the Temple of Solomon wept because the Restoration Temple (or Second Temple as it was called) did not compare in glory to the former. We made mention of the fact that this era known as the Restoration Period is analogous to the Reformation Era under Martin Luther. Similarly, that era could not be compared to the glory of the New Testament Church.

It remains for the Church of the Last Days to bring back the glory of New Testament times. Furthermore, the Temple of Ezekiel, during the millennial reign, will not only bring back the glory of Solomon’s Temple but will exceed it. There were three things missing in that Restoration Temple:

1. The Ark of the Covenant (and the Mercy Seat with the Shekinah glory of God dwelling between the cherubim)—speaking of the literal presence of God.
2. The Urim and Thummim—two stones, white and black, that were given to the high priest. When a person came to



the anointed high priest, he would ask a question that could be answered “yea” or “nay.” The high priest would put his hand into his breastplate, as it were, and would pull out a stone to give the answer. In other words, they had discernment and knew the will of God in the original Tabernacle of Moses and in the Temple of Solomon, but not in the Restoration Temple.

3. The fire from off the altar—the original fire was divine from heaven, but the fire in the new temple was man-made.

The building did not compare to Solomon’s Temple in glory, and those three blessings were missing; yet, they still had restoration in the temple. It is possible to have a restoration without those things, because that is perfectly Scriptural.

However, in Haggai 2:3 we can see what God says about this: “Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory?” In other words, how many of you saw the Temple of Solomon? Obviously some of those present did see the Temple of Solomon. God continues, “And how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?”

**3:13** - *“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.”* The reaction of the people was overwhelming. There was an emotional confusion between the generations. The new generation was rejoicing, while the old generation was lamenting. As the young had never seen revival, this move of

God was wonderful, but the older ones who had experienced the reality of Solomon's Temple just wept with sorrow. To a certain degree, this mirrors the Church prior to the time of revival—the young rejoicing and exuberant because of any move, whilst the old who have seen previous moves of God are still heavy of heart.

The older people knew that full restoration had not been given, and that God could do far greater things, as it says in Isaiah 64:4, "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him."

As though to emphasise this truth, the Holy Spirit had Paul quote this passage verbatim in 1 Corinthians 2:9. Therefore, it is very important to understand that when we speak of revival and restoration, we are asking for something far greater than the restoration they had at the time of Zerubbabel.

## Chapter 4 — The Construction Ceased

**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.”* Whenever God moves afresh the enemy seeks to counterattack.

This is not realised by many of God’s people; and therefore, when they see difficulties, obstacles, and people arising against them they often feel that they are not in the will of God, and cease to continue the work. Thus, Satan scores a victory. In reality, it is the opposite. The greater the battle, the more important is the work that has been entrusted to us.

**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.”*

The enemy does not always come in the same way, and sometimes he comes in the guise of a helper. In this particular situation, the people who were seeking to help were descendants of those heathen nations who had been planted in the land of Israel by the Assyrian king, Esarhaddon.

King Esarhaddon succeeded Sennacherib, whose army had been slain by an angel of the Lord as they had besieged Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah, king of Judah (Isa. 37:36-38). These heathen would have marred the true worship of God by their own customs and brought confusion into the services.

How careful we must be not to have mixture in our churches by having those in our leadership who either are not saved or have a different vision and anointing from what God has given to us! Leaders must therefore have discernment and heed the warning that the Lord gave to Samuel. Man looks on the outward appearance but God looks at the heart (1 Sam. 16:7).

**4:3** - *“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.”* The Jewish leaders saw through this ruse of the enemy and rejected their aid.

**4:4** - *“Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building.”* Having been rejected from being a part of this work of God, the enemy then sought to destroy the work. This will invariably be the situation in our churches when we refuse a request for a position in the church to someone who has not been ordained by God.

I could personally cite a case where I was an assistant pastor. A young man who had been close to the pastor prior to going into military service had now returned. He wanted my position, and when the pastor refused, saying that he was not qualified as I was, he started to sulk. This young man then verbally attacked the pastor, but when the congregation stood with the pastor and myself, he left the church and became a Catholic priest. The last I heard of him was that he was drinking heavily and smoking.

Leaders must be firm and resolute, not swayed by the arguments of man. In the case we have shared, had the pastor yielded, that young man would have in all probability led the young into the worldly path of drinking and smoking, and would have brought many to grief.

**4:5** - *“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.”* Regretfully, in the span of a minister’s life, he will most probably be involved in a lawsuit. Many ungodly lawyers (the only profession condemned by Christ—Luke 11:45-46) make merchandise of the sorrows and ill fortune of others. The prices that they charge are usually excessive, and they guarantee no success to those whom they represent.

It has oft been said that the only person who profits from a lawsuit is the lawyer. However, lawyers who are unscrupulous incur the righteous indignation of the Judge of all the earth, before whom they must appear, as will all of mankind. There are, naturally, lawyers who are exceptions to the norm, but there are very few of them.

One of the most widely used tactics of lawyers is to procrastinate and thereby to prolong a case. This was what these counselors, employed by the enemies of Judah, succeeded in doing. The remarkable aspect of their case was that they were able to oppose the decree of Cyrus, who had been raised up by God to order the rebuilding of the Temple. We must never underestimate the power of lawyers for many will do anything but aid justice. They blocked the rebuilding for a period of 16 years through the reigns of Cyrus,

Cambyses, and Smerdis, until the second year of the reign of Darius in 520 B.C.

**4:6** - “*And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they unto him an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.*” Ahasuerus reigned from 486–465 B.C. His Greek name was Xerxes and he was the husband of Esther (please see our book entitled *Esther* for further study).

Beginning with this verse until verse 23, we have a chronological interposition of events; this is a later period speaking of the opposition to the rebuilding of the walls of the city, which should be placed between chapters 6 and 7 (See introduction to Chapter 7).

**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.*” Artaxerxes reigned from 465–423 B.C. This passage was written in Aramaic rather than in Hebrew in the original manuscripts because it was official government correspondence with the king.

**4:8** - “*Rehum the chancellor and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king in this sort.*” These were the rulers of the people that had been placed in the land of Samaria, which is in northern Israel, distinct from the southern kingdom of Judah. Judah was the area being repopulated by the Jews returning from Babylon at the time of this migration under Zerubbabel.

**4:9** - *“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.”* Here we have a list of some of the nations that were rooted out of their own lands at the time of Ashurbanipal who reigned (from 669–627 B.C.) as virtually the last powerful king of Assyria. The nation along with the capital city of Nineveh fell 15 years later to Nebuchadnezzar in 612 B.C. These heathen nations came principally from the lands north of Israel and almost to the borders of India.

**4:10** - *“And the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Asnapper brought over, and set in the cities of Samaria, and the rest that are on this side the river, and at such a time.”* These nations obviously had no loyalty to the children of Israel and looked to their roots in the lands of Assyria, now ruled by the Persians, since some of them were in fact allied to the Persians historically, like the Elamites.

**4:11** - *“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.”* The river referred to is the Euphrates. It is the northeastern boundary of the land promised to Abraham (Gen. 15:18), and was so in David’s kingdom.

**4:12** - *“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.”* This refers to the time of the

rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem and is a confirmation of the prophecy of Daniel 9:25, “Know therefore and understand, *that* from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince *shall be* seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.”

**4:13** - “*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.*” Historically this was true, for the Jews were ever, in one sense, of a rebellious nature towards those who had conquered them. A long list of the kings of Judah such as Hezekiah and Zedekiah had refused to pay tribute money to their masters, the Assyrians of long ago. Moreover, they had rebelled against the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar. Their letter continues in the following verses.

**4:14** - “*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.*” These were paid employees of the king and the government of the Persian Empire. Therefore, it was their duty to report to the king concerning any activity that, in their opinion, would be a danger to the king’s revenue and the peace of his territories.

Here we see that the normal function of government was employed by the wicked one to seek to thwart the plans of God. We must be mindful of these methods also, for the normal



rules of a nation may indeed be used to delay God's purposes for our lives or for the life of the local congregation.

**4:15** - *“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.”*

The chancellor and the chief secretary then made appeal using the national records to substantiate their complaint by asking for this.

Certainly, Jerusalem had been destroyed because of the breaking of the covenant that Zedekiah had made with Nebuchanezzar (2 Chr. 36:13). He had rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God to keep his part of the treaty. Zedekiah had resolutely refused to obey the Lord God of Israel and rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar.

**4:16** - *“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.”* This statement of the government official was false. Zerubbabel had not received a commission from God, nor had Nehemiah in later years, to rebel against the authority of the kings of Persia.

**4:17-18** - *“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. The letter which ye sent*

*unto us hath been plainly read before me.”* The king acknowledged receipt of the letter from Rehum and the others.

**4:19** - *“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.”* The king commanded that a diligent search of all of the government records, as to whether this charge was legitimate or not, was to be made. Certainly, no record of the heathen kings would have been favourable towards Israel, whom they considered a block to their expansionist dreams of invading and capturing the far greater prizes of Egypt and Ethiopia.

**4:20-21** - *“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. 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.”* It is interesting, as we shall see later in the Book of Nehemiah, that this very king was the one who reversed his order and gave the command for the walls of the city to be rebuilt in the twentieth year of his reign (Neh. 2:1-8). God changed the heart of this king, just as he did later in the Church Age with King Henry VIII. The Lord turned King Henry VIII’s heart to countermand his own order to destroy the English Bible, and instead to charge its installation in every pulpit of the land.

Truly, as it is written in Proverbs 21:1, “The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it

whithersoever he will.” May this be a comfort to us, knowing that our world leaders today are in the hand of the Lord, and that no decision will be made unless the Lord permits it.

**4:22-23** - *“Take heed now that ye fail not to do this: why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings? 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.”* As we have previously stated, these events occurred in the reign of Artaxerxes and applied to the rebuilding of the walls of the city.

**4:24** - *“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.”* Now the text reverts to the time of Zerubbabel and the restoration of the Temple. Thus we are now looking at the year 520 B.C.

## Chapter 5 — The Year of the Prophets

The enemy may thwart the work of God for a time, but he can never prevent it from ultimately coming to pass. God's work will be accomplished. To ensure the rebuilding of the Temple, God had His prophets stir up the people of God to perform the work that He had purposed for them to do so that His plans might go forward.

How we should heed the words of good King Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 20:20, "... Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper." This is exactly what the leaders of the Jews did, and they prospered.

**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."*

The prophecies of Haggai were very scathing concerning the attitude of the Jews who were reclining in their own furnished and luxurious houses, saying that the time for the Lord's house to be built had not yet come (Hag. 1:2). Haggai had therefore to stir them up from their lethargy.

On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month of the second year of Darius, God spoke through Zechariah with good and comforting words, saying, "My House shall be built in Jerusalem" (Zech. 1:16).

**5:2** - *"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.*” The hands of the leaders were strengthened by the prophetic word of encouragement.

It is important for pastors and church leaders to be surrounded by prophets or prophetesses of repute who will be able to bring a word in due season, and encouragement in times of the building of church properties. The building of church properties is one of the times where the enemy brings the greatest pressure against leadership. Some leaders have experienced mental, moral, and spiritual collapses during these periods because they have not been sufficiently undergirded by prayer and the prophetic word from church members.

**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?”* The government officials were naturally responsible for a building of such dimensions, so they made diligent inquiries concerning the permit for this undertaking.

**5:4** - *“Then said we unto them after this manner, What are the names of the men that make this building?”* They then sought to have the names of the leaders who had started this project.

**5:5** - *“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.”* Although the local Syrian governor sought to stop the work by threats, the Spirit of the Lord strengthened the leaders and they continued the work with the assurance that the hand of

the Lord was upon them. As a result, the local governor made appeal to King Darius.

**5:6** - *“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.”* Darius had been king for barely two years. Yet in those two years, he had fought some 19 battles to ensure his succession to the Persian throne, as he was not in the direct line of succession from Cyrus, the father of modern-day Persia. Therefore, Darius would have been very quick to heed any perceived threat to his authority, such as the erection of so notable a building.

**5:7** - *“They sent a letter unto him, wherein was written thus; Unto Darius the king, all peace.”* By the very nature of their address to the king, the officials were seeking to assure him that they were intent upon securing the stability of the kingdom in such troubled times.

**5:8** - *“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.”* It is a fact which one can certainly attest to throughout the world, that when a nation, people, fellowship, or church finds favour with God, they prosper naturally after a time of trials and purging. Such was the case with the temple during this period.

**5:9-10** - *“Then asked we those elders, and said unto them thus, Who commanded you to build this house, and to make up these*

*walls? We asked their names also, to certify thee, that we might write the names of the men that were the chief of them.”*

The normal attitude of any government official is to assure that information forwarded to a king, upon which he must make a decision, is well-documented. Therefore, we, in like manner, should ensure that we have secretaries who keep good records.

### ***The Answer and Confession of the Jews***

**5:11** - *“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.”* The appeal to history is very strong with the Jews. In fact they became so involved in what Paul termed endless genealogies that he delivered the following charge to Timothy his spiritual son in his letter to him, “Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do” (1 Tim. 1:4).

However, in this case, the answer of the Jews was perfectly valid, and they told it to their own shame. Many Christians fall into this trap by dwelling on the past glories of their churches, rather than living in the present with the new move of the Spirit and the fresh truths which the Lord is speaking today.

It is good sometimes to go back in our own lives and in the life of a church to see what God has promised in prophecy or through Scriptures to a congregation. As it is necessary to find out how far short we have sometimes fallen due to sin in the camp, or due

to a Laodicean attitude of ungodly contentment with a lower position than the one that God has offered. The great king was none other than Solomon, who was known not only in Jewish history, but also by all the heathen kingdoms of those days.

**5:12** - *“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.”* Here is a complete acknowledgement of the sins of the forefathers. Often we suffer as a church or as a nation, because of the wrong doings of previous generations.

This is attested to by the Lord Jesus when He said, speaking to Jerusalem: “Upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation” (Mt. 23:35-36).

I can attest to this in some small way because of an experience that I had in a church where I was invited to minister. There was little or no move of God in the services. Upon inquiring of the Lord, He indicated that the sins of adultery committed between a former pastor and his secretary on church property had so defiled the building that it was as though leprosy had eaten into the walls of the church.

The remedy was to tear down the building. This was achieved through the sale of the building to a secular enterprise that wanted



the land to construct another building to fit their needs. The congregation moved elsewhere and revival came. When a blockage has been revealed and removed, God moves again.

**5:13** - *“But in the first year of Cyrus the king of Babylon the same king Cyrus made a decree to build this house of God.”* This was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 44:28 as recorded in Ezra 1:1.

**5:14** - *“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.”* This is also recorded in Ezra 1:7-11.

***When a  
blockage  
has been  
revealed and  
removed,  
God moves  
again.***

**5:15** - *“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.”* The clear-cut decree of Cyrus is also recorded in Ezra 1:2. Indeed, it was the foundation upon which the Jews acted for it was not just a decree of man but a decree ordained and declared by God. It is good for us to have a clear foundation for all our actions.

**5:16** - *“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.”*

The acknowledgement of the delay of some 16 years was noted.

This delay was in part the fault of the Persian government authorities themselves as they permitted the delaying tactics of the lawyers. The blame also lay upon the lethargic response of the Jews who did not actively pursue the building of the foundation or counterattack the arguments of their enemy lawyers through prayer and counter-petitioning the government at Babylon.

**5:17** - *“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.”*

The right of precedence carries much weight in matters of the law. It is always good to ensure that we do things right before the law to protect the rights of future generations in the Church. If challenged, these rights can then be supported by our having received the necessary documentation and due permission from government officials.

I well remember that a certain dear pastor, when opening a day care centre for children, was instructed by the Holy Spirit to abide by all the laws of the local officials. His abiding has held him in very good stead in their eyes throughout the subsequent inspections of the property and the facilities.

## Chapter 6 — The Completion of the Temple

### *The Attestation of King Darius*

**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.”* Great care was taken in ancient times to record all that the kings decreed. This is proven, with respect to the kings of Judah and Israel, with many references found in the Word such as 2 Chronicles 24:27 where it speaks of Joash, “Now concerning his sons, and the greatness of the burdens laid upon him, and the repairing of the house of God, behold, they are written in the story of the book of the kings.”

**6:2** - *“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.”* Apparently there were many places where such records were kept, and it was only after a diligent search that these were located in the home province of Cyrus. The Persian Empire appeared to have three capitals (four if we include Babylon, since Cyrus is specifically called the King of Babylon, in Ezra 5:13). The search was also commenced there by the orders of Darius. The other capitals were as follows:

1. Persepolis – the ceremonial capital which was renowned for Persian culture and was destroyed by Alexander the Great.
2. Susa or Shushan – the capital of the Elamites which, during the time of Esther, became the administrative capital of the whole of the Persian Empire.

3. Achmetha – the capital of the Median Empire where the scroll was found.

(We must remember that in those days records were kept on scrolls, for books were a later invention well after the time of Jesus.)

**6:3** - *“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.”*

The decree of Cyrus was precise, as befitting a king’s command, and it shows us the dimensions of the Second Temple (as this restored temple of Solomon was called). These measurements seem to differ from the original according to the details given in 2 Chronicles 3:3, which specifies that the breadth was to be 20 cubits and the height of the porch was to be 120 cubits. It was all to have been overlaid with pure gold in Solomon’s Temple, whilst no such provisions were made for the second temple. However, as we read further, we will find that the foundations were to have been substantial.

**6:4** - *“With three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber: and let the expenses be given out of the king’s house.”* The king had intended to defray all the costs of the building, which was his offering to the one and only true God of heaven and earth.

**6:5** - *“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.”* The decree of Darius was given and thus upheld the original decree of Cyrus. All the original vessels were to be restored. Moreover, he instructed his officials not to hinder, but rather to render all possible assistance to the temple builders. Darius is seen here as one who wishes to be identified with Cyrus, and seeks to confirm himself as a rightful heir of the great King.

**6:6-8** - *“Now therefore, Tatnai, governor beyond the river, Shetharboznai, and your companions the Apharsachites, which are beyond the river, be ye far from thence: 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. 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.”*

It seems, too, that the heart of Darius had been apprehended by the decree of Cyrus to believe that the God of the Jews was in fact the only true and living God. Remarkably, the kings of Persia—Cyrus, Darius, and later Ahasuerus, were all favourable towards the Jews (Ezra 7:1; Neh. 2:1; Esth. 8:1).

**6:9** - *“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.*” Not only was the building of the Temple to be done at the king’s expense, but also all of the sacrifices were to be supplied. Everything was to come from his treasuries. How wonderful is our Jehovah Jireh who uses the heathen to provide for the work that He desires His people to accomplish!

**6:10** - *“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.”* Darius desired that he and his sons would constantly be remembered favourably by the one and only true God.

**6:11** - *“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.”* The punishments that these kings decreed upon those who opposed them were severe, but in reality anyone who dared to delay the construction of the temple would be opposing Almighty God.

We should pause to consider this thought: when God rises in revival power, those who have lived in the light and then have chosen to sin suffer far greater punishments than those who have been living in times of relative spiritual darkness.

We shall see the hand of God move in these Last Days as He did in the Early Church. Not only were there great manifestations of His power to heal, but also solemn judgments like those that fell upon Annaias and Sapphira in Acts chapter 5.

**6:12** - *“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.”* Here again, judgment is pronounced upon those who would dare to change the measurements of the temple.

This truth translates into Church theology by saying that those who seek to change Church doctrine through teaching a lesser gospel and thereby altering the spiritual measurements of His people are in danger of His wrath.

This is confirmed by Revelation 22:19, *“And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”* His blessings are given to those who faithfully uphold the whole counsel of God.

**6:13** - *“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.”* Mercifully, the government officials moved with appropriate speed to implement the orders of the king.

I have, in some small way, suffered in one country at the hands of local officials, and it took the intervention of higher government officials to permit me to receive a visa. In fact, the Lord stirred up the higher government officials to come down upon the appropriate local official who had treated me so unjustly. God controls the governments of this world, beloved, and He does

not hesitate at times to show Himself mighty on the behalf of those whose hearts are perfect towards Him (2 Chr. 16:9).

**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.”*

Artaxerxes was not involved with the building of the Temple, since it was finished in the year 516 B.C., and he did not commence his reign until 464 B.C. He is included because he was responsible for the decree to rebuild the walls and street of Jerusalem.

One of the most precious promises in the Word of God is recorded in Zechariah 4:9, “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you.”

One of the titles of the Lord Jesus is the “...Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending... which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty” (Rev. 1:8).

***When the Lord  
begins a work  
in and through  
us, He will  
surely finish it!***

We have this promise for our own lives too, as recorded in Philippians 1:6, “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ...” When the Lord begins a work in and through us, He will surely finish it, even as He did the rebuilding of the temple through Zerubbabel. Praise the Lord!



**6:15** - *“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.”*

Another factor that proves that the Second Temple was not so grand as Solomon’s was that Solomon’s Temple took seven years to complete, whereas this one only took four years.

**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.”* Even a partial restoration is glad news, and so these dear ministers of God rejoiced with great joy at the revival of God’s presence in the land.

We too should be thankful for any fresh move of God, irrespective of the fact that it is not the fullness of the glorious, promised latter rain of the Last Day outpouring. As the prophet says, we should not despise the day of small things (Zech. 4:10).

**6:17** - *“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.”* One hundred is the number of fullness with respect to fruitfulness in a person’s life (Gen. 26:12; Mt. 13:8). Two hundred is the reward of a faithful servant.

Four hundred is universal fruitfulness, as four is the number for the cardinal points of North, South, East, and West. Twelve he goats are the symbol of the sin offering to atone for the rebellion of leadership, since all the tribes had rebelled against God over the past centuries when they were in the land of Israel. In this way, it was one goat for each tribe.

**6:18** - *“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.”* These directives are given in more detail in 1 Chronicles chapter 24, at the time of David. Suffice it to say all the temple service was re-instituted after the divine order. We should, by the grace of God, seek to wait upon the Lord to ensure that all functions and all offices in the Church are occupied by those of God’s choice—those who are flowing under the anointing and direction of the Lord.

**6:19** - *“And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month.”* Now the Feast of Passover is analogous to the spiritual experience of salvation. We should always seek to present the salvation message in appropriate services so that the unregenerate might come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, our Savior.

I have noticed that amongst churches who move on to deeper messages, the constant commission of Matthew 28:19, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost...” is at times neglected. So let us take heed and seek to feed the family of God by giving the milk as well as the meat of the Word (Heb. 5:12-14), bringing forth things new and old (Mt. 13:52).

**6:20-21** - *“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. 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.”* There is a sense here that the children of Israel were cleansed from their backsliding ways.

We, too, should always give opportunity in our services for the backslider to be cleansed from whence he fell, so that he can be reunited in fellowship with the Lord and the community of believers. The steps to the return of the backslider are given in Hosea 14:1-2, “O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive *us* graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.”

**6:22** - *“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.”* Concerning salvation, the Lord said in Luke 15:7, “I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.”

Therefore, may we greatly rejoice over our salvation and seek to pray for others who have lost their joy. We know King David had lost the joy of his salvation, and prayed in Psalm 51:12, “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.” As we close this section of the Book of Ezra, may we, too, marvel with holy joy that the hearts of those who oppose us, as King Darius opposed the Jews, can be turned to aid us in the forwarding of the work that God has entrusted to our care.

## PART THREE

### *The Second Return*

Between the account of the first return under Zerubbabel and the second under Ezra, there is a period of nearly 60 years. In this period we have the life and reign of Esther, who was married to Ahasuerus. Ahasuerus' empire extended from India to Ethiopia (Esth. 1:1) and he ruled from 486–464 B.C., between the reigns of Darius and Artaxerxes I.

In this section of the book we are introduced to Ezra, who is credited with writing much of the Old Testament, especially the Historical Books. Some psalms are likewise attributed to him, although in our Bible they are anonymous. Ezra was a man of extraordinary talents and zeal for the work of God.

Ezra is called a ready scribe, meaning that he had the ability to interpret the spiritual sense of the Scriptures. His contemporaries and the succeeding generations alike held him in such high esteem that he was referred to as the Second Moses. His mission was to set the temple worship in order, and the order he established endured until the fall of Jerusalem and the final destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70. He also promoted holiness with respect to marriage and cast out the heathen wives of the Jews.

The portion of this book of Ezra is valuable as it helps us, in our generation, to realise and understand the keys to the restoration of the Church and of all that the Lord has planned in these Last Days.

Just for a moment, let us look at the Tabernacle of Moses as it portrays the New Testament truths of restoration and spiritual worship. In type, this Tabernacle was fulfilled by Christ and is to be fulfilled by the Church, as well as by each individual believer.

The Tabernacle of Moses had seven pieces of furniture. Firstly, there is the Altar which speaks of salvation and the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ for our sins. This foreshadows what we shall see in the Last Days, during the mighty harvest of souls. The Laver is the second piece of furniture, representing Water Baptism and the Word of God. Water Baptism, as the Lord Jesus Christ said, is given unto us to fulfill all righteousness. We are going to see multitudes upon multitudes being baptized in water, signifying their desire and their determination to go on with the Lord.

Thirdly, there is the Candlestick that speaks of the anointings of the Seven Spirits of the Lord. To a certain extent, we see these anointings moving in our own lives. They are found in Isaiah 11:2, “And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD...” These anointings were upon the Lord Jesus without measure, and through them, He did mighty signs and wonders.

I believe that in the Last Days we are going to see the Seven Spirits of the Lord move in a way we have never before experienced in the Church of Jesus Christ! There is the Spirit of the Lord, which is the anointing to preach. We are going to see great conviction take place as the Word of God is preached. Tremendous wisdom is going to be manifested. We are going to

see an understanding, the like of which we have never seen before, of God's ways. The Spirit of counsel is going to fall upon us in such a way that we know exactly what God wants us to do. We are going to see the Spirit of might; the power of God released in the Church. We are going to see mighty signs and wonders through the Spirit of might as well as the fear of the Lord and a release of knowledge (Dan. 12:4). Amen!

The next piece of furniture is the Table of Shewbread, representing Jesus as the Bread of Life – the Word made flesh. I believe with all my heart that we are going to experience such a revelation of Christ that we, too, become broken bread for the nations. The fifth article of furniture, the Altar of Incense, speaks of intercessory prayer that causes one to draw closer and closer to the Lord and to understand what He is saying. Through intercession, one is able to bring to pass those things of which He has spoken. We need to have Him speak to us and give us a vision but that vision must also be birthed through prayer.

The sixth article of furniture is the Ark of the Covenant, speaking of the laws written upon the fleshly tables of our hearts. Finally, the seventh piece of furniture is the Mercy Seat. Above the Mercy Seat there was the glory of God – the Shekinah glory! As we look in Numbers 7:89, we find that God actually spoke from off the Mercy Seat. We want to hear the voice of God in a way we have never heard before!

***We are going to see mighty signs  
and wonders!***

The New Testament fulfilment of the Temple worship revealed to Israel in the Old Testament is explained, to a certain extent, by Paul in 2 Corinthians 6:16, "...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." I believe that we are going to have a revelation not only of Christ, but also of the Father and of the Holy Spirit in us as we have never had before. I believe we are going to see the Three-in-One walk in His "temples" in the Last Days. We shall be so conscious of God's presence.

The Tabernacle of David was the next dwelling place and featured only the Ark of the Covenant. We find that the Ark was no longer mentioned after the siege of Babylon. The Tabernacle of David was a tent upon Mount Zion that housed the Ark of the Covenant. It was there that King David used to go and sit before the Lord.

In Amos 9:11, there is a prophetic word that says, "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old." This prophecy was quoted by the Apostle James in Acts 15:16-17, "After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things."

There is a clear-cut promise for the Last Day Church that God is going to raise up the Tabernacle of David again. We will now go on to look at Ezra chapters 7-10 to examine the keys to the restoration of the Church in these Last Days.

## Chapter 7 — The Genealogy, Life and Ministry of Ezra

**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.”* This genealogy is incomplete since there were nearly 1000 years from the Exodus (1427 B.C.) to the return under Ezra, which was in the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes (c. 458 B.C.).

One gap may be filled from 1 Chronicles 6:7-10, which supplies six names between Meraioth and Azariah (Ezra 7:3). Another gap probably occurs between Seraiah (Ezra 7:1) and Ezra himself, since Seraiah appears to be the high priest of Zedekiah’s time, who lived at least 130 years before Ezra. Three or four names are probably missing in this gap. Another name, Meraioth, may be obtained from 1 Chronicles 9:11, between Zadok and Ahitub (Ezra 7:2). This would make a total of 26 names, which is probably nearer the correct number.

We must realise that all Scripture is given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit and therefore these omissions are necessary to emphasise a spiritual truth. Only 17 names appear between Aaron and Ezra (including Ezra).

This is significant in light of the other lists of 17 in the Word of God. For example, in Ezekiel 18:15-17, there is a list of 17 virtues of a righteous man. In Romans 8:35 and 38-39, there are 17 trials that try us but are unable to keep us from the love of God. In Galatians 5:19-21, there are 17 sins that will separate us from God. Seventeen signifies moral and spiritual perfection.



Therefore, these 17 named priests are the ones who are counted worthy to be of that number. The list of those priests who were found worthy to be included in the 17 names were from Aaron to Ezra. May we understand that this has an application for our lives.

Rather than being recognized by man for our earthly positions during our lifetime, we want to be recognized by God and included amongst the list of the faithful shepherds in His Book for eternity. Little, if anything, is known of the lives of these priests with the notable exceptions of the few we will mention in the following verses.

**7:2** - *“The son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub.”*

Zadok received a very honorable mention as being a faithful priest during the reign of David, and was entrusted with the service of the Tabernacle of Moses at Gibeah. He, along with Nathan, anointed Solomon to be the next king. His faithfulness continued throughout many generations through his sons who will be privileged to approach and minister to the Lord in the Millennium Temple (Ezek. chapter 43). They are held up as examples to all ministers that we might see the rewards given to faithful priests.

**7:3-5** - *“The son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of*

*Meraioth, The son of Zerayah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki, The son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest.”* Phineas, because of his zeal for God in slaying an Israelite man who had openly and contemptuously defied God by bringing a Midian woman into his tent, received an everlasting priesthood, as we now read in

Numbers 25:10-13, “And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy. Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace: And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.”

Aaron was the elder brother of Moses and a descendant of Levi. He was the first high priest, and his descendants became the priestly tribe.

Together with Moses, Aaron entered into the presence of Pharaoh, and performed those mighty signs before the Egyptian king. In spite of the fact that he rebelled at Sinai by making a molten calf (Ex. 32), and that he sinned with Miriam by criticizing Moses, he was called a saint of the Lord in Psalm 106:16. Here again, we have a beautiful example of God’s gracious, redeeming love.

Eleazar, the third son of Aaron and the nephew of Moses, succeeded his father during the lifetime of Moses. His two elder brothers, Nadab and Abihu, had taken their censers and offered up strange fire before the Lord. “There went out fire from the Lord and devoured them and they died before the Lord” (Lev. 10:2). This is an awesome warning for us not to offer false worship before the Lord, for it is an abomination before His holiness. Therefore, Eleazar and Ithamar replaced them.

**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.”* A scribe was originally a secretary who was responsible for taking and keeping the records.

However, in the time of Ezra, scribes were students, copiers, and interpreters of the law. The fact that Ezra was known by this title emphasises the high honour in which this office was held. In fact, the scribe was held to be superior to the priest at this time and even until the days of the New Testament era.

The appellation “ready scribe” signifies one who was adept at the interpretation of Scripture and who could easily write on Scriptural matters (Ps. 45:1). It must be understood from this verse that Ezra enjoyed the confidence of the king to such an extent that the heart of the king was readily turned towards the affairs of God.

Again, how great is our God who rules in the heavens and in the affairs of men, and turns the hearts of kings as rivers of waters whithersoever He wills (Prov. 21:1).

**7:7** - *“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.”* As we have already mentioned in our comments on Ezra 2:70, the ministers were divided into the following groups: priests, Levites, Nethinims, and porters. An additional category is also included – that of the singers. We

must never forget that the Early Church was a singing congregation as it was in the days of the temple worship in David and Solomon's era.

In the psalms and in the epistles of the New Testament, much is made of worshipping, praising, and singing unto the Lord, and the making of melody in our hearts. Let us pay attention to our singers so that they may enthrone our Lord with their sweet music.

Music can also be martial; and we must remember that the Church is like a mighty army with banners unfurled, going victoriously against the foe. As we see in Song of Solomon 6:4, "Thou *art* beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as *an army* with banners." With songs of victory, we march, completely undaunted. Praise the Lord!

**7:8-9** - "*And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. 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.*" This would have been in the year 458 B.C. The actual direct distance from Babylon to Jerusalem is approximately 520 miles.

However, because of the desert which separates the two capitals, the route chosen for the journey by most travelers and armies is through Carchemish and the Orontes Valley, a distance of nearly 900 miles. This would account for the four months it took the faithful band to travel to their desired haven.

### ***The Ministry of Ezra***

**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.”* In order to prepare our hearts to seek and obey the Law of the Lord, we need to fill our hearts with the knowledge of His Word. This is in addition to keeping our heart “with all diligence: for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23).

When we do prepare our hearts, God will most graciously write His laws upon the fleshly tables of our hearts, and as the prophet Ezekiel says, cause us to walk in His statutes (Ezek. 36:27). King Rehoboam shows us the result of not doing so, as we read in 2 Chronicles 12:14, “And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD.”

Now there is another very important truth in life here, namely, that knowledge by itself can puff us up. But if we share it with others in all humility, seeking to genuinely aid them in the pursuit of the fulfilment of God’s purpose for their lives, then we who water will also be watered. The pursuit of knowledge for the sake of knowing brings death, “for the letter killeth but the Spirit bringeth life” (2 Cor. 3:6).

Another very blessed truth that should not be overlooked is that the Lord prepares the heart of the humble (Ps. 10:17). Therefore, as we will humble ourselves before the Lord, He will give us a heart that pleases Him, and we can become as King David, a man after God’s own heart (Acts 13:22).

### ***The Letter of the Persian King Artaxerxes***

**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.”*

Again, may we note the remarkable attitude that the king had toward this Jewish priest.

It was an attitude of great respect, suggesting that this king’s father was none other than Ahasuerus, the husband of Esther. (Esther pleaded for the lives of her people, the Jews, approximately 12 years after the accession of her husband to the throne as seen in Esther 3:7. Ahasuerus reigned 22 years in all. Eight years later, his son ascended the throne, so that with the seventh year of Artaxerxes, there would have been a total of 15 years of the very favourable decree toward the Jews by Ahasuerus.)

Thus, some 15 years later, Artaxerxes still held the Jews, and especially their teachers in high esteem, just like his father Ahasuerus who was ever wont to consult those who knew the law and judgment (Esth. 1:13-15). Ezra must have personally known the king and undoubtedly witnessed to him concerning the things of God.

**7:12** - *“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.”* This title, “king of kings,” was merited on the grounds that, like his father Ahasuerus, Artaxerxes reigned over the same 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia, many of which would have been ruled over by kings of local territories. Now re-emphasising

the fact that Ezra is a priest and a scribe, or a trustee of the law of the one and only true God, the king uses a phrase translated into English as “perfect peace.”

In the original, the word “peace” was not used, but has been added by the translators to give a sense of the meaning that they thought the king wished to convey in this greeting. It would seem appropriate to add that “perfect” could well contain this thought, but also the thought could be that Ezra adhered perfectly and fully to the Law (of which the Lord Jesus, in Matthew 5:18, said that every jot and tittle would be fulfilled). It is with this in mind that we, gentle reader, should seek to be faithful to God’s Word in every sense, since he who is faithful in that which is least, is faithful in that which is much.

**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.”* This was the second return, or second wave of revival, the first being in the days of Zerubbabel, and the third under Nehemiah.

The very important truth to glean from this is that God never violates the free will of man. Even in times of revival, it is only those who choose of their own free will to enter into the new moves of God who enter in. Beloved, let us therefore prepare to move on ourselves in the Lord.

**7:14** - *“Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king, and of his seven counsellors, to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which is in thine hand.”* It is

noteworthy that the kings of Persia were surrounded by seven counselors: a type of the Seven Spirits of the Lord who surround the Lord of Glory. These Seven Spirits of the Lord are available to all His saints that They may enable them to make the right choices.

**7:15-16** - *“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, 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.”*

The lavishness of the offering that the king permitted is truly remarkable. It fulfils the prophecy in Haggai 2:7-8, “And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts.” In like manner, Isaiah chapter 60 speaks of the glory of the heathen coming to the nation of Israel. Although Babylon had taken all the treasures from Jerusalem, she now had to release them along with all the other gold and silver that she had taken from the other nations whom she had pillaged. How wonderfully does our God turn the captivity of His people!

**7:17-18** - *“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. 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.*” Perfect trust is implied in these instructions, for the king asked no accounting from Ezra and his colleagues for the money that was given.

May God grant that we, as ministers of God, may incur and be worthy of the same trust from His people. Those who merit such trust are termed “faithful” as we read in 2 Kings 12:14-15 during the time when the Temple of Solomon was being repaired in the days of Jehoash, king of Judah, “they gave to the workmen, and repaired therewith the house of the Lord, Moreover they reckoned not with the men, into whose hand they delivered the money to be bestowed on workmen: for they dealt faithfully.”

**7:19-23** - *“The vessels also that are given thee for the service of the house of thy God, those deliver thou before the God of Jerusalem. 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. 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, 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. 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?”* Certainly we see in these commandments of the king how wonderfully the Lord had touched and fashioned the heart of the king to provide abundantly for His work. The work that He had entrusted to the hands of this

faithful priest and scribe Ezra was now divinely provided for. May this be our case, that the Lord will abundantly provide as long as we have “Teflon-coated hands” (non-sticky) and use the dedicated money for the work for which it is given, and not use it to gratify our own lusts.

Sadly, so many ministers whom God has caused to pass through difficult financial times, when blessed by God, use the finances that flow in during the times of revival on an extravagant lifestyle. I have regretfully seen how a lavish lifestyle ends in immorality. Solomon is one such example. **May we develop, at all times, the fruit of temperance.**

**7:24** - *“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.”* This allowed them to enjoy the king’s favour and gave them the freedom to minister to God without the need to attend to the burdens that taxation would impose upon them.

**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.”* The little phrase “the wisdom of thy God, that is in thine hand” suggests that the king is referring to the scroll and parchments that a scribe would normally carry. This is analogous to how we carry our Bibles. Therefore, in keeping the laws of God which are in the Word, we will find wisdom.

The extent of God's favour upon the returning exiles was so great that He ensured that His people would not be subject to the heathen Persian governors. Rather, they would have judges from among themselves, and the laws would be the Laws of God to which the Persian king had indeed given his approval. Thus they were to become again a self-governing community and nation, albeit still a colony of the Persian Empire.

**7:26** - *“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.”* Very clearly, the king was linking obedience to the Law of God as being obedient to his own laws.

Would to God that were true today, but unfortunately we are living in the ungodliness of the Last Days, of which we read in Isaiah 24:5, “The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.”

**7:27-28** - *“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: 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.”* Now follows the pious and devout thanks of Ezra for all of God's goodness as he says. Clearly, Ezra recognized that it was not by might nor by power, but by the grace of God alone that the hearts of the king and his

seven counselors were turned to favour the work of God that had been entrusted into his hands. **As we, too, have our eyes enlightened to see and understand more and more the hand of God directing our lives in even the smallest of things, then we will become candidates to receive the abundance of His grace.**

## Chapter 8 — The Second Journey under Ezra from Babylon to Jerusalem

Now follows a long list of the males who went up with Ezra from Babylon, the land of their captivity. We should remember that all these were born in captivity and had never known the land of their ancestors.

It is true that many Christians are, in a sense, in the same position. They have never known the true liberty of the Spirit-filled life and the glories of revival. Living in a time when the Spirit of God is not moving, they are living far below their Scriptural privileges (See Rom. 9:4). Even as these dear Jews who had known no other life than a legalistic form of religion, far from the Land of Promise.

**8:1-15** - *“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. Of the sons of Phinehas; Gershom: of the sons of Ithamar; Daniel: of the sons of David; Hattush. 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. Of the sons of Pahath-moab; Elihoenai the son of Zerariah, and with him two hundred males. Of the sons of Shechaniah; the son of Jahaziel, and with him three hundred males. Of the sons also of Adin; Ebed the son of Jonathan, and with him fifty males. And of the sons of Elam; Jeshaiiah the son of Athaliah, and with him seventy males. And of the sons of Shephatiah; Zebadiah the son of Michael, and with him fourscore males. Of the sons of Joab; Obadiah the son of Jehiel, and with*

*him two hundred and eighteen males. And of the sons of Shelomith; the son of Josiphiah, and with him an hundred and threescore males. And of the sons of Bebai; Zechariah the son of Bebai, and with him twenty and eight males. And of the sons of Azgad; Johanan the son of Hakkatan, and with him an hundred and ten males. And of the last sons of Adonikam, whose names are these, Eliphelet, Jeiel, and Shemaiah, and with them threescore males. Of the sons also of Bigvai; Uthai, and Zabbud, and with them seventy males. 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.”*

Unlike most historians of antiquity who used the third person, Ezra wrote in the first person, because he was reporting his actions in response to the king's commission.

The river referred to is a tributary of the River Euphrates, and was situated quite near to Babylon. These exiles were able to camp in the fields and had an abundant supply of water, in order to prepare for their long journey of some four months to Jerusalem. Here, Ezra inspected them for a period of three days.

From this we may learn valuable lessons that we, too, should not undertake journeys in a haphazard fashion, as is the manner of some, for in so doing we often incur unnecessary hardships which good organisation can avoid. Even as the Lord admonished when building a tower that one had to have sufficient funds to finish it (Lk. 14:28), all projects that we undertake should be prayerfully and carefully costed to ensure that sufficient finances are available.

To read that Ezra found none of the sons of Levi among the assembled company is sad. They were those who, when Moses cried out in the wilderness, “Who is on the Lord’s side?” rose as one man, and stood with Moses. Now some 1000 years later, they were esteeming the synagogues and amenities of Babylonia above the dwelling places of Zion. May we seek the Lord and pray that our natural and spiritual children will always desire His presence above everything else that this life has to offer.

**8:16** - *“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.”* In this life, we need to desire to be surrounded by and have communion with those who have the understanding of God’s ways.

When we are in perplexing situations and those around us only see the natural, mistakenly attributing our decisions to folly or error, it can cause such discouragement. Yet, when a man of understanding comes upon the scene and speaks a word of life from the Lord into the darkness of our problems, what peace, solace, comfort, and strength it brings! I personally receive such strength from the men and women of understanding who surround me. To me, they are like Aaron and Hur who held up the hand of Moses.

**8:17** - *“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.”* The meaning of “the place Casiphia” has been the subject

of much discussion. It certainly means silver, and whilst some have identified this as being the silver mines of the area in the Caspian mountains, it would seem a great deal too far for Ezra to have sent a delegation that had to have returned within a very short period of time.

Matthew Henry has referred to it as the college for the Levites, where they were instructed during the time of the captivity. It was probably located in the city named Casiphia, which does mean silver. This would seem to be more the sense of this passage, especially as the next few verses refer again to a man of understanding, which is what a college would produce.

**8:18-23** - *“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; And Hashabiah, and with him Jeshaiiah of the sons of Merari, his brethren and their sons, twenty; 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. 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. 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. So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us.”* This is a very wonderful testimony



when we consider that the journey would take some four months through terrain that was very difficult and prone to attack by robbers (Ezra 8:31). This band, with all their treasures, would have been a very rich prey for marauding bands of thieves that inhabited those areas.

Thus, in refusing to ask the king for protection, they were glorifying the Lord, as well as maintaining an excellent testimony toward the king of the greatness of the power of our God to preserve His people. They obviously had the mind of the Lord in this (He was entreated of them) and were not acting out of presumption.

Let us be of the same mind so that we do not turn to the strength and power of this world to protect us from our enemies. In our travels from country to country, the Lord has quickened to us personally the promises of Psalm 91 concerning plagues, viruses, and the enemy for our travel from country to country. However, we should take all reasonable precautions and not be foolish.

**8:24** - *“Then I separated twelve of the chief of the priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them.”*

Twelve is the number of government, and in the selection of 12 of the chief priests, Ezra was illustrating ability as a good administrator. This is therefore a lesson for us. Although it is essential to have the anointing and the moving of the Spirit in our churches, fellowships, and colleges, we must not neglect to ensure that we have the necessary infrastructure. We must have well-organised administration so that the work of God proceeds smoothly and meaningfully.

An excellent lesson from history is the Methodist revival of the eighteenth century. The two principal leaders, John Wesley and George Whitefield, had quite different philosophies. George Whitefield had the larger meetings but was burdened with providing for his orphanages, such that he was continually seeking to raise money in his meetings.

The problem was that he did not provide good infrastructure for his organisation. On the other hand, John Wesley concentrated upon revival meetings and the moving of the Holy Spirit, yet he left behind him an excellent organisation.

As he was dying, George Whitefield acknowledged that his work would not last, whilst John Wesley's would endure. His remarks were fully justified, as the Methodist or Wesleyan movement has remained until this day.

**8:25** - *“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.”* Again, we must note that in this time of revival, the hearts of all levels of society were touched. So it will be in the Last Days, for when God moves there is no shortage of finance!

**8:26-30** - *“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; Also twenty basins of gold, of a thousand drams; and two vessels of fine copper, precious as gold. 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. 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. 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.”*

In good administration, there is accountability. Every gift that Ezra had received was entrusted to the priests. Certain well-known evangelists who have large organisations do not handle the finances but entrust their disposal to trusted colleagues. They therefore enjoy an honourable name and reputation.

**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.”*

Thus, all told, Ezra waited for 12 days ensuring that all was ready and in order, with respect to men and provisions, before beginning the journey. We must always remember that “...he that believeth shall not make haste” (Isa. 28:16).

**8:32** - *“And we came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days.”* Even upon arrival, there was a time of settling in before the matters of the treasures were resolved. I do think that this very precise reporting of the journey is given so that we might be instructed in our movements, and that all things might be done decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40).

**8:33-34** - *“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; By number and by weight of every one: and all the weight was written at that time.”*

Written records were kept so that if there had been a challenge concerning the integrity of any of the participating priests, there would have been recorded proof to protect them from these accusations.

**8:35** - *“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.”*

Thus, we should note that a sacrifice was made to God before any other business was transacted. They were most careful to observe the order of events, so that after discharging the matter of the treasures that had been entrusted to them, they could therefore, with a free heart, worship the Lord.

**8:36** - *“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.”* The officers were now acquainted with the orders of the king and so they, in obedience, gave all the assistance these returning exiles needed.

How God transforms situations! Where once they had been the captives, now they were honoured and treated with all courtesy by the governor and his officers. How great is our God! When the Lord turns our captivity, "...we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them" (Ps. 126:1-2) and we sing praises to our wonderful God. Amen and Amen.

## PART FOUR

### *The Restoration of the People*

#### Chapter 9 — Israel has Intermarried with the Heathen

**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.”* The seriousness of marriage and the importance of having the partner whom God has ordained cannot be overly emphasised. In the Law God decreed,

“Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee: Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice; And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods” (Ex. 34:12,15-16).

Taking a wife who was not of the children of Israel was the primary undoing of the great King Solomon, as we read in 1 Kings 11:1-6. “But king Solomon loved many strange women,

together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father.”

Lest we think that this was simply a commandment for the Israelites, we are instructed by the Apostle Paul, the teacher of the Church, that we are not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14).

**9:2** - *“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.”* This seems to have been a prevalent problem during the Restoration Period, for even the prophet Malachi, who prophesied during this time, cries out in Malachi 2:11, “Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god.”

Realizing that the Restoration Period reflects our days, we need to see that one of the main attacks against the Church and humanity as a whole lies in the area of marriage. The statistics concerning divorce are deplorable. In a great number of countries today, fewer than half of all marriages are expected to last for the lifetime of the partners. This is because people do not earnestly seek God for His choice in taking a lifetime partner.

As Christians, it is not enough to simply take a wife or a husband who is born again. We must marry one who has the same vision. Unless we do, unhappiness will soon result, and disillusionment will be our lot for the rest of our married life. I know many who have made this unfortunate choice and have lived to regret their error.

**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 astonished.”* The effect upon the righteous of these mixed marriages can be seen in the attitude of Ezra, the godly and holy priest. Whilst in our days we perhaps do not resort to the outward manifestations of grief as those in Ezra’s days, yet our hearts and spirits are broken and overwhelmed with sadness.

**9:4** - *“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 astonished until the evening sacrifice.”* That little phrase “trembled at the words of the God of Israel” is the hallmark of the godly. Along with a contrite spirit, it is the qualification of those whom God Himself will esteem and acknowledge.



Isaiah 66:2 confirms this, “For all those *things* hath mine hand made, and all those *things* have been, saith the LORD: but to this *man* will I look, *even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.*” **Whatever God says, let us be possessed of that reverential fear and awe which permits His Word to apprehend us as we accept it.**

### *The Prayer of Ezra*

**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.*” The time of the evening sacrifice (which is about 6 p.m. when the day’s work was finished) was a time set apart for the worship of God by the pious Jews in all generations. It is also an excellent time for us, after our evening meal, to remember the Lord and give thanks for the blessings and preservations that the hand of God upon us has wrought throughout the day.

**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.*” Here is the acknowledgement of the sins of the people by Ezra. As did all the saintly leaders of past generations, including Moses, Samuel, and Daniel, we find them interceding before the Lord. They stood in the gap to turn God’s wrath away from their generation.

This ministry is pleasing in the eyes of God, as we note in Isaiah 53:12, where it is written that God would divide for Christ

a portion with the great because He had made intercession for the transgressors. Let us wait upon the Lord for this most precious ministry, that through us, the intercession of the Holy Spirit may preserve many from the pit.

**9:7** - *“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.”* Now Ezra pours out his heart unto the Lord concerning the sins of His people.

There is no doubt that their propensity was to rebel even before they were the chosen people God had spoken of, as we see in Deuteronomy 9:4-24. The Lord did not give Israel the Promised Land because of their righteousness, but as punishment for the wickedness of the former inhabitants.

In fact, the Lord said that they were rebellious from the very day that He knew them (Deut. 9:24). Yet in spite of this, He loved them for Abraham’s sake. God’s longsuffering with the children of Israel is a model for us in our dealings with the rebellious and difficult members in our congregations.

In studying the children of Israel, I often asked myself the question, “Why would God want to restore them?” God called them rebellious, but even more, they were the ones who crucified the Lord of Glory. Pontius Pilate gave the order to crucify Jesus against his will, having been persuaded by the chief priests, the scribes, religious leaders, and the mob.

Clearly when we look at the types in the Old Testament, we find that God gave strict instructions as to how the Passover lamb was to be slain. He said to let the whole congregation of Israel kill it. Neither the Egyptians nor the mixed multitude killed it. Christ, as our Passover Lamb, fulfilled all of the Old Testament types, and the accounts in the Gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles manifestly state that Israel crucified Christ (Ex. 12:6; Mt. 27:20; Acts 3:13-15). Because of this, judgment came upon the nation. Judgment had come previously through the Babylonians, because the country of Israel had rebelled against God and had gone into idolatry and other kinds of sins.

God brought the Babylonian Empire upon them, and because they crucified Christ, He brought Titus and the Romans upon them in A.D. 70. Rebellion was so rooted in the Jewish nation at the time of the Roman Emperor Hadrian (135 A.D.) that he latinized the name Philistine to become Palestine.

Therefore, we have here an extremely rebellious nation who killed the Son of God, yet God still restored them. Why? The answer to this is the key to God's dealing with the backslider. "Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day" (Deut. 10:15). God restored Israel because He loved the fathers.

Abraham was, of course, the founding father, and he was called "the Friend of God" (Jas. 2:23). Abraham received all the promises, and it was to him that God made the promise concerning His seed. Isaac was the one hundred-fold Christian

(Gen. 26:12). He is the epitome of meekness. This was revealed when he did not fight for the wells that his father Abraham had dug. (Gen. 26:18-22).

Jacob wrestled with God and prevailed. He had his name changed to Israel meaning “prince with God” and after his death, he was called “Jeshurun” which meant “upright.” The fourth patriarch was Joseph. He was such a wonderful man of God that he was called a fruitful bough (Gen. 49:22). God first chose Israel and then chose to restore her because of His love for the fathers.

Israel committed the greatest sin by crucifying the Christ of Glory. That crucifixion was not just for a moment or for a day. Zechariah 13:6 tells us that He is still marked! His wounds are forever, and every time the Father looks at Him, the Father has to consider who made them. Israel has left those marks eternally upon Christ. However, God still forgave because of the fathers.

We can see this again with David. David was a man after God’s own heart. Continually we read in the Psalms that the Israelites made pleas to God to remember David their father. Because of David, God did not destroy His people. This is the tremendous power of a godly father.

We must bear in mind that restoration and blessing are predicated upon the parents. Our children are going to be blessed of God to

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degree that we  
know Him.***

the degree that we know Him; that is Scriptural. The degree that we live for God is the degree to which our children will be blessed.

**9:8** - *“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.”* Here we see fulfilment of the cry of Habakkuk in Habakkuk 3:2, “...O LORD revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.” Habakkuk lived during the reigns of Manasseh and Amon, kings of Judah. He foresaw the Babylonian captivity: hence his prayer for a reviving in the time of judgment.

**9:9** - *“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.”*

Gabriel gives this commandment concerning rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem when he visits the prophet Daniel—Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be sixty nine weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times (Dan. 9:25). Thus our calculations would be  $69 \times 7$  (days in a week) = 483 years, remembering that since there is no year 0, that would mean 457 B.C. + 483 years = 26 A.D. (the exact year of the Lord’s presentation to Israel by John the Baptist.)

Here Ezra acknowledges the goodness of God in releasing them from their Babylonian captivity and enabling them to rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem. After redemption from a captivity that they had fully deserved, Israel was in need of a personal reviving to rebuild the Temple and the walls, and to repair the desolation of the city. As it is with so many of us when we have been redeemed from a captivity that we have merited because of past misdeeds, God graciously returns us to the pathway of light.

**9:10** - *“And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy commandments.”* The words that follow are not a direct quotation from any particular Scripture, rather they give the general sense of that which the Lord has required concerning the children of Israel’s conduct, when they were to go in and possess the Promised Land.

**9:11** - *“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.”* These heathen nations practiced the most debasing acts of immorality, which were direct fruit from the fact that they were worshipping devils.

**9:12** - *“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.”* It was therefore a logical conclusion that there was to be no intermarriage between a nation called to

holiness and those that were unclean in every area of their lives. Thus, as Christians, we too must not intermarry with unbelievers. The Lord had the same standard in restoration that He had when Israel originally went in to possess the land under Joshua.

**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.”* Some of the most touching verses in Scripture are Hosea 11:8-9 where we find God’s extraordinary mercy upon Israel, in spite of all her sinfulness:

“How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city.”

Essentially, the Lord was saying that although His people were bent on backsliding and merited being destroyed even as Sodom and Gomorrah were (Deut. 29:23), He spared them because He was rich in mercy. God simply sent them into Babylonian captivity, where He promised they would be redeemed from all their filthiness (Micah 4:10). **The purpose of captivity is to cleanse us from a besetting sin.** Thus, Babylon, which was the source of all idolatry, cleansed Israel from their sin of idolatry.

**9:14** - *“Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldst not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?”* When the Lord most graciously delivers His people from their bondages, He reminds us (as with His warning to the man who had an infirmity for 38 years), *“...Behold thou art made whole; sin no more lest a worse thing come upon thee”* (Jn. 5:14).

*Let us not  
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This admonition was also given to the woman taken in adultery in John 8:11. With much grief, I have seen many who seek for deliverance from their bondages and then return to their sins and bondages, like a dog to its vomit (Prov. 26:11; 2 Pet. 2:22). They were then given over to evil spirits that tormented them to their dying day. Let us not tempt the Lord as some people have done, instead let us walk in holiness all the days of our lives, being grateful unto Him who has loved us and washed us from our sins.

**9:15** - *“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.”* Here we see Ezra terminating his confessions with heaviness of heart.

In Psalm 1:5, there is an awesome warning that *“...the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the*



congregation of the righteous.” They shall not be able to remain before the throne of the Majesty on High, and will instead be like the chaff which the wind drives away. However, if we rely upon His grace to transform us, we shall be presented faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy (Jude 1:24). It is important for us to consider what it will be like on Judgment Day.

## Chapter 10 — Separation of Israel from Strange Wives

**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.”* I have noticed during my life that people are like their leaders. If the leader is godly, then he reproduces godly people who will follow him. Thus, as Ezra wept before the Lord, the result was that the people also wept contritely with brokenness of heart under great conviction before the Lord.

**10:2** - *“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.”* It is one of the great virtues of our God that He gives hope, even in times of absolute darkness – darkness which this sin had produced over the spiritual lives of the people of God. Whilst stressing the blessing of hope, we must add that we can cross the line of no return. Esau, who sought the blessing with tears after he had mocked and belittled it, found no place for repentance.

**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.”* It is indeed wonderful that Shechaniah strengthened God’s leader at such a time as this. We have similar accounts in Scripture.

As when David was surrounded by the Philistines and Nathan and Zadok strengthened him in the purposes of God. Another well-known example was when Aaron and Hur lifted up the hands of Moses.

We must ask God to give us those who have had the same vision birthed within them to strengthen us and give the word of the Lord when the need arises. I do thank the Lord for likeminded brethren around the world who receive a word from God for me when I am in need. It is also noteworthy that they made a covenant to do that which was right in this matter. As we study the Scriptures, we find in times of revival that God's people were prone to make covenants or to bind themselves by a solemn oath to walk in His ways.

We may cite the case of Jehoiada the high priest who, on the occasion of the accession of Joash to the throne of Judah, made a covenant between the Lord and the king and the people that they should be the Lord's people (2 Ki. 11:17). While we must be careful to enter into this act with due solemnity, it is good at times for the congregation, led by the pastor, to enter into a covenant with the Lord. It could be a covenant to cease from any matter that is displeasing to the Lord, or one to engage in a certain godly pursuit. This includes even the matter of pledges for missionary endeavours or building programs.

**10:4 - *“Arise; for this matter belongeth unto thee: we also will be with thee: be of good courage, and do it.”*** These godly exhorters who encourage us, and even give direction in times of decision are so precious. They truly are comparable to those who

have the wellspring of wisdom within their hearts flowing out to us as a flowing brook to revive our thirsty soul. It is such consolation to know that those of good heart are with us, and that like Joshua of old, we, too, can be of good courage as we right the wrongs in the congregation.

**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.”* The leaders led the way in this covenant, as should always be the case. Regretfully, I have known of cases where people in leadership have encouraged the people under them in a good work but have not followed suit themselves.

Let that not be the case with us. That situation is analogous to a signpost which points the way but does not go where it points, as was the case with King Solomon.

**10:6** - *“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.”*

We see frequently that godly leadership experiences godly mourning and grief when sin is revealed, and his heart is made heavy under the burden of the iniquities of his people. It is indeed as the priest of old, who had to wear the breastplate with the stones of the twelve tribes, that he might bear the judgment of the children of Israel. A truly righteous leader will have his people upon his heart, constantly bringing them before the Lord.

**10:7** - *“And they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem unto all the children of the captivity, that they should gather themselves together unto Jerusalem.”* When events of singular importance are to take place either in the nation of Israel or in the Church, it is necessary to call a solemn assembly so that all are present when decisions by the leadership are announced. It is there that the Lord’s presence apprehends one and all, and then the congregation moves as one man. When grave decisions are made, it is essential that unity prevail.

**10:8** - *“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.”* This action was only possible in the nation of Israel because Ezra had been given that power by the king of Persia, as we read in Ezra 7:26. We must remember that church membership is voluntary and that such matters concerning those who will not cooperate in the things of God must be left to the Lord to judge and mete out the punishment that He deems right.

**10:9** - *“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.”* We have noticed that when the Spirit of the Lord is moving, even the most adverse weather will not affect church attendance. When, however, there is no noticeable move of the Spirit, even a slight change in the weather is excuse enough for some to miss a church service.

**10:10** - *“And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives, to increase the trespass of Israel.”* When addressing problems, whether in a church or in people’s lives, a leader must be very specific. This was the problem with the friends of Job who did not discern the real problem in his life that the Lord was trying to deal with, particularly that of self-righteousness. Instead, they spoke of many irrelevant truths which did not help solve his situation.

It was only when the much younger man Elihu spoke under the anointing of God that the matter was truly dealt with (Job 32:3, 35:2, 36:2-4). A good leader will also be willing to confront and point out areas of sin as the Lord directs. He must not be afraid of the reaction of people, but rather be totally obedient to God.

**10:11** - *“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.”* In this life, it is not only important to identify with exactitude the sins of God’s people, but also to realise that they must be dealt with in such a manner that there is a cessation from that sin. This is exactly what Ezra was doing. The people who have sinned must therefore respond accordingly by declaring that they will break with their sinful ways.

**10:12-13** - *“Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, As thou hast said, so must we do. 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.”* This separation was

not going to be dealt with in a day but over a period of time. So it is sometimes in congregations where sin is rife; it takes weeks and months to cleanse.

**10:14** - *“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.”* In matters so grave as this national sin, there had to be a thorough examination and cleansing of the people.

Regretfully, these situations are often glossed over and people are not delivered from those sins, which then crop up again. As shepherds and pastors, we should remember that we are like spiritual surgeons who are cutting out a cancerous growth. We must make very sure that we have taken out all the roots and every part where the cancer of sin has reproduced or revealed itself.

**10:15-17** - *“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. 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. And they made an end with all the men that had taken strange wives by the first day of the first month.”* The slow, meticulous way in which this matter was examined merits our attention. The sin was of such a nature that if it had not have been checked, it could have ruined the whole of the nation both morally and spiritually. This is true for a church:

unless the sin of marrying divorced or unconverted spouses is drastically addressed, it will spread and ruin generations of young people. Let no one suggest that when a Christian marries an unsaved person, the Christian will convert the unsaved one! It is a bad apple that ruins the box of good apples, not the reverse. Certainly Ezra and his godly associates recognized this truth. They therefore addressed the problem swiftly; and so should we, for if we do not, the spirit of immorality will take over our congregations.

**10:18-19** - *“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. 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.”* One of the most distressing features of this sin was that the leaders (the priests being equivalent to our pastors) had married strange wives. The result was that the congregation had followed their leaders. It is so sad when we see pastors who are married to divorcees, or to women who do not have the same vision, encouraging their people to do likewise.

**10:20-44** - *“And of the sons of Immer; Hanani, and Zebadiah. And of the sons of Harim; Maaseiah, and Elijah, and Shemaiah, and Jehiel, and Uzziiah. And of the sons of Pashur; Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethaneel, Jozabad, and Elasah. Also of the Levites; Jozabad, and Shimei, and Kelaiah, (the same is Kelita,) Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer. Of the singers also; Eliashib: and of the porters; Shallum, and Telem, and Uri. Moreover of Israel: of the sons of Parosh; Ramiah, and Jeziah, and Malchiah, and*



*Miamin, and Eleazar, and Malchijah, and Benaiah. And of the sons of Elam; Mattaniah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, and Abdi, and Jeremoth, and Eliah. And of the sons of Zattu; Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, and Jeremoth, and Zabad, and Aziza. Of the sons also of Bebai; Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, and Athlai. And of the sons of Bani; Meshullam, Malluch, and Adaiah, Jashub, and Sheal, and Ramoth. And of the sons of Pahath-moab; Adna, and Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezaleel, and Binnui, and Manasseh. And of the sons of Harim; Eliezer, Ishijah, Malchiah, Shemaiah, Shimeon, Benjamin, Malluch, and Shemariah. Of the sons of Hashum; Mattenai, Mattathah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, and Shimei. Of the sons of Bani; Maadai, Amram, and Uel, Benaiah, Bedeiah, Chelluh, Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasau, And Bani, and Binnui, Shimei, And Shelemiah, and Nathan, and Adaiah, Machnadebai, Shashai, Sharai, Azareel, and Shelemiah, Shemariah, Shallum, Amariah, and Joseph. Of the sons of Nebo; Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jadau, and Joel, Benaiah. All these had taken strange wives: and some of them had wives by whom they had children.”* Here we have a list of those leaders who had disgraced their Lord by contracting such marriages.

Forever written in the annals of Scriptures, their names will always be associated with this sin. Let us be those whose names are recorded forever in the books of heaven as being among the saints like Ezra, who have faithfully kept His commandments and have encouraged others to so do. May we be counted among those who have turned many to righteousness. Amen.

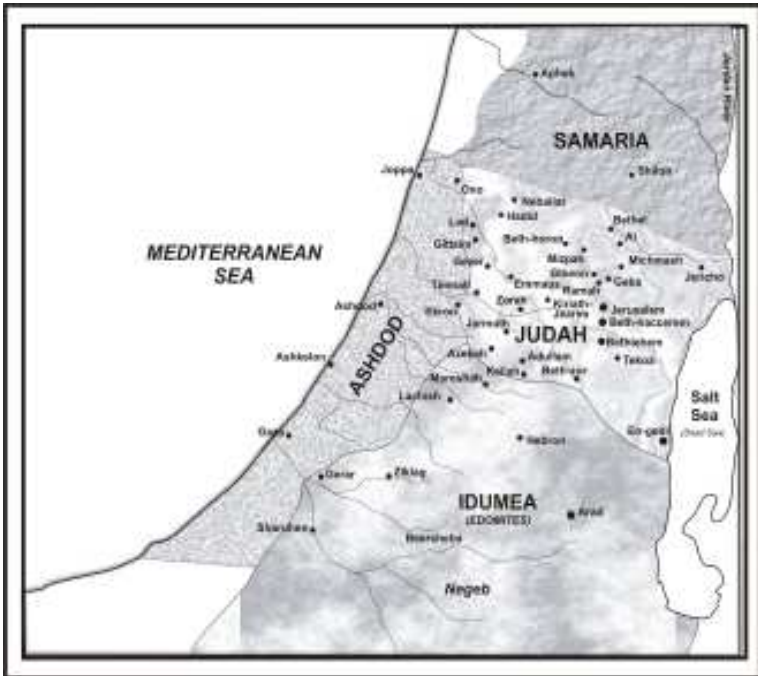
## Epilogue

After studying this book, may we see the way to revival in these clearly identifiable steps:

1. It must be God's time. The revival and restoration could not have come before the 70 years of captivity were finished. Therefore, we must patiently wait until His appointed hour has come.
2. Those that participate in the revival or restoration are those whose spirits God has stirred. Thus, we should ask God to give us a heart that seeks His face and is pleasing in His sight.
3. The first action must be to build a family or congregational altar—spend time in prayer, praise, and worship to the Lord so that His presence will be in our midst, for He inhabits the praises of His people.
4. The next action is to lay a good foundation with right doctrine and righteous leaders.
5. In the face of enemy attacks (for they will come) we must persevere, unwaveringly, with the vision until we bring forth the headstone, shouting: "Grace, grace unto the Lord!" (Zech. 4:7). It is by grace alone that the work which God entrusts to our care is accomplished.

*THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH*

## Map of Judaea at the Time of Nehemiah



# ***THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH***

## ***Introduction***

As one considers the ministry, there are basically two aspects with which a pastor must be concerned. First, he is naturally concerned with the spiritual care of his own heart and life, and that of the flock which has been entrusted to him. The second aspect of ministry in the life of the pastor that must not be overlooked is the responsibility for the construction and maintenance of the physical church building.

When starting this book, this fact became very real to me. The building that we occupy, although not large by some standards, became a burden to me when I was escorted by a new maintenance superintendent to see many areas that were in disrepair. The cost, time, and personnel that it took to bring it up to the required standard was considerable. There are many pastors like myself who are saddled with these problems. And I would say, virtually every pastor will pass through a similar experience at least once, if not several times, in his lifetime. Thus, this book of Nehemiah, which deals with such a situation, is a source of comfort to us all. It addresses this aspect of the pastor's ministry and responsibility, since Nehemiah had to bear the burden of the upkeep and building of not just one building or a group of buildings, but of the whole city of Jerusalem.

In the times when we are called upon to build a church or building, there are many spiritual lessons to be learnt and battles to be

won. Regrettably, it is a time when some ministers backslide because of the weight of the burdens imposed upon them in the building programs. Therefore, during such times, special vigilance should be maintained to ensure there is an abundant flow of grace to enable us to accomplish the work. In this way, we may come out onto a higher spiritual plain of glory through the trials that we have traversed.

Although this book deals primarily with the physical rebuilding and restoration of the city of Jerusalem, there are many beautiful spiritual truths that have been embedded in this section of Holy Scripture.

Nehemiah, who was of the tribe of Judah, had become the cupbearer to the Persian king, Artaxerxes. It was a position of immense trust, because he tasted the wine before presenting it to the king, to prevent the king's being poisoned. This position was held by a close confidant and counsellor of the king.

Thus, Nehemiah had risen to an exalted rank in the Persian Empire. His commission—to leave and supervise the rebuilding of Jerusalem—was in the twentieth year of the king's reign (c. 445 B.C.). This had been preceded by the first return under Zerubbabel (536 B.C.) and the second return under Ezra 79 years later (457 B.C.) in the seventh year of the reign of King Artaxerxes.

**These returns were to fulfil three ministries:**

1. The Restoration of the Temple
2. The Reinstitution of Temple worship
3. The Rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem

## ***Outline***

1. The prayer of Nehemiah for the remnant in Jerusalem (1:1-11)
2. The petitioning of the king and the return to Jerusalem (2:1-20)
3. The division of the builders of the wall and the building of the gates (3:1-32)
4. The precautions for the defense of the wall against the enemy (4:1-23)
5. The restoration of the lands to the poor (5:1-19)
6. The completion of the wall in the face of the threats of the enemy (6:1-19)
7. The register of the genealogy of those who came up out of captivity (7:1-73)
8. The reading of the Law (8:1-18)
9. The rehearsal of the history of the children of Israel, and confession of their sins (9:1-38)
10. The list of those who sealed the covenant and a promise not to forsake the house of God (10:1-39)
11. The list of those who dwelt in Jerusalem and in the cities of Judah (11:1-36)
12. The list of those who went up with Zerubbabel and their descendants, and the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem (12:1-47)
13. The return of Nehemiah from his visit to the king and a further cleansing of the people (13:1-31)

## Chapter 1— The Prayer of Nehemiah

**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,”* This introduction is the usual way prophetic books are introduced where the name of the author is given at the beginning.

The twentieth year refers to the reign of Artaxerxes; this is the manner of chronological reckoning in ancient times. Shushan was the political capital of the Persian Empire where the king generally resided. The other capitals of note were Persepolis, the ceremonial capital, and Achmetha, the palace in the province of the Medes. Chiseleu, the ninth month, corresponding to our mid-November and December, was the period when this book opens.

**1:2** - *“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.”* It had been about 13 years since Ezra had received permission from this same king to go up and put the temple worship in order.

Thus, Nehemiah, being a man of compassion and piety, with a deep love for the people of God, inquired of the state of those who still remained in Jerusalem. It would somehow suggest that there had been those who had returned again to their former habitations in Babylon and elsewhere. This would not have been unusual, since anyone familiar with people knows that many start, but often there are a number who return to their former places and do not



finish. In fact, that was the case with the children of Israel, who consistently desired to return to Egypt when times of difficulty occurred in their wilderness journey.

There is also a serious warning for us as we read in Hebrews 11:15, “And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.” I have seen so many turn back before the breakthrough came in their ministry, either at home or in a foreign field. Their decision resulted in eternal loss for them, as they settled for a position that was far less than what the Lord was offering them. We need to press in to receive all that God has for us, rather than settling for second best.

**1:3** - *“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.”* Thus, even after Israel had reoccupied the land for nearly 100 years (536–444 B.C.), the city of Jerusalem was still in a very sad plight. The people had indeed rebuilt the temple, but they were living in poverty. This thought is developed by the prophet Haggai, a contemporary of Zerubbabel in the first return, “Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. 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” (Hag. 1:5-6).

They had built their own houses, but not the house of the Lord. This refers to the time when they had left off building for 16 years after only having laid the foundation of the Temple because

of opposition during the reign of Cyrus until the second year of the reign of Darius. Malachi (a contemporary of both Ezra and Nehemiah) rebuked them in his day, saying that they were cursed economically because they were not tithing (Mal. 3:7-12).

Thus, it seems as though they had cycles of relative prosperity and hardship due to their own lack of devotion to the Lord. We should remember this, for the Lord blesses when we obey, unless it is a trial that He wishes us to pass through for our spiritual enrichment. The blessing follows to the degree we have triumphed in the trial.

**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,”* When he was told the state of Jerusalem and the people, Nehemiah experienced godly sorrow and a recognition that this poverty was due to their sinful ways. Nehemiah, as Ezra and Daniel before him, began to pray penitentially for his own nation of Israel. He acknowledged their sinful past and identified himself with their sins. This is ever the attitude of the righteous as we see from the following verses.

***The blessing follows to the degree we have triumphed in the trial.***

**1:5-8** - *“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: 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. 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. Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations."*

This is a reference to a quotation from Deuteronomy 28:49 and 65 about 1000 years before, when the Lord spoke that He would bring a fierce nation (Babylon) against them, and then would scatter them throughout all the nations because of their wickedness. This was said before the children of Israel had even entered the Promised Land of Canaan (known today as Palestine or Israel). This illustrates the truth that the testimony of Jesus is indeed the Spirit of Prophecy (Rev. 19:10).

**1:9** - *"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."* It is so very wonderful that in spite of their wicked ways, the Lord had given these wonderful promises of restoration if they would turn from their wickedness and repent. In these promises they could have hope. Certainly for each one of us there is the same hope given if we have fallen into some abyss of sin and despair. We may see this illustrated in the words of Job 14:7, "For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not

cease.” Therefore, let us hope, dear ones, in the tender mercies of our Lord in time of need.

**1:10-11** - *“Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand. 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.”* So, Nehemiah concluded his prayer by asking God for favour in the sight of the king, to whom he was cupbearer.

The last phrase in this verse signifies that he was in the king’s presence continually, and enjoyed the king’s trust. Nevertheless, he did not presume upon his relationship with the king but rather besought God, in whose hands the hearts of all men reside, for He turns the hearts of men whithersoever He will (Prov. 21:1).

## Chapter 2 — The Petitioning of the King and the Return to Jerusalem

**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.”* The month Nisan is equivalent to our month of April.

This was the duty of the king’s cupbearer: to be called into the presence of the king when the king wished to drink wine. The cupbearer would first sip the wine, signifying that it had not been poisoned, and then present it to the king for him to drink. Wine is a universal symbol of joy; therefore, anyone approaching the king at such a time would naturally do so in a joyous manner. Moreover, it appears that Nehemiah was by nature a happy man and had not previously evinced any sorrow.

**2:2** - *“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.”* The king’s inference, drawn from the sadness portrayed upon the face of Nehemiah, was that he was sorry to be a subject of the king. This, of course, reflected upon the character and administration of the king. We, as Christians, must not imply that it is hard being a subject of the King of kings. Let us be joyful and so manifest our gratitude to Him for having saved us!

**2:3** - *“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?"* As we see, Nehemiah was then sore afraid because it could have cost him his life. Thus, he sought to dispel this thought of the king very quickly. This is a good illustration of the spiritual condition of the Church in our times.

Many places of worship which once knew the precious moving and visitation of God are now desolate and waste. As we pass by, we just want to lament and beat our breasts in sorrow at these monuments to past revivals. The book of Nehemiah gives hope that God will again build His Church in our generation, and we will see far greater manifestations of His Spirit than previous generations have been privileged to see. Let us rejoice and be glad, for these dead bones shall live again. Praise the Lord!

**2:4** - *"Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven."* This is an example of one of those lightening prayers which cannot be uttered, but which our precious Lord hears when we cry to Him from our heart in a moment of dire need.

We should practice praying through the day so that in desperate moments, we would, without hesitation, seek our Lord's help immediately in silent prayer. Then we will see the Lord align the hearts of others to His will for our lives. He will also give us acceptance in the sight of authorities, and favour with men and women in high places.

**2:5** - *"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.*" This would confirm that Nehemiah was of the tribe of Judah, as church historians Jerome and Eusebius declare.

**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."* Here is a very important truth that must not be overlooked. It is evident that Nehemiah had heard from God concerning the timing of his mission. Thus we, too, can have a sense of timing in the will of God, knowing when it will begin and how long (at least approximately) it will last.

**2:7** - *"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."* There is a distinct difference in the approach of Ezra and Nehemiah to their respective missions. Ezra had testified to this same king that the Lord would take care of the returning captives; therefore, he did not ask of the king for help concerning their journey. Nehemiah, however, had a company of armed soldiers provided by the king for his safe conduct. This may be accounted for by the position Nehemiah held as a court official. There is another fact that should not be overlooked; on both occasions, the king provided all that was necessary for the building of the temple and for the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem. This is a confirmation of the prophecies of Isaiah 60:10 and Haggai 2:7-8.

**2:8-9** - *"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. 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.*" The phrase "beyond the river" was understood to refer to the land that was beyond the River Euphrates. This was used when speaking of both Syria and Israel in those days.

**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."* Now we are introduced to men representative of those nations who were longtime enemies of Israel.

Sanballat, a native of Horonaim, was a Moabite governor of Samaria under the Persian king. Tobiah the Ammonite, his chief secretary, was also a descendant of the children of Lot, who perpetually warred against Israel. A Sanballat of later generations persuaded Alexander the Great to build a heathen temple upon Mount Gerazim. Thus, this hatred for Israel was continual.

**2:11** - *"So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days."* Three days seems the normal time required to become adjusted to new surroundings after a long journey. Ezra and his company took a similar period of time. If it is included in Holy Scripture then it is of definite importance to us. Thus, when we journey into new places, we may well need that same amount of time in order to accustom ourselves to our new surroundings both naturally and spiritually.



**2:12** - *“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.”* Many years before, King Solomon wrote Proverbs 12:23, “A prudent man concealeth knowledge” and Proverbs 17:27, “He that hath knowledge spareth his words...” One does not reveal to the enemy, or even to friends, one’s plans until the appropriate time, since few can be entrusted to guard their lips and keep knowledge that has been given to them.

It is wisdom to view the work before one makes plans, which was exactly the course of action of Nehemiah. Counting the cost and understanding the extent of the problem is always sound business practice, rather than, as some do, jumping into what they think is a pool and afterwards realizing that they are in an ocean of debt.

Many ministers I have personally known have bought buildings or started constructions, only to find there was far more expense and labour than they had believed at first. They then discovered that they had neither the funds nor the manpower to achieve the project. The result was, and is often, that the church becomes so far in debt that it becomes financially bankrupt. This leads to a spiritual collapse, and places the congregation under a dark cloud of despair.

**2:13** - *“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.”* The “dragon well” was named

at this time when devil worship was prevalent, during the period of the apostasy of the inhabitants of Jerusalem prior to the final siege and fall of Jerusalem in the sixth century B.C. It was so named in honour of Satan as their source of life. (The spiritual significance of the other gates will be fully examined in chapter three of this commentary.)

**2:14-15** - *“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. 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.”* Nehemiah’s night examination was quite meticulous; he was under no illusions concerning the extent of the repairs that had to be done to bring the city back to its former state of prosperity.

**2:16** - *“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.”* It was only after Nehemiah had fully grasped the situation that he began to communicate to the Jews the purpose of his mission.

**2:17-18** - *“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. 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.”* Here we see another important truth that must not be overlooked. Two

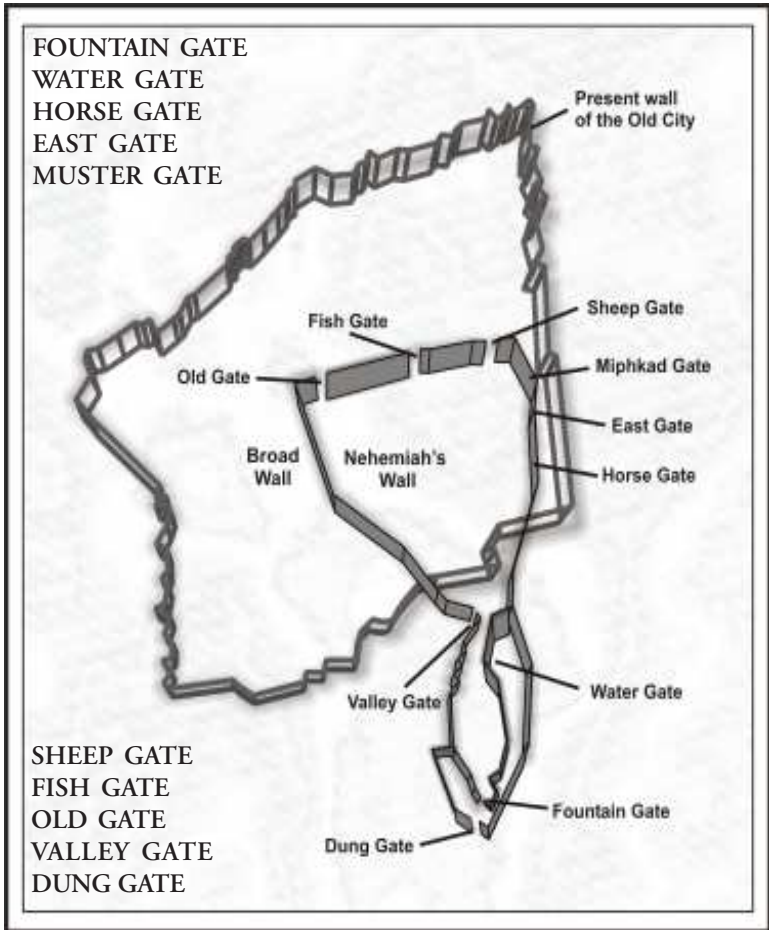
requirements for building are God's commission, and the permission and necessary permits from the relevant authorities. Since Nehemiah had both, he was, therefore, able to receive the support of his people for the work.

**2:19** - *“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?”* A third enemy now emerges. Geshem the Arabian was undoubtedly a chief of one of the Arabian tribes inhabiting the desert regions.

Sargon, king of Assyria, had colonized Samaria by using Arabs. Therefore, they would be allied at this time with Persia against their traditional enemy: Israel. They would be most disturbed by any increase in the strength of Israel, which could well occur with the restoration of the city. Thus they resorted to mocking and insinuating that the Jews were rebelling against the king.

**2:20** - *“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.”* The correct response to the verbal attacks of the enemies of God's people is to trust in the Lord.

In essence, this is the response of Nehemiah. Nehemiah further emphasised the fact that only Israel had a right to build and inhabit the holy city. The uncircumcised, whether natural in the Old Testament, or spiritual in the New Testament or Church Age, have no inheritance in the things pertaining to God.



## Chapter 3 — The Division of the Builders of the Wall

In this chapter, we have many truths with respect to the spiritual significance of the gates as we shall soon see. There were ten gates in all, each having a profound spiritual significance for our own lives, illustrating a spiritual progression in the life of the child of God.

### *The Sheep Gate*

**3:1-2** - *“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. And next unto him builded the men of Jericho. And next to them builded Zaccur the son of Imri.”* In contemplating this verse, there is one point we must not miss; the first person mentioned in the work of rebuilding the walls is the chief minister. As ministers, we should set the example for the congregation by, whenever possible, being on the job site first. There will be more concerning the high priest when we come to 13:4, as an awesome truth in this verse will be unveiled.

Let us go straight to the first of the gates which is the Sheep Gate. This gate was evidently the gate through which the sheep for the sacrifices were brought into the city. That, however, is not our primary interest. We want to study the spiritual significance. If we will look at the city of Jerusalem as being a type of the Church (for Jerusalem is the mother of us all, as Paul states in Galatians 4:26), these gates represent certain aspects of the

ministry of the Church, and are applicable in our own individual lives. Sheep are a Scriptural type of Christians, for Isaiah 53:6 says, "...all we like sheep have gone astray." Jesus is also called the Good Shepherd. Therefore, one of the first duties of the Church is to care for her own. Sheep are very ignorant and prone to straying from the path of righteousness and becoming lost. The shepherd has to seek that which is lost.

Then, too, sheep are often discouraged; they are incapable of defending themselves, and so have to be protected and encouraged to walk in the right paths. Moreover, they need to both hear the shepherd's voice and feel his touch from time to time; they have to be loved. When hurt or wounded, either by straying from the paths or by being attacked by some predator, they need the wine and the oil in binding up their wounds. Just as the Good Samaritan ministered to the unfortunate man who was overcome by the robbers on his way down to Jericho from Jerusalem.

Spiritually, wine is the joy of the Lord, and oil is the peace and the anointing that keeps our minds and hearts in the love of Jesus. From the point of view of our own spiritual lives, we must first become one of His sheep by being birthed into the Kingdom through asking Jesus to come into our hearts. However, after we are saved, we must stay close to the Shepherd of our souls by heeding the instruction of His under-shepherds whom He places over us.

The tower Meah, meaning "one hundred," lets us know that we are expected to bring forth one hundredfold fruit. We are not to be content with just sixtyfold or thirtyfold but to be one

hundredfold Christians, even as Isaac was (Gen. 26:12). The tower Hananeel, meaning “God is gracious,” signifies that our salvation is by grace (Eph 2:8) and all that we do and all that we are is by the grace of God. Therefore, we need to humble ourselves that we might receive grace in time of need.

### ***The Fish Gate***

**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.”* The next gate is the Fish Gate. We are all familiar with the little signs of fish that some Christians have, either on the rear of their cars or pinned on the lapel of their jackets, denoting that they are fish who have been caught by the Lord. The Lord told Peter, an avid fisherman, that He would make him a fisher of men. The next step in our Christian experience is to seek to save others after we have been saved ourselves. In effect, we too should become fishers of men. This needs to become a consuming passion in our lives—to win others to Jesus.

In order to win souls, it would not be amiss to learn a few lessons from fishermen. I learned a lesson by watching fishermen while I was walking in London near the Serpentine River. They were throwing small stones into the water and then casting their lines. I asked them why they were doing that and they replied that the fish bit in troubled waters. I have observed this around the world. In times of political unrest or economic difficulties, people seem very interested indeed in the gospel message and they fill the churches to capacity.

Various lures and baits catch different species of fish. We need to hear from God which method to use for the particular people to whom we are presently witnessing. Even in preaching, some messages or types of presentations will appeal to some and not to others. We must, as Paul says, become a Jew to a Jew, a Gentile to a Gentile, in effect, become what will catch the souls of men and women for Christ (1 Cor. 9:22). But naturally this does not suggest that we should be undignified or use satanic methods.

Let me give an example. A dear ministering friend of mine, very zealous of souls, wanted to win an African chief and thereby the tribe to the Lord. He invited the chief to a nearby stream and asked, "If I cause fire to come up from the water, will you believe on the power of my God and then will you accept Him as your Saviour?" The African chief agreed. Whereupon my friend, with slight of hand, dropped calcium carbide crystals into the stream. Passing a lighted match over the escaping gas, he ignited the gases and flames came up from the water. The chief, as well as the tribe, accepted Christ but the Lord did not approve of this deception and made the missionary confess his trickery.

**3:4-5** - *"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. And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord."* This is a most distressing comment on the spiritual state of leaders. Those who are not wholehearted have their lack of consecration for the revealed will of God recorded in their books (and in this case Holy Scripture) for all eternity. We want to attain



great spiritual heights and be remembered like Ruth, for being a diligent and hard worker, spending little time in the hut to rest (Ruth 2:7).

### *The Old Gate*

**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.”* When the fish or the new converts come in, they must be taught sound doctrine; upon which the New Testament Church was built. This is the meaning of the Old Gate, substantiated by the exhortation of Jeremiah 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.”

A list of subjects that form this sound doctrine are given to us by the Apostle Paul, teacher of the Early Church, and therefore our teacher, in Hebrews 6:1-2:

1. The Foundation of Repentance from dead works
2. Faith toward God
3. The Doctrine of Water Baptism
4. The Holy Spirit Baptism
5. Laying on of Hands
6. The Resurrection of the Dead
7. Eternal Judgment

Early in our Christian life, we need to place our feet upon the pathway of righteousness and realise that the path of the just is

as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day (Prov. 4:18). This verse must be our desire not only for every one of our converts, but also for ourselves.

**3:7-12** - *“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. 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. And next unto them repaired Rephaiah the son of Hur, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem. 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. Malchijah the son of Harim, and Hashub the son of Pahath-moab, repaired the other piece, and the tower of the furnaces. And next unto him repaired Shallum the son of Halohesh, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem, he and his daughters.”*

It is interesting and important to note that in times of restoration and revival those of all trades and professions amongst believers are pressed into the service of the work of the Lord. Noting that the daughters of Shallum were called in to help at this time, we see this is similar to the time of harvest when even children are pressed into service.

### *The Valley Gate*

**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.”* The Valley Gate leading out to the Kidron Valley, which divides Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives speaks of the low places which spiritually represents humility. In order to travel from Mount Moriah, upon which Jerusalem is built, to the Mount of Olives, it is necessary to first descend into the valley of the River of Kidron. This illustrates the fact that in order to go from one height to the next, one first has to go down and then climb again.

We cannot go from one mountain-top experience to the next unless we are willing to experience the low places or the humbling situations that test our hearts. The Lord wants to know if we are serving Him for Himself or for what He gives us either in the realm of the natural or the spiritual.

Many fail this test and remain on the lower levels of heavenly experiences when the Spirit would beckon them to come higher. Mountain-top experiences are those times when we have triumphed over difficulties or circumstances in our lives, or when we have received a particular blessing from the Lord such as the Baptism of the Holy Spirit or the spiritual experience of Galatians 2:20.

### *The Dung Gate*

**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.”* All the refuse of the city was taken out through this gate. In our lives, as

we enter into the low places, we have a revelation of our own hearts. It is here that we must ask the Holy Spirit to remove all the dross and evil from our lives, for these can indeed prevent us from going all the way with the Lord into the Holy of Holies.

King David cried out in Psalm 139:23-24, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” It is here that we cry out, “O Lord, create in me a clean heart; take away the stony heart and give me a heart of flesh.”

### ***The Gate of the Fountains***

**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.”* When our hearts have been cleansed afresh, and the refuse in our lives taken out, the fountains of the Spirit of God can spring up from within the depths of our beings, and flow out like rivers of living water (Jn. 7:37-39). As we are filled, those rivers of living water can flow out and refresh the lives of others.

**3:16-25** - *“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. 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. After him repaired their brethren, Bavai the son of Henadad, the ruler of the half part of Keilah. 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. 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. 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. And after him repaired the priests, the men of the plain. 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. 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. 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.”*

The above section deals with the rebuilding of the walls. Now the walls of any city are extremely important in that they protect the inhabitants from the enemy. So too, is this the case in the spiritual. Isaiah 60:18 tells us that these walls around us are called Salvation for at salvation our Lord puts a wall around us to protect us from the attacks of the enemy.

These walls are maintained by obedience for as in the case of Israel, God broke down the spiritual hedge or wall around His people because of their sinful ways. Let us look at Psalm 80:13 for a moment, “The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the

wild beast of the field doth devour it.” The boar speaks of uncleanness and the wild beast speaks of unrestrained sinfulness, and they devour the fruit of the Spirit in the lives of God’s people. May we diligently maintain our walls in good repair with a life of obedience and by repentance if need be.

### *The Water Gate*

**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.”* This is the place where Ezra taught. The Water Gate corresponds to the deeper doctrines of the Word of God by which we are washed in order to be presented unto Christ as a glorious Church without spot or blemish or any such thing (Eph. 5:26-27).

An aspect that must not be overlooked when dealing with the deeper doctrines of the Word is that it is not sufficient just to have head knowledge of them. These truths must be rooted deep down within our very nature so that they transform our character. King David said, “Thou desirest truth on the inward part and in the hidden part Thou shalt make to know wisdom” (Ps. 51:6). Thus, we must, in a sense, become the Word made flesh.

In my lifetime, I have known many people who have had head knowledge of these truths but they unfortunately did not earnestly pray that the truths might penetrate the very fibres of their being that they might become the truth that they professed, knew, and preached. The result is that after a time, they denied those very truths, and in some cases, became adversaries of those who have indeed made these truths part of their lives. Furthermore, we

read in 2 Peter 2:19 that they promise others liberty yet they themselves are servants of corruption. Let us, therefore, take heed that we become the genuine products of the truths that we teach.

**3:27** - *“After them the Tekoites repaired another piece, over against the great tower that lieth out, even unto the wall of Ophel.”* The great tower functioned as a watch tower to alert the inhabitants of the approach of the enemy. Spiritually, in Song of Solomon 7:4, the nose is likened to a tower. The nose senses danger; and therefore, is analogous to the discernment that we need as Christians to detect the attacks of the enemy before they come so that we may be prepared.

### *The Horse Gate*

**3:28** - *“From above the horse gate repaired the priests, every one over against his house.”* Horses are associated with an overcomer and a warrior in the army of God. As we see in Revelation 19:14, the army of God, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were going forth to conquer, going from victory to victory. The Lord wants us to be “. . . more than conquerors through Him who hath loved us” (Rom. 8:37). We are conquerors to the degree that we have permitted the Lord to remove the dross from our lives, and to wash us deeply in our inner parts.

### *The East Gate*

**3:29-30** - *“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. 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.”* This is a special gate, since it will be the gate through which Christ will enter in His millennial reign (Ezek. 46:2). It faces the East and is, therefore, the gate that greets the rising sun. This gate depicts the Sun of Righteousness arising with healing in His wings (Mal. 4:2). There is a further truth for our lives that we may see here. We read of the prayer of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 3:16-19:

“That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”

May we desire the East Gate experience which has the sense that the Lord will come into our church and into the lives of the believers, in all His fullness. It is achieved as the other gates are progressively established spiritually in our lives and in the lives of the congregation.

### ***The Gate Miphkad***

**3:31-32** - *“After him repaired Malchiah the goldsmith’s son unto the place of the Nethinims, and of the merchants, over against the gate Miphkad, and to the going up of the corner. And between the going up of the corner unto the sheep gate repaired the*



*goldsmiths and the merchants.*” The definition of Miphkad is difficult to achieve but “an appointed place” seems very appropriate since it is the last gate in the ten progressive spiritual steps in the life of a believer.

Therefore, it would apply to the blessing that the Lord promised the prophet Daniel, that he would stand in his appointed place (Dan. 12:13). This means he would indeed possess the post which the Lord had purposed for him to inherit eternally in the heavenlies. We too must seek, by His grace, to attain the eternal place that He has destined for us before the foundation of the world.

Since this gate was built by the merchants, it would signify, too, that all the wealth of heaven would be at the disposal of those who reached this spiritual state. The Lord said the kingdom of heaven belongs to the poor in spirit (Mt. 5:3). It is the place of true spiritual prosperity.

## Chapter 4 — The Precautions for the Defence

When we start the work that the Lord has entrusted to us, we must realise that we will have to contend with our enemies and withstand their attacks. These attacks can take many forms. As we have seen in the book of Ezra, the attacks took the form of lawsuits, which effectively stopped the work of rebuilding the Temple because of the legal manoeuvres of the lawyers.

**4:1-3** - *“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. 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? 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.”*

In this case, the opposition came by the derision of the Samaritans who were mocking Israel. When we first began our work at Zion with our ministerial institute, we were much derided by those who were from other colleges. They mocked us and said we would not succeed in setting up ministerial institutes in many parts of the world.

If you, gentle reader, are experiencing similar attacks, may I share that we have overcome by simply trusting in the Lord—first, by carefully seeking Him for every step that we have made, and

then following the instructions that we felt He was giving us as scrupulously as we could (though not perfectly, I am sure). This has enabled us to set up schools in many countries, to the shame of our enemies.

**4:4-5** - *“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: 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.”* We prayed in a manner very similar to that of Nehemiah, though perhaps not in such a forthright manner concerning God’s judgment upon our enemies.

However, God had judged them, putting them out of their positions. In certain cases, it is true that some, having known the truth, have indeed lost their salvation and had a very sad end. “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:31). We need to understand that the ultimate purpose of an enemy is to destroy us. Therefore we appeal to God to defend us. But our actions must be to shed love to them for in so doing we open the way for God to bring down His wrath, as is seen in Romans chapter 12.

**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.”* Here we come to a very important truth. We must not let the enemy cause us to give up the work or to let our hands become slack.

As leaders, we must continue the work that we have begun in God. The enemy often seeks to intimidate us, trying to make us

fearful. We, however, must be as bold as lions (Prov. 28:1). Here the people had a mind to work and accomplished the work in record time. It is wonderful when God gives to the pastor a team that has a will to work.

**4:7-8** - *“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, And conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it.”* Now the enemy (the traditional enemies of Israel, who plague them unto this very day) made plans and conspired against Israel. But there is a great difference between the enemy’s making plans and the fulfilling of his plans; for that he cannot do unless God permits.

**4:9** - *“Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them.”* Nehemiah exercised prudence in setting a watch, as well as going to prayer. This is a wise precaution when others threaten physical harm to our buildings; we, too, should be diligent and provide watchmen. In addition, Nehemiah took the situation right to God so that the buildings were protected spiritually and naturally.

**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.”* In the pursuit of our duties as leaders, we have to realise that we are going to have to surmount many obstacles in order to fulfill the tasks that the Lord has entrusted to us. Not the least of these obstacles is contending with discouragement

from the lips of our coworkers. Here we see that Judah, or the people of the city, were saying that they were exhausted, and too tired to continue. Their particular work was to remove the rubbish that had accumulated over perhaps the last 100 years. Previous generations had been derelict and it was left to them to remove all the debris.

This is interesting because when God speaks revival, there is a need to remove the spiritual sins and bondages from previous years. For example, misdeeds or sins that others have committed have to be atoned for. I have known of congregations that could not move on with God because of the sins of a previous pastor. When the sins were acknowledged and confessed by the present congregation, revival broke out.

After past bondages of psychology or immorality have been dealt with, then God most graciously moved in the lives of many individuals. I have known of situations where God required those who had criticized the pastor or other members of the congregation to confess and ask for forgiveness in order to be delivered from those bondages of criticism in their lives. Only then could they enter into revival. The rubbish, in whatever form it exists in our personal lives or in the congregation as a whole, has to go before the church can be built up.

**4:11-12** - *“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. 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.”*

The voices of fear and discouragement are everywhere. They come not only from our enemies, but also from within our ranks as the voices and threats of those outside are echoed by members of our congregations. Therefore, the leader has to be resolute, anchored in the Word of God, and filled with the faith of the Lord. Being a leader demands our all, and certainly tests our mettle. May the words of Paul in Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” ever be our encouragement.

**4:13** - *“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.”* Again, when warned of danger, Nehemiah took very thorough precautions, and so should we, yet not relying solely upon our precautions but upon God. There is a divine balance that we must learn in these situations.

**4:14** - *“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.”* Nehemiah encouraged the people to be strong and fight if the need arose. At the same time, he exhorted them not to let their confidence rest in their arms but in the Lord, even as David, who came against Goliath saying, “I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts” (1 Sam. 17:45).

**4:15** - *“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.”*

The result of Nehemiah's prudence was that the enemy saw that the Jews were prepared; therefore, they knew that their plans had been frustrated.

This should be a lesson to us. If we will do the things that are right, ensuring that there is no breach whereby the enemy can attack us, we will be preserved from a battle. For us this means that we are to be careful to fulfil all government codes and laws where, of course, these do not impinge upon the liberty of the Church. In areas prone to crime, we should take suitable precautions to protect our buildings, property, and the lives of our people.

**4:16-23** - *“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. 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. For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me. 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. In what place therefore ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us. So we laboured in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared. 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. 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.”*

There is a time appointed by God when the work is so pressing that everyone must give all his time to do and finish His work. For these Jews, the time was remarkably short, for they completed the wall in 51 days (just under two months), showing the tremendous blessing of God.

This reminds me of an incident that happened when a group of Christians went to construct a church for a group of Eskimos in a very remote area in Northern America. Not far from where the group of Christians were working, there was a crew of workmen constructing a building of similar size which was going to serve as a warehouse. The two groups laboured steadily.

When the Christians finished the church, which was of a more complicated nature, the workmen, who had derided the Christians at the beginning of the project, were but barely half finished with their building. It is amazing how God aids His people in their labours for His glory. We, too, had a building project; everyone gathered on the site to worship God at the beginning of each day, and our project, built very well indeed, was also finished in record time.



## Chapter 5 — The Restoration of the Lands to the Poor

**5:1** - *“And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews.”* Here the governor sees the tears of the poor who are oppressed by their brethren. He was under the obligation to deliver “the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked” (Ps. 82:4).

There is ever a blessing to those who remember the poor, as illustrated by Psalm 41:1-3: “Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble. The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.”

This was brought forcibly to my attention when I was caring for one of my wife’s uncles on his deathbed. My wife’s uncle had never been spiritual, and his language was not that of a saint by any stretch of the imagination. However, he had always cared for the poor, even to the adopting of several children from families who were destitute and raising them as his own. He was suffering from a very severe form of cancer, yet to his doctor’s astonishment, he suffered no pain whatsoever. Upon inquiring of the Lord concerning this phenomenon, the Lord quickened the verses of the above quoted psalm. Because the uncle cared for the poor, the Lord cared for him upon his bed of sickness. Nehemiah was just such a man of tender and compassionate mercies and was, therefore, dear to the heart of God.

**5:2** - *“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.”* One of the enigmas of life is that those who can least afford to have children seem to have them in abundance, whilst those who are blessed economically rarely have more than two or three.

Thus, these poor people were crying out to Nehemiah that their children were many. In other words, their families were larger than they could provide for. They were obliged to go into debt to care for their families, and their richer brethren were taking advantage of their situation.

**5:3** - *“Some also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth.”* The dearth spoken of began in the days of the first return under Zerubbabel and is mentioned in Haggai 1:6 where the prophet declares, “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.”

Even 100 years after the first return, they were still experiencing near famine conditions, because of God’s judgment upon the land. This judgment was the result of neglecting the things of God. There was no joy in their service for the Lord, as we read in Joel 1:12, “The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men.”

The spiritual condition of the country was so bad that we are told by the contemporary prophet Malachi in Malachi 1:10 that there was not even one person amongst the congregation who would shut the doors of the Temple or make a fire upon the altar of the Lord without payment. They did not work joyfully, but grudgingly performed the service of the Lord; therefore, they were suffering economically.

**5:4** - *“There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king’s tribute, and that upon our lands and vineyards.”* The king’s tribute was the tax payable to the Persian monarch. Therefore, like all taxes, it tended to further impoverish the poor, as having many children increased their taxes, since this was a poll tax paid by each individual.

**5:5** - *“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.”* The Law provided for those who, of necessity, sold their sons and daughters into slavery, as we see in Exodus 21:7, “And if a man sell his daughter to be a maidservant, she shall not go out as the menservants do.”

This servitude was to last for but six years, according to Deuteronomy 15:12. In the seventh year, the servant was to go out free. In every generation, the lot of the poor is hard. However, the Lord provided for them in His instructions, given in Deuteronomy 15:11, “For the poor shall never cease out of the

land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.” This, indeed, was not how the others were treating their poor brethren. The plight of the poor should have evoked the compassion of the richer brethren, but sadly, it did not.

**5:6** - *“And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words.”* Now we see the reaction of Nehemiah. The father’s heart of a leader experiences grief and anger when those for whom he is responsible are unjustly treated. The attitude of a leader is of the utmost importance with respect to the well-being of the people with whom the Lord has entrusted him.

We must remember that all power is of God, and it is God who appoints leaders (Rom. 13:1). Those who are in charge of others should remember the exhortation of King David, who said, “Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain” (2 Sam. 23:1-4).

This is a beautiful picture of a righteous ruler who evokes the same hope and joy in the people’s hearts that daybreak brings to those waiting for the dawning of a new day. Some of the qualifications of a righteous man are that he gives his bread to

the hungry, and covers the naked with his garment (Ezek. 18:7). Moreover, Job, the third most righteous man mentioned in the Word of God (Job 29:12), “delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. That the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon him: and that he caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy.”

Also, it is said that he who has a merry heart has a continual feast (Prov. 15:15). Thus, we know that joy is the blessing of the righteous man and permits the righteous to feed upon the treasures of righteousness and wisdom within his own heart, bringing forth the right course of action in any given circumstance. Let us, beloved, joyfully give with an open hand to those who are in need (Deut. 15:8).

**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.”* The definition of usury is “interest” in the sense that, under the Mosaic Law, money, food, or anything else was loaned to help the struggling poor, and upon its return nothing was to be added to the principal (Lev. 25:36-37; Deut. 23:19-20).

It was one of the characteristics of a righteous man that he did not practice usury (Ps. 15:5; Jer. 15:10; Prov. 28:8). Nehemiah gathered a large number of the people to witness against these sins. This group was used to enforce Nehemiah’s condemnation of the wrong doings of their rulers, and bring them to shame.

**5:8** - *“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.”* Out of the goodness of his heart, Nehemiah had apparently redeemed some of the Jews with his own money, and his friends followed his example, unlike the nobles and rulers who were either selling fellow Jews into servitude or buying them as servants.

**5:9** - *“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?”* At best, life is so very short. We should not be involved in the temporal pursuit of gain, but rather remember that the Lord said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). We should seek to ameliorate the lot of others rather than to increase our own wealth. In so doing, we shall have riches in heaven that will never fade away.

**5:10-11** - *“I likewise, and my brethren, and my servants, might exact of them money and corn: I pray you, let us leave off this usury. 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.”*

This great cry comes forth from his lips, for Nehemiah who was a wealthy man in his own right could have bought poor Jews but chose not to do so. The hundredth part here is thought to have been what they required the poor to pay in interest each month, amounting to 12 percent interest per annum.

**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.”*

The great message of restoration, the theme of this era, is now spoken forth through the lips of this righteous governor. It was a message that had to be obeyed by every man who was in this company. It is a truth that we must not miss in this study—when we are living in a period when God gives a sovereign theme, that message has to become a reality in each one of our lives. We see that when Moses, who was the minister of circumcision, had not circumcised his own sons, God sought to kill him at the inn (Ex. 4:24-25) in spite of the fact that He had commissioned Moses at the burning bush.

In the Charismatic Revival, those who were not filled with the Holy Spirit and speaking in other tongues were passed by. However, God met those churches that opened their doors to a fresh Pentecost. Now we are entering a new period in the Church when God is, indeed, speaking Revival and Restoration. Therefore, we must ensure that we are fulfilling all of God’s requirements in this hour and believing Him to do a new thing.

**5:13** - *“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.”* The seriousness of their sin caused Nehemiah to adopt drastic measures. It is of paramount importance that God’s people make a solemn commitment to Him to walk in His ways when an individual or a congregation is violating His laws. This obviously has to be followed by a walking in the commitment. Regretfully, I have known so many occasions when promises have been made to God, but not kept.

We should take heed to the warning of King Solomon in Ecclesiastes 5:1-6, “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. 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. 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. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?”

Let us, therefore, take heed that when we make vows or solemn commitments to the Lord, we fulfil them and do not go back upon our word.

**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.”* We now see the nobility of the character of Nehemiah with respect to his own desire not to burden the people for his upkeep.

The Apostle Paul made a similar sacrifice as he notes in 1 Thessalonians 2:9, “For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of



God.” For 12 years the people did not have to bear the expense of the governor or his servants. I have known of occasions when leaders of fellowships do not take a salary but rather trust God for their upkeep so as not to be a burden to the congregation.

**5:15** - *“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.”* Nehemiah was speaking of the governors who ruled during the period between Zerubbabel and himself. He does not mention them by name, but obviously they did not have the care of the people upon their heart. They permitted even their servants to oppress the people, because they did not have God’s fear in their hearts as Nehemiah did.

We, as leaders in His Church, should likewise live a very simple lifestyle, only permitting ourselves the necessities of life so that money can go to further the gospel in other places.

**5:16** - *“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.”* It is only when we practice righteousness that we are in a position to preach and to correct others. Nehemiah was in such a situation, for he and his family members had specifically refrained from buying the lands of the poor to profit themselves. Furthermore, unlike the servants of previous governors who had oppressed the people and lived like lords themselves, the servants of Nehemiah had worked on the wall with the people.

**5:17** - *“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.”* The greatness and generosity of Nehemiah shines forth even more when we realise that he, out of his own treasury, fed a large number of the Jews who had separated themselves from among the heathen for the work of God. It is evident that he must have been a man of considerable wealth to have been able to provide for such a large number of people. It is rare for men of wealth to give to the Gospel, as the real support often comes from those of more meagre means.

**5:18-19** - *“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. Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people.”* This considerable amount of food that Nehemiah provided for those around him was achieved from his own resources. He did not take the salary that was due him as governor so that he would not be a burden to the poor. Nehemiah was a truly great and noble man who valued a good name above the treasures of this world, heeding the admonition of King Solomon, who wrote in Ecclesiastes 7:1, “A good name is better than precious ointment.”

## Chapter 6 — The Completion of the Wall

**6:1-2** - *“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;) 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.”*

Having been thwarted by Nehemiah in their attempt to make a direct attack upon the city, these enemies then turned to subtlety. The enemy of our souls is relentless; thus, we must always be vigilant. As the Apostle Paul says, we are not ignorant of Satan’s devices (2 Cor. 2:11). Sometimes the enemy wants to meet with us to discuss their viewpoints. I have experienced this ruse of the enemy in my life. It is often fatal, because it can lead to compromise on the part of the righteous. Do not fall into this snare, because in so doing the work of God in many places will be harmed, as it has indeed been harmed and stopped altogether in times past by this means.

**6:3-4** - *“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? Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner.”* Nehemiah gave the correct response. Yet we see the persistence of the enemy in desiring to discuss matters. Although they do not give up easily, we must not be deterred from the work God has entrusted to us.

**6:5** - *“Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand.”* When all else fails, the enemy of our souls will fall back on ruses and downright lies in order to stop the work of the Lord from going forward and being accomplished. This open letter was therefore sent to the nobles.

This ruse is similar to that which the king of Assyria used when he sent his messengers to those on the wall during the time of Hezekiah. The messengers spoke with a loud voice so that everyone might hear and be afraid of the king of Assyria. Sennacherib employed this trick some 400 years before Sanballat sought to hinder Nehemiah and the work of God’s people (2 Ki. 18:13-37; 19:9-14). The enemy repeats his tactics from one generation to another; therefore, we can understand how to combat him by studying Holy Scriptures.

**6:6** - *“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.”* No such thought had entered the heart of Nehemiah, who was performing his God-appointed duties, with the express permission of the king of Persia. Thus, Nehemiah could have easily refuted this message with the facts. The letter continues in the next verse.

**6:7** - *“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.”* I must now repeat

the warning that the enemy wishes to enter into dialogue with us. This we must avoid, for if we permit it, we will lose ground in the discussion. We are not going to convince the enemy of the error of their ways, for they know very well that their accusations are but lies.

Christ did not argue with Satan in the temptation, but rather He rebuked and refuted him with well-chosen Scriptures. Please avoid discussions with the enemy. The enemy of our souls has been at this work for millennia, and we are no match for him. One never convinces the devil who is working through the people opposing us.

**6:8** - *“Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart.”* We see Nehemiah’s response to the enemy. Having passed this way myself on many an occasion, I know that our enemies spend much time in assembling a case against the work that God has given us to do. They try to hinder us, whether it be in seeking to refute a doctrinal teaching, a course of action, or a building program that God has put in our hearts to accomplish for His glory. Many, for example, pass their lives in the ministry seeking to bring into disrepute the glorious experience of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking in other tongues, rather than meekly accepting this Scriptural doctrine and receiving the power of the Holy Ghost into their own lives and hearts.

**6:9** - *“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.”* Fear is a very powerful weapon and

along with discouragement ranks as the most devastating weapon in the armory of the devil. We need to know the antidote for these poisonous and insidious viruses that sap the energy of the saints of the Most High. The Apostle John tells us that perfect love casts out fear (1 Jn. 4:18), and as Nehemiah 8:12 says, “The joy of the Lord is our strength.” Therefore, as the love of God is perfected in our hearts and we rejoice in the Lord through prayer, praise, and worship, fear will be banished. Moreover, we are instructed by the prophet Isaiah, who said:

“Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isa. 40:28-31).

As I have been writing these notes, I myself have been under much spiritual attack. After meditating upon the love that God has for us, and rejoicing in Him, I found that the dark clouds of oppression vanished and heaven’s light began shining upon my work again.

**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.*” This young man was a self-proclaimed prophet who was in the pay of the enemies of his nation, and, therefore, was a traitor.

The desire was to remove Nehemiah from leadership, thus enabling Sanballat to assume the reins of government. There is a truism which Zechariah states, “...Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered...” (Zech. 13:7).

**6:11** - *“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.”* Through his response, we know Nehemiah was not deceived.

Being a true leader of men, with a shepherd’s heart, he was not going to seek to save his own life. Rather, he was going to be at the front, facing the enemy and continuing the work upon the walls that God had given them to do. If necessary, he would lay down his life for the sheep. We must not relinquish our God-given responsibilities at the behest of others but only at the command of the Lord.

**6:12** - *“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.”* It is difficult to find words filled with sufficient condemnation for this Shemaiah. He was a prophet, though a lying one, in the pay of a foreign power. He was deceitful and used his prophetic gift or office for his own gain. Thus, he must be classified with Judas who likewise used his office for gain. Certainly the two cannot be far from each other in the place of eternal torments.

**6:13-14** - *“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. 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.”* Shemaiah was exposing Nehemiah to the dangers of sinning against God by pressuring him to leave his God-appointed post. He was not alone in his false prophesying; there were others, including Noadiah, a prophetess who also prostituted her gift and office against God’s leader.

The judgment of perpetual torments that they must have been enduring over the past 2000 years must be filling hell with cries of anguish and remorse. It is difficult enough for a leader to have to contend with enemies from outside the church without having contention and problems arising from within.

When these enemies who come against you are recognized leaders who have spiritual mantles and are of note among the people within the fellowship or church, the burden and grief is so much greater. They so often influence many in the church against God’s anointed man.

**6:15** - *“So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days.”* This is one of the most remarkable verses in Holy Scripture. It tells us firstly that the rubbish and decay of 142 years (from 586 B.C. the fall of Jerusalem until then, 444 B.C.) was remedied in just 52 days. In the numerics, (4x13) we can see universal atonement for the sin of the people and nation. This means that revival can, in a very short time, cleanse and purify the



Church from centuries of decay, error, and apathy, into a Bride without spot or blemish.

What glorious hope and expectation this gives us! Paul promises us in Romans 9:28, “For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth.” God will do a quick work and finish it in righteousness.

**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.”* It is a fact that no one can overthrow the work that God has ordained. Gamaliel said nearly 500 years later concerning the work of the Apostles, when they appeared before the high priest in Jerusalem, “And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God” (Acts 5:38-39).

Thus it is with all things, beloved. If God be for us who can be against us? (Rom. 8:31). If we are walking in His will and obeying His commandments, then our enemies will be put to open shame when they see that all their efforts to stop us will come to naught. He that hath begun a good work in us will surely finish it in us and through us (Phil. 1:6). Praise the Lord!

**6:17-19** - *“Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters unto Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came unto them. 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. Also they reported his good deeds before me, and uttered my words to him. And Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear.”*

To understand the heartaches of Nehemiah and appreciate situations such as this betrayal of the nobles of Israel as they communed with Tobias, the one who was seeking to hinder the work of God’s appointed leader, one has to experience it personally.

Many a time have I, as a pastor, had members of my congregations communicate with other leaders who seek my downfall. Thus, when preaching, I am aware that I am ministering to a divided congregation. Their allegiance is only in part to the church and to me as their pastor, for at the same time they seek the companionship of those who are literally the enemies of our church.

They then proceed to talk to their friends in the congregation, seeking to put forth the views of those who oppose me. They put my enemies in a most favourable light, pointing out that perhaps I, the pastor, had not understood the position of those who were preaching against us. They present those who are against us as being indeed very pleasant people, only desiring to work together with us. Such was the situation with which Nehemiah had to contend.

Another factor one has to contend with is the people who are linked to other fellowships by marriage with their members. This

is extremely difficult; in many cases, it is impossible to break those allegiances. Another spirit can find a home in the hearts of those in your congregation who have divided loyalties in such instances.

Thus, when preaching, one is constantly battling this opposition. On top of all this, your words are constantly being reported to the other camp. It is painful and heartbreaking. Therefore we must not be sympathizers with those who leave churches for the wrong reasons. We must not have a false kind of love for the enemy. Many times we feel that we are being compassionate, but if God does not feel the same way, then we are wrong. For in so doing, we would be opposing God's will.

## Chapter 7 — The Register of Genealogy

**7:1** - *“Now it came to pass, when the wall was built, and I had set up the doors, and the porters and the singers and the Levites were appointed.”* The officers who had charge of the temple were naturally considered the most trustworthy to be placed in charge of the city. It is noteworthy that these are all spiritual appointees. We should ensure that, even as the deacons of the Early Church were men of sound spiritual attainments, all the officers and helps in our churches be so qualified, morally and spiritually.

**7:2** - *“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.”* We note that in the Bible, God, at sovereign times, did use families to accomplish His purposes. The leaders of the children of Israel were siblings: Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

David was surrounded by many members of his family, and even Jesus was encompassed by His family. His cousins were John the Baptist and the Apostle John, and the Apostles James and Jude were His brothers. When a leader has family members helping him, family loyalty gives a sense of security, trust, and continuance for God’s work that has been entrusted to the leader when he has family members helping him.

Hananiah was chosen because he had first been proven in a lesser position, which is in accordance with the instructions for the choosing of deacons in 1 Timothy 3:10. May I say that there are

few who qualify with Abraham to be called faithful. Only those who follow the Lamb, whose name is Faithful and True, whithersoever He goeth "... *are called, and chosen, and faithful*" (Rev. 17:14, 19:11).

**7:3** - "*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.*" In the East, it is customary to open the gates of a city at sunrise and to bar them at sunset—a rule which is not infringed upon except to allow the entrance or exit of a person of authority, but even then, rarely.

Nehemiah recommended that the gates of Jerusalem should not be opened so early. At a time when the enemy was practicing all sorts of dangerous stratagems, this precaution was necessary, to ensure that the inhabitants of Jerusalem were all astir and could enjoy the benefit of broad daylight for observing the suspicious movements of any enemies.

The propriety of regularly barring the gates at sunset was, in this instance, accompanied with the appointment of a number of people to act as sentinels, each mounting guard in front of his own house. Spiritually, one might say that parents should mount guard over friendships that their children have, as well as the television, music, and books that they have in the house.

**7:4** - "*Now the city was large and great: but the people were few therein, and the houses were not builded.*" The walls were

evidently built on the old foundations. The city covered a large area, as all Oriental cities do, the houses standing apart, with gardens and orchards intervening. Many of the houses were little more than shacks made of stones without mortar. It is to the glory of God that His house shall be filled, as this following story illustrates.

The Lord made it clear in a particular country that He wanted a certain church to meet in a building that would hold well over ten times the number of the congregation. When, in obedience to the word of the Lord, the congregation did meet in that building, the Lord gave them Luke 14:23, "...that My House may be filled." Little by little that huge auditorium was filled to overflowing.

**7:5** - *"And my God put into mine heart to gather together the nobles, and the rulers, and the people, that they might be reckoned by genealogy. And I found a register of the genealogy of them which came up at the first, and found written therein."* The arrangement about to be described by Nehemiah is ascribed to the grace of God in prompting and directing him, rather than to his own prudence and common sense.

**7:6-30** - *"These are the children of the province, that went up out of the captivity, of those that had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away, and came again to Jerusalem and to Judah, every one unto his city; 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; The children of Parosh, two thousand an hundred*

*seventy and two. The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two. The children of Arah, six hundred fifty and two. The children of Pahath-moab, of the children of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand and eight hundred and eighteen. The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. The children of Zattu, eight hundred forty and five. The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and threescore. The children of Binnui, six hundred forty and eight. The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty and eight. The children of Azgad, two thousand three hundred twenty and two. The children of Adonikam, six hundred threescore and seven. The children of Bigvai, two thousand threescore and seven. The children of Adin, six hundred fifty and five. The children of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety and eight. The children of Hashum, three hundred twenty and eight. The children of Bezai, three hundred twenty and four. The children of Hariph, an hundred and twelve. The children of Gibeon, ninety and five. The men of Bethlehem and Netophah, an hundred fourscore and eight. The men of Anathoth, an hundred twenty and eight. The men of Bethazmaveth, forty and two. The men of Kirjath-je'arim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred forty and three. The men of Ramah and Geba, six hundred twenty and one."*

Nehemiah resolved to prepare a register of the returned exiles that contained an exact record of the family and ancestral abode of every individual. While thus directing his attention, he discovered a register of the first detachment that had come under the care of Zerubbabel. It is transcribed here and is the same as that in Ezra chapter 2. Although it differs in a few particulars, the discrepancy is sufficiently accounted for from the different circumstances in which the two registers were taken.

Ezra's register was made up at Babylon, while Nehemiah's was drawn out in Judea, after the walls of Jerusalem had been rebuilt. The lapse of so many years might well be expected to make a difference in the catalogue through death or other causes; thus Machish is omitted in Ezra 2:30. Perhaps, though entered into the register as intending to accompany the returning, he and his family changed their minds and remained in Babylon.

Other circumstances led to a difference between this register and that of Ezra. In particular, one person is called by different names, according to Jewish custom. Thus, Hariph (Neh. 7:24) is the same as Jorah (Ezra 2:18); Sia (Neh. 7:47) the same as Siaha (Ezra 2:44), etc. (On the subject of the variation of the names, and the difference as to numbers in this and the parallel passage of Ezra, see *Dissertation* of Kennicott, vol. ii, p. 508, which gives a minute comparison of texts as well as a very full and satisfactory explanation of all obscurities.)

As to the difference of numbers, that is just what might have been expected. Many who had resolved to take advantage of Cyrus' edict and intimated their purpose to Ezra, drew back, and continued where they were. On the other hand, when the caravan was starting, great numbers may have unexpectedly joined their ranks and come to Jerusalem. One purpose for this genealogy of the nobles, rulers, and people was to ascertain with accuracy the parties to whom the duty of ministering at the altar and conducting the various services of the temple legally belonged. The possession of the old register of Zerubbabel was invaluable, as it provided guidance to exact information in this important point of inquiry.



**7:31-73** - *“The men of Michmas, an hundred and twenty and two. The men of Bethel and Ai, an hundred twenty and three. The men of the other Nebo, fifty and two. The children of the other Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. The children of Harim, three hundred and twenty. The children of Jericho, three hundred forty and five. The children of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred twenty and one. The children of Senaah, three thousand nine hundred and thirty. The priests: the children of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred seventy and three. The children of Immer, a thousand fifty and two. The children of Pashur, a thousand two hundred forty and seven. The children of Harim, a thousand and seventeen. The Levites: the children of Jeshua, of Kadmiel, and of the children of Hodevah, seventy and four. The singers: the children of Asaph, an hundred forty and eight. The porters: the children of Shallum, the children of Ater, the children of Talmon, the children of Akkub, the children of Hatita, the children of Shobai, an hundred thirty and eight. The Nethinims: the children of Ziha, the children of Hashupha, the children of Tabbaoth, The children of Keros, the children of Sia, the children of Padon, The children of Lebana, the children of Hagaba, the children of Shalmai, The children of Hanan, the children of Giddel, the children of Gahar, The children of Reaiah, the children of Rezin, the children of Nekoda, The children of Gazzam, the children of Uzza, the children of Phaseah, The children of Besai, the children of Meunim, the children of Nephishesim, The children of Bakbuk, the children of Hakupha, the children of Harhur, The children of Bazlith, the children of Mehida, the children of Harsha, The children of Barkos, the children of Sisera, the children of Tamah, The children of Neziah, the children of Hatipha. The children of Solomon’s servants: the*

*children of Sotai, the children of Sophereth, the children of Perida, The children of Jaala, the children of Darkon, the children of Giddel, The children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattil, the children of Pochereth of Zebaim, the children of Amon. All the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon's servants, were three hundred ninety and two. And these were they which went up also from Telmelah, Telharesha, Cherub, Addon, and Immer: but they could not show their father's house, nor their seed, whether they were of Israel. The children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred forty and two. And of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai, which took one of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite to wife, and was called after their name. These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but it was not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood. And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and Thummim. The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore, Beside their manservants and their maidservants, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and they had two hundred forty and five singing men and singing women. Their horses, seven hundred thirty and six: their mules, two hundred forty and five: Their camels, four hundred thirty and five: six thousand seven hundred and twenty asses. And some of the chief of the fathers gave unto the work. The Tirshatha gave to the treasure a thousand drams of gold, fifty basins, five hundred and thirty priests' garments. And some of the chief of the fathers gave to the treasure of the work twenty thousand drams of gold, and two thousand and two hundred pound of silver. And that*

*which the rest of the people gave was twenty thousand drams of gold, and two thousand pound of silver, and threescore and seven priests' garments. So the priests, and the Levites, and the porters, and the singers, and some of the people, and the Nethinims, and all Israel, dwelt in their cities; and when the seventh month came, the children of Israel were in their cities."*

With respect to these verses, as we mentioned earlier, this genealogy is essentially the same as in Ezra chapter 2 and the comments that we made concerning that will suffice. This also is the opinion of many notable commentators including F. Delitzch and C.F. Keil.

## Chapter 8 — The Reading of the Law

**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.”* Here we see the great difference between revival and normal church attendance.

In normal times, the people have to be coaxed to come to church, and generally they are apathetic, not taking notes of the sermon, and sometimes not even bringing their Bibles. In revival, they are there demanding to be taught the Word of God by their ministers. In times of revival, there is a deep hunger created amongst the people to feed on and devour the Word of God, and they demand to be taught by their ministers; for that reason God gives teachers of righteousness (Joel 2:23).

**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.”* We need to take note of the fact that there are certain ones amongst God’s people who are unable to understand the preaching of the Word. Obviously, these would not profit from hearing the preaching, and were separated from the others. As the secular educationalists have special instruction for those with learning difficulties, we should seek to have special classes for those who have difficulty understanding the truths of God’s Word.

Now the first day of the seventh month is clearly expressed for a reason—to alert us to a hidden meaning. This was the first day

of the last three Feasts of the Lord (see Leviticus 23). The feasts were as follows:

1. The Feast of the Passover – This took place on the fourteenth day of the first month (Lev. 23:5), and spiritually illustrated salvation. Christ is our Passover Lamb, sacrificed for our sins, by whose blood we are saved.
2. The Feast of Unleavened Bread – This feast took place between the fifteenth and twenty-first of the first month (Lev. 23:6) and signifies that for the rest of our lives we should feed upon the unadulterated and sincere Word of God.
3. The Feast of First Fruits – This feast took place in the first month (Lev. 23:11). Christ is our First Fruits, having been raised from the dead. In like manner, we undergo the rite of water baptism, which is to be buried with Christ and then be raised to walk in newness of life with Him.
4. The Feast of Pentecost – This feast took place on the fiftieth day after Passover in the third month. For the Christian, it is analogous to being baptized with the Holy Ghost with the initial sign of speaking with other tongues.

### ***The Last Three Feasts Celebrated during the Seventh Month***

5. The Feast of Trumpets – This feast took place on the first day of the seventh month (Lev. 23:24). This signifies God's speaking afresh to His people; He is moving on,

and those who hear His voice must be prepared to move on with Him.

6. The Day of Atonement – This feast took place on the tenth day of the seventh month (Lev. 23:27). This is the feast in which God’s people afflicted their souls and received a deeper cleansing of body, soul, and spirit. By His grace, we need to cry out to our Savior, even as David who said, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps. 139:23-24).
  
7. The Feast of Tabernacles – This is the seventh and final feast that took place between the fifteenth and twenty-first of the seventh month (Lev. 23:34). It is of importance that this feast was celebrated at the time of the Restoration (as we have previously stated). The Restoration Period is a type of the restoration of the Church. Therefore, the Feast of Tabernacles, which is a type of the latter rain, will be celebrated and experienced by the Church in these Last Days before the coming of the Lord. This is seen in Acts 3:20-21, “And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.”

We are told in James 5:7, “Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the

precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.”

In Israel there are two principal rains. The early rain prepares the earth for sowing, and the latter rain in the seventh month matures the harvest. This harvest is then brought in during the Feast of the Harvest, which is the Feast of Tabernacles. We shall look further at the Feast of Tabernacles a little later in this book, where we shall see other spiritual truths associated with this feast that are applicable to the Church in our days.

**8:3** - *“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.”* We notice, too, that Ezra read in the street before the Water Gate to alert us to the fact that the Water of Life was now washing the people, as we read in Eph. 5:25-27, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

Even as we read here concerning the people in Ezra and Nehemiah’s time, we shall find that when the glorious latter rain is poured out, people will have an insatiable desire for the instruction of the Word of God.

**8:4** - *“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.”*

Another truth that should not be overlooked is that Ezra was surrounded by the elders of Israel so that the people would realise that he spoke on behalf of the leadership of the congregation.

It is always good for the pastor to advise the elders first before giving fresh direction to the church. When unanimity has been achieved in the leadership, then the pastor should speak to the congregation with the elders on the platform beside him. In this way, the congregation understands that what is being said is on behalf of the leadership of the church. It gives credence to the message, direction, or doctrine that is being expounded.

**8:5** - *“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.”* Whilst this statement could just be passed over as a factual remark that Ezra was visible to all the people, there is, however, a spiritual truth that can be drawn out. It is very important for the congregation to see their spiritual leaders and be aware of their lifestyles.

The leaders, like those of this period, should live modestly and devoutly. Their lives should be an example of their message for the people. As the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4:16-17, “Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me. For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful



in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.”

**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.”* It is a profound blessing from the Almighty when the congregation is willing to hear and learn the Scriptures.

It is God who inclines the heart of man to seek to know and desire to understand the Book of Life. Oh, what a privilege it is for us to minister to such earnestly seeking souls. As I was writing this, I passed through Germany where I had the privilege of ministering to just such a group of choice saints of God. Many of them were so mature in His grace that they already seemed heaven bound. They drank the Word with a deep appreciation that would have gladdened the heart of any man of God and they drew forth fresh truths from my own heart. Oh, what blessed fellowship we enjoyed over those seemingly fleeting days together!

**8:7-8** - *“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. So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.”*

One of the lessons that we have to learn when studying God’s Word is that it not only has spiritual applications, but it also has very practical applications for our lives here on earth. Ezra and

his fellow teachers sought to implant this in the hearts of those who listened. All of the Old Testament sacrifices were but types of the sacrifice of Christ.

We need to appreciate the richness of truth contained in these Old Testament types and understand the consequent application of these sacrifices to the life of every believer in these New Testament days. Thus will our own lives be fuller and purer. We will enjoy greater spiritual liberty and come to know experientially what Jesus meant when He said in John 8:32, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

**8:9** - *“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.”* Due to the famine of knowledge of the Scriptures, which the sins of former generations had brought upon them, the people were very ignorant of God’s Word.

Thus, the people wept as their hearts were convicted through the preaching of the message of God in the Books of the Law and Prophets. The people were told not to weep, for the day was a Holy Day—meaning a day of joy and gladness in the presence of the Lord, during the time of the Feast of Tabernacles.

**8:10** - *“Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”* Here we

have one of the most often quoted Scriptures in this book of Nehemiah: “The joy of the Lord is your strength.” We need to major on joy and rejoicing, for it not only is our source of strength, but it opens the way for further blessing. Paul, quoting Jesus, said that the Lord loves a joyful giver as we read in 2 Corinthians 9:7, “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.” The Feast of Tabernacles, as we have already stated, is the seventh and final feast of the Lord, as mentioned in Leviticus 23. It is called by several names: Feast of Harvest, Feast of Ingathering, and Feast of Booths, since at that time, as we shall see later, the people were instructed to dwell in tents made of the branches of specific trees. It was the time of rejoicing.

**8:11-12** - *“So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved. And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.”* One of the great treasures in the Christian life is the ability to understand the Scriptures and God’s plan and purpose for us as individuals, as well as for our Church as a corporate body. This understanding brings a sense of rest and well being to our souls and spirits.

The revelation of His Word and His will for our lives is one of the blessings that the Lord gives to those who walk with Him in righteousness. His Word becomes a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Ps. 119:105).

**8:13** - *“And of the second day were gathered together the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests, and the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, even to understand the words of the law.”* As we mentioned earlier concerning 8:4-5, it is vital in leadership that we act as Moses did. Moses first met Aaron (we might say his assistant pastor) and then the elders of the children of Israel. When he went to the people, it was with a united leadership so that the congregation could accept that God had visited them and had given a command to Moses. Therefore, when God is indicating a fresh move or message for the church, it is wisdom to confer with leadership, as it is easier for the congregation to accept the new vision when they know you have the support of the leaders.

**8:14** - *“And they found written in the law which the LORD had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month.”* This is taken from Leviticus 23:39-40:

“Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath. And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days.”

Spiritually, these trees help to show us that there is an outpouring of the goodness and righteousness of God, and an abundant supply of the water of life.

**8:15** - *“And that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written.”* There is an additional blessing when they celebrated this feast at the time of the restoration.

The olive speaks of peace and rest, and the pine, or boxwood speaks of protection or containment, in that Israel was set apart from the world and protected from their enemies. God promised to protect all their possessions during the time of the feasts. Myrtle is a beautiful evergreen, and the fact that Queen Esther’s name is a derivation from the “myrtle tree” can well illustrate the beauty of the Lord that is manifested through those who partake of this feast. Spiritual Mount Zion is also associated with His beauty (Ps. 50:2). The palm tree is ever a symbol of righteousness, while thick trees are symbols of the strength of God that is manifested through those who are partakers of this feast.

**8:16** - *“So the people went forth, and brought them, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim.”* One very notable aspect of this feast is that the people came out of their own dwelling places and dwelt together throughout this feast. This speaks of the unity that will be manifested by those who will see eye to eye when the Lord brings back the captivity of Zion (Ps. 126). In the millennial reign of Christ upon earth, we know this feast will unify the nations for Zechariah 14:16 states, “And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all

the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.”

They camped in the street of the Water Gate, which again speaks of the abundance of the Word of God and the Spirit of God which will be manifested at this feast. They also camped in the street of Ephraim (who was the continual backslider amongst all the tribes of Israel). This indicates that this feast will be noted for the large number of backsliders who will be returned to the Lord during the last day revival.

**8:17** - *“And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness.”*

This feast had been observed under King Solomon’s reign (2 Chr. 5:3), and also when the captivity of Israel returned under Zerubbabel, as evidenced in Ezra 3:4, but never had they kept it in such a wholehearted fashion since the days of Joshua.

**8:18** - *“Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner.”* Again, may we re-emphasise that this last day revival will be centred on the teaching of God’s Word so that the people of God have His laws written upon the fleshly tables of their hearts. We, therefore, should prepare ourselves by raising up teachers of righteousness that we may instruct the harvest of converts in the ways of God.

## Chapter 9 — A Rehearsal of their History

**9:1** - *“Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them.”* Confession and repentance precede revival. Nonetheless, after the conviction and blessing of the Holy Spirit, there is the necessity of further humbling and cleansing—the consequence of having sin revealed through a greater revival light shining into our personal lives and the conduct of the Church. This was the case in the time of Nehemiah.

**9:2** - *“And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers.”* One of the most grave situations in the life of a believer is to be unequally yoked with one who is either an unbeliever, or not of like precious faith. It causes the believer to lose his life of sanctity, as well as his faith in the Bible. Therefore, whether it is in marriage or in the workplace, we should not make alliances with those who are not walking in the same way.

Now the confession of past sins is important, since God requires those things of the past, as we see in Ecclesiastes 3:15, “That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past.” A Scriptural illustration of dealing with the sins of the past, including those of the fathers, would be the famine at the time of David. When David inquired why there was a famine, God told him that it was because of the sin of Saul against the Gibeonites some 30 years before (2 Sam. 21:1-14). God may well require us, either for our families or for our nations, to repent of the sins of our forefathers.

Judgment for their sins may fall upon us, as was the case with David and his generation. In a certain sense, this was confirmed by the Lord, who said in His day that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world would be required of His generation (Lk. 11:50-51). May we ensure that we do not give the Lord reason to bring judgment upon our children and the future generations to come.

**9:3** - *“And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the LORD their God one fourth part of the day; and another fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the LORD their God.”* The method that these dear Israelites used in cleansing their souls from defilement is a model for us in this day in which we are living.

Either privately or publicly, should the Lord so desire, it is good to spend several hours reading the passages of the Word which the Holy Spirit indicates. Then we should spend time confessing any shortcomings to the Lord, past or present, that He puts His finger upon in our lives, for the definition of sin is to come short of the glory of God in any area. By these acts of obedience, we shall be enabled to partake of a further revelation of His glorious ways and, above all, of the matchless Christ of God in all of His revealed beauty. It is very important not to neglect or forget to confess them to those we have wronged as well.

**9:4** - *“Then stood up upon the stairs, of the Levites, Jeshua, and Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Chenani, and cried with a loud voice unto the LORD their God.”* There are times for private and silent prayer and meditation; but at other



times we need to express our emotions, even as we read of Jesus, “Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared” (Heb. 5:7).

**9:5** - *“Then the Levites, Jeshua, and Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabniah, Sherebiah, Hodijah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah, said, Stand up and bless the LORD your God for ever and ever: and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise.”* The leaders first commanded the people to rise and worship the Lord, and then they turned to the Lord Himself and eulogized Him. This was followed by a declaration of the greatness and goodness of God.

It is so often beneficial to declare with a loud voice all His wondrous acts, since Paul said in Romans 10:17, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Beloved, may we practice reciting His Word out loud at times, for it will increase our faith and we will receive the blessings.

**9:6** - *“Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.”* David went out into the night sky and saw the greatness of God in creation (Ps. 8); it is good for us to see the greatness of God in His creation. We then can appreciate the Scripture, “Is there anything too hard for Me?” (Jer. 32:7). Seeing His greatness increases our faith to believe that nothing is impossible for Him.

**9:7** - *“Thou art the LORD the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham.”* Now follows a rehearsal of the history of the children of Israel from the days of Abraham, whom we are told is our father if we are Christ’s (Gal. 3:29). Thus, whilst much is a recounting of Jewish history, the truths are still applicable to us in our day and age.

**9:8** - *“And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say, to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou art righteous.”* The first truth we should examine at this stage is that Abraham inherited the promises of God because he was found faithful. Now as we look carefully into the Holy Scripture, we find that faithfulness is a primary virtue for being considered for the ministry, and it is also commended by Jesus. (See Matthew 25:14-23.)

The Apostle Paul tells us that his previous lifestyle of persecuting the Church did not disqualify him from being called to the ministry because he did it out of ignorance. What qualified Paul? The fact that God counted him faithful (1 Tim. 1:12). Those who are with the Lamb are the called, chosen, and faithful (Rev. 17:14).

**9:9** - *“And didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heardest their cry by the Red sea.”* When we cry out unto God in our affliction, He hears and will answer, for it is written that “in all their afflictions He was afflicted” (Isa. 63:9). The Apostle James indeed exhorts us in James 5:13, “Is any among you

afflicted? let him pray.” So, beloved, let us come with holy boldness unto His throne of grace to find grace and help in time of need (Heb. 4:16).

**9:10** - *“And shewedst signs and wonders upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land: for thou knewest that they dealt proudly against them. So didst thou get thee a name, as it is this day.”* It is important to realise that the judgments came upon Pharaoh and the others because of their pride.

God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (Jas. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5). Pride is one of the most dangerous sins. It deceives our hearts and causes us to desire places and positions that God has not granted to us. Lucifer, through pride, became Satan because he desired to be like the Most High (Isa. 14:11-15).

**9:11** - *“And thou didst divide the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land; and their persecutors thou threwest into the deeps, as a stone into the mighty waters.”* Now we have the enumeration of some of the signs and wonders that the Lord performed on the journey from Egypt to the Promised Land.

The opening of the Red Sea allowed the children of Israel to cross over on dry land; when the waters closed again, they covered and destroyed the army of the Egyptians. The Red Sea is symbolic of Water Baptism. As we mentioned earlier, Water Baptism is the rite of being buried with Jesus and arising in newness of life to walk with Him. This brings us to the next act of God: being led by the Spirit of God.

**9:12** - *“Moreover thou leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar; and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way wherein they should go.”* It is important for us to understand that we, as Christians, need not only to be born again by the Holy Spirit and filled with Him, but also to be led of the Spirit. We read in Romans 8:1, *“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”*

**9:13** - *“Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments.”* The Mount Sinai experience was symbolic of the Feast of Pentecost. In this glorious encounter with Jesus as our Baptizer in the Holy Spirit, we are also blessed by fresh revelation of the Word of God. It was here at this stage of the journey that God chose to give the Ten Commandments, written upon two tables of stone. For New Testament believers, these Commandments must be written upon the fleshly tables of our hearts. It is our wisdom to keep the laws of God (Deut. 4:6).

**9:14** - *“And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant.”* The Sabbath, the seventh day of the Old Testament week, was a day of rest. For the New Testament believer, it is to enter into God’s rest whereby we cease from our own works, even as God ceased from His (Heb. 4:1-11).

**9:15** - *“And gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger, and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock for their*

*thirst, and promisedst them that they should go in to possess the land which thou hadst sworn to give them.”* In the journey from Egypt to the River Jordan, the Lord provided manna or bread from heaven every morning. Jesus said that He was the Bread of Life. As He is the Word made flesh, we should feed upon the Living Word each day for our spiritual food.

First Corinthians 10:4 says, “And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.” Therefore, for us it is the Spirit of Christ flowing through the Scriptures that gives life, not the dead letter of the Word that kills (2 Cor. 3:6). Thus, the children of Israel were supernaturally led and fed by God so that they could enter into the land that God had promised them.

**9:16** - *“But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments.”* Now we have the problem that besets mankind—we are proud and will not listen to God speaking ever so clearly to us. We do not listen; whether He speaks through His written Word, to our hearts, through our conscience, through preachers, or through others who witness to us concerning the right way wherein we should walk. Therefore, we need to be like the children of Israel whose leaders now acknowledged that their forefathers refused to obey.

**9:17** - *“Refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not.”* Here again, we have the character of God stressed—a God of love and mercy who forever cares for His

children and remembers that we are but flesh. As Jesus said in Matthew 26:41, "...the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." So our Heavenly Father understands, and in His deep compassion, is always there to encourage us along life's journey.

**9:18** - *"Yea, when they had made them a molten calf, and said, This is thy God that brought thee up out of Egypt, and had wrought great provocations."* One of the most hurtful acts that a man can do against God is to worship an idol and claim that the idol is God. The children of Israel caused God to experience such heartache and sorrow. The Lord their God who had confounded the gods of Egypt before their eyes and accomplished such great miracles as the opening of the Red Sea.

It is an experience many pastors know—the anguish of soul is so great when someone who has been exposed to the truth for a number of years, turns away, and walks with those who rebel against you, or turns to other churches that do not preach the full Gospel. Even as I write, it seems as though I am experiencing a little of His pain and sorrow. Oh, how can we humans be so blind as to turn to idols and ignore the God of all heaven and earth, who created all things for His good pleasure? We must seek Him to know His plans and purposes for our own lives, for even as the prophet declared, "...He created it not in vain" (Isa. 45:18).

**9:19** - *"Yet thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to shew them light, and the way wherein they should go."* One of

the most amazing virtues of the Heavenly Father is His merciful kindness. When we have so grievously wounded His heart of love, He still comes back and works with us to accomplish His purposes in our lives. This is seen also in the teachings of the Lord Jesus when He says, concerning His Father, in Matthew 5:43-48:

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

Let us strive for Scriptural perfection in that we truly love, which means to completely forgive and forget, and then unreservedly bless those who have despitefully used us.

**9:20** - *“Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them, and withheldst not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst.”* Here we see the fulfilment of Psalm 68:18, *“Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them.”* Thus, the Father gives both spiritual and natural blessings to those who rebel against

Him that He might show forth the perfection of love. May we do likewise and show the perfection of God's love to all.

**9:21** - *“Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing; their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not.”* Here we see the perfection of longsuffering and goodness of the Father. During those 40 years there were constant acts of rebellion of one kind or another, and still the Father of Lights in whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning continued to support His people. How longsuffering should we be with those who disappoint us!

**9:22** - *“Moreover thou gavest them kingdoms and nations, and didst divide them into corners: so they possessed the land of Sihon, and the land of the king of Heshbon, and the land of Og king of Bashan.”* Although it is not mentioned in this text, the Lord hardened the hearts of these kings (Deut. 2:30) so that they, like Pharaoh before them, would be destroyed.

Let us understand two truths here. First, we must always have a broken and a contrite spirit so that we will receive the love and mercy of the Lord; and second, when our enemies harden their hearts, we should realise that the Lord intends to destroy them and we have but to wait and see.

**9:23** - *“Their children also multipliedst thou as the stars of heaven, and broughtest them into the land, concerning which thou hadst promised to their fathers, that they should go in to possess it.”* It is indeed amazing that God so graciously multiplied the nation, considering they were indeed so



rebellious. In so doing, He was again manifesting His mercy and goodness to them, since an abundance of children in those days was considered to be a blessing.

**9:24** - *“So the children went in and possessed the land, and thou subduedst before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gavest them into their hands, with their kings, and the people of the land, that they might do with them as they would.”* Before entering the Promised Land, Moses had mentioned seven nations; namely, the Hittites, Gergashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perezites, Hivites, and the Jebusites. These represent the seven cardinal sins, as mentioned by King Solomon in Proverbs 6:16-19:

“These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.”

These are the sins that must be dealt with in our own hearts so that we, too, may have victory as God brings us into our spiritual inheritance.

**9:25** - *“And they took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards, and oliveyards, and fruit trees in abundance: so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness.”* Here we see a snare into which so many of God’s dear people fall. When people are prospered, they become self-sufficient and

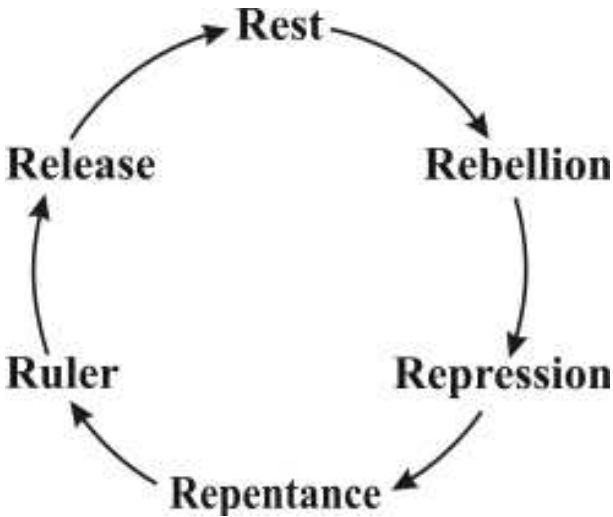
lose their holy dependency upon the Lord. Israel was forewarned about this before they entered the Land of Promise. We see an example of this in Deuteronomy 32:15, “But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.” Let us beware of prosperity if our hearts are not fully sanctified, as we, likewise, will fall.

**9:26** - *“Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to thee, and they wrought great provocations.”* The extent to which Israel sinned as a nation was great. The Lord had chided them saying that unlike the heathen who never changed their gods, Israel had rejected the true and living God for idols which were made of iron and wood.

**9:27** - *“Therefore thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven; and according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies.”* We see the response of their preachers because of this rebellion.

The Levites are referring to the time of the Judges when there was a repeated cycle of events through those 350 years. There would be a period of Rest, followed by one of Rebellion; then this would lead to Repression through an enemy God raised up to dominate them; afterwards there would be Repentance – Israel then turned back to the Lord, with a Ruler who was appointed by

God, and experienced Release from the enemies' oppression. This cycle of events is as follows:



**9:28** - *“But after they had rest, they did evil again before thee: therefore leftest thou them in the hand of their enemies, so that they had the dominion over them: yet when they returned, and cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven; and many times didst thou deliver them according to thy mercies.”* This deliverance did not last long; after a time, they returned to their rebellious ways and God raised up 12 judges (or saviors) in all. There were seven cycles in all during this period of 350 years.

**9:29** - *“And testifiedst against them, that thou mightest bring them again unto thy law: yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto thy commandments, but sinned against thy judgments,*

*(which if a man do, he shall live in them;)* and withdrew the shoulder, and hardened their neck, and would not hear.” There is a phrase here of great importance in our spiritual life that we must not overlook—namely, “that Thou mightest bring them again unto Thy Law.” The Law is not an option, but a commandment. God’s purpose for the New Testament is to write His law upon the fleshly tables of our hearts so that He may cause us to walk in His ways. Therefore, we should realise that those who walk in the Spirit and are led of the Spirit do indeed fulfil the righteousness of the Law (Rom. 8:4).

**9:30** - *“Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy spirit in thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the people of the lands.”* The children of Israel were warned by Moses that they would indeed go into captivity and be dispersed among the nations when he stated:

“And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone. And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind...” (Deut. 28:64-65).

**9:31** - *“Nevertheless for thy great mercies’ sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou art a gracious and merciful God.”* Another reason Moses gave for not destroying the children of Israel (who deserved to be eliminated

from among the nations) is that the heathen nations would then rejoice and claim that they, and not the Lord, had brought judgment upon them. We read this in Deuteronomy 32:26-27.

“I said, I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men: Were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high, and the LORD hath not done all this.”

**9:32** - *“Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepeth covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble seem little before thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day.”* This relates to the time recorded in 2 Kings chapter 17 when the northern ten tribes were taken into captivity by Sennacherib and then later deported by Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal (c. 732 B.C.).

**9:33-35** - *“Howbeit thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly: Neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments and thy testimonies, wherewith thou didst testify against them. For they have not served thee in their kingdom, and in thy great goodness that thou gavest them, and in the large and fat land which thou gavest before them, neither turned they from their wicked works.”*

It is a fact that even after the deportations of those ten tribes of the Northern kingdom of Israel, the Southern kingdom of Judah (with the exception of the kings, Hezekiah and Josiah) did not serve the Lord, but rather abased the kingdom by gross wickedness. They literally filled the land with murder, adultery, and covetousness. Regretfully, so few of us learn from the errors of others.

**9:36-37** - *“Behold, we are servants this day, and for the land that thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold, we are servants in it: And it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins: also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we are in great distress.”* Thus acknowledging the justice of God, they openly declare that this restoration was but spiritual, for they were indeed in bondage to the Persian Empire.

They were in reality little more than slaves, since the Persians could command them at will, even to the moving of them from one country to another. To a certain extent, we as Christians, are experiencing the same as this world is still under the domination of the Prince of this world. Satan controls the governments which are mostly anti-Christian.

We must remember though that our God reigns in the heavenlies, and as He overruled the decrees of the Persian Empire, so He will do in our days as we cry unto Him. Praise the Lord! We must understand, beloved, that when we continue in sin, another spirit will have dominion over us, even Satan. He will control and ruin every area of our lives—body, soul, and spirit. It is only

in obedience to the Lord and to His Word that we can enjoy His promise in John 8:32, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

**9:38** - *“And because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it.”* Covenant-making with the Lord is to be encouraged because it binds us to a purpose and a course, setting our will in a path of righteousness. Why not pause, beloved, at this moment and meet the Lord in this area, binding yourself to walk in His most holy will for your lives? It will be of eternal benefit for you.

## Chapter 10 — Those who Sealed the Covenant

**10:1** - *“Now those that sealed were, Nehemiah, the Tirshatha, the son of Hachaliah, and Zidkijah.”* In those days, as in certain countries today, official documents are finalized by a seal which represents the person who adheres to that which is written in the document. Thus, we have a long list of those who put their personal or family seal to this solemn document of intent to serve God. Nehemiah was naturally first as he was the governor and representative of the Persian emperor.

Zidkijah, or Zadok, the scribe of Nehemiah 13:13, was the one who drew up the document and, therefore, signed in the second place. The highest officials were the first to sign or seal the document in order to set a good example for the rest of the people. Leaders should always do so, as others will follow their good deeds in the pathway of righteousness. These two leaders were the two witnesses that are necessary for any solemn occasion.

**10:2-8** - *“Seraiiah, Azariah, Jeremiah, Pashur, Amariah, Malchijah, Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch, Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah, Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch, Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin, Maaziah, Bilgai, Shemaiah: these were the priests.”*

Now we have the 21 priests (3 x 7), who represent the ministers of God in their divine role of perfection, standing solidly behind the Covenant. Ministers in their pulpits have tremendous powers of persuasion; may they use these powers to turn people into the pathway of godliness.



**10:9-13** - *“And the Levites: both Jeshua the son of Azaniah, Binnui of the sons of Henadad, Kadmiel; And their brethren, Shebaniah, Hodijah, Kelita, Pelaiiah, Hanan, Micha, Rehob, Hashabiah, Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah, Hodijah, Bani, Beninu.”* These 17 men (the number of both moral and spiritual strength) represent the elders who rallied behind their leaders. It is wonderful when a church is united in leadership, as it shows such power for good.

**10:14-27** - *“The chief of the people; Parosh, Pahath-moab, Elam, Zatthu, Bani, Bunni, Azgad, Bebai, Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin, Ater, Hizkijah, Azzur, Hodijah, Hashum, Bezai, Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai, Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir, Meshezabeel, Zadok, Jaddua, Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiiah, Hoshea, Hananiah, Hashub, Hallohesh, Pileha, Shobek, Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah, And Ahijah, Hanan, Anan, Malluch, Harim, Baanah.”*

There were 44 (4 x 11 represents universal purity of purpose) chiefs of the people who subscribed to the manifest will of God as declared by the religious leaders. It is so encouraging when the influential members of the congregation are behind their ministers.

**10:28** - *“And the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the porters, the singers, the Nethinims, and all they that had separated themselves from the people of the lands unto the law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, every one having knowledge, and having understanding...”* I cannot but stress here that in order to be wholehearted with God, one must be morally pure. We are told in Hosea 4:11 that whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart. Therefore, they had

to separate from all things that did not make for spiritual, moral, and sexual purity in order to fully serve the Lord.

**10:29** - *“They clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God’s law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord, and his judgments and his statutes...”* This adherence to the Law of God as given by Moses was their wisdom. Our wisdom is the Ten Commandments written upon the fleshly tables of our hearts, walking and being led of the Spirit of God in all that we do and say. We should so pray that the Lord will write them on our hearts.

**10:30** - *“And that we would not give our daughters unto the people of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons.”* Marriage is one of the most important decisions (if not the most important) that one makes in one’s life, other than to follow God with all of one’s heart. If a man marries a girl or a girl marries a fellow who is not walking in the same vision, irrespective of their being Christian, there will undoubtedly be trouble later in life and deep spiritual frustration.

I am thinking of a girl who was a pastor’s daughter with a call to a certain foreign land. She married a fellow who professed to have the same call, but in actuality did not. The result was that deep bitterness entered into both their lives, and although they have gone to church for more than 50 years they do not possess the joy of Jesus in their lives. Nothing, but absolutely nothing, can compensate for the lack of the joy of Jesus in the heart of the believer. We only have this joy when we walk in the light as He is

in the light, in His perfect will for our lives. I was indeed blessed by having a wife who had a similar call and our marriage was one of pure joy.

**10:31** - *“And if the people of the land bring ware or any victuals on the sabbath day to sell, that we would not buy it of them on the sabbath, or on the holy day: and that we would leave the seventh year, and the exaction of every debt.”*

Christians do not keep the Sabbath (Saturday) as holy, but the Lord’s day (Sunday), the day of His resurrection. Nevertheless, we should seek to set Sunday apart for church attendance, prayer, and meditation in His Word. We should not profane it by shopping or playing sport or, if possible, by working in our secular occupations.

**10:32-34** - *“Also we made ordinances for us, to charge ourselves yearly with the third part of a shekel for the service of the house of our God; For the shewbread, and for the continual meat offering, and for the continual burnt offering, of the sabbaths, of the new moons, for the set feasts, and for the holy things, and for the sin offerings to make an atonement for Israel, and for all the work of the house of our God. And we cast the lots among the priests, the Levites, and the people, for the wood offering, to bring it to the House of God, after the Houses of our fathers, at times appointed year by year, to burn upon the altar of the Lord our God, as it is written in the law.”*

The people then voluntarily bound themselves to provide for the service of the house of the Lord so all the requirements would be met. It is indeed good if the Christians, too, ensure that all the needs of the

church buildings are met in like manner. In so doing, the name of the Lord, which is over His house, will be glorified.

**10:35-39** - *“And to bring the firstfruits of our ground, and the firstfruits of all fruit of all trees, year by year, unto the house of the LORD: Also the firstborn of our sons, and of our cattle, as it is written in the law, and the firstlings of our herds and of our flocks, to bring to the house of our God, unto the priests that minister in the house of our God: And that we should bring the firstfruits of our dough, and our offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine and of oil, unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and the tithes of our ground unto the Levites, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of our tillage. And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes: and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure house. For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the offering of the corn, of the new wine, and the oil, unto the chambers, where are the vessels of the sanctuary, and the priests that minister, and the porters, and the singers: and we will not forsake the house of our God.”* In these verses we have a continuation of a list of commitments to the needs of the service of the Lord’s house.

With respect to giving, whilst these were Old Testament commandments, they are also obligatory for the Christian. Let us remember the promise as mentioned by King Solomon in Proverbs 3:9-10, “Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.”

## Chapter 11 — Those who Dwelt in Jerusalem

### *Those who Dwelt in Jerusalem (11:1-24)*

#### **The Rulers**

**11:1-2** - *“And the rulers of the people dwelt at Jerusalem: the rest of the people also cast lots, to bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem the holy city, and nine parts to dwell in other cities. And the people blessed all the men, that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem.”*

At the headquarters, there is a sense of awe and majesty as it is where the spiritual covering or angel of His presence dwells. For that reason, the capital of any nation or Christian fellowship is where the rulers or leaders should reside. It is from there that orders are issued and decisions are made. In addition, there were those among the people who volunteered to live in Jerusalem as others were needed to live there to fulfil the many other necessary functions at the headquarters. Therefore they determined that one in ten should dwell at the capital.

We would at first think that every Israelite would wish to have the privilege of dwelling in the Holy City. However, when we consider that the standards of life would be such that a greater degree of circumspectness and godliness would be required of the inhabitants, we realise that only a few would wish to have this honour. (See Psalm 15 and Psalm 24.) We must always understand that a far higher standard is required of those who dwell in the presence of the Lord than from those who reside in

the remote villages. In Jerusalem there was Mount Zion, which typified heavenly Mount Zion, the holy mountain of God. Zion is called the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth for out of her God hath shined (Ps. 50:2).

During this Restoration Period the inhabitants were chosen by lot. We know that from Proverbs 16:33, “The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.” Therefore, the Lord decided who had this honor.

Likewise in our time, those who will be in spiritual Mount Zion are those who have this hope birthed within them, as we read in Psalm 87:5-6, “And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her. The LORD shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there.” Now we see that those in Jerusalem were granted a place of honour in Scripture, and their names are to be remembered by all generations, because of their dedication. Therefore, shall the people of all time praise these dear saints of God who wholly offered themselves unto their Lord.

Another aspect should be considered: namely, that the wrath of the enemy is always directed against the capital city. Therefore, the inhabitants would be subjected to greater danger. This is manifestly true of Jerusalem, for it is the target of Satan, and in the Last Days, will be the target of the Antichrist himself. Thus, those who desire to be in spiritual Mount Zion must live an entirely different life from those who inhabit the dwellings of Jacob. That is why we read in Psalm 87:2, “The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.”

**11:3** - *“Now these are the chief of the province that dwelt in Jerusalem: but in the cities of Judah dwelt every one in his possession in their cities, to wit, Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon’s servants.”* It is clear from these lists that those who had given up their inheritances in the provinces and dwelt at Jerusalem were considered the most honorable.

When God writes His books concerning our lives, may it be recorded that we are among those who had the honour and were counted worthy to dwell in Mount Zion, and in the Holy City of our God.

It should be noted that a promise was made to the overcomers in the Philadelphian Church that they will have written upon them the name of God and the city of God, which is the New Jerusalem (Rev. 3:12). May we pray and so live, dear ones, that we may be counted worthy to be among that holy company of the redeemed saints of God.

Many people chose to dwell in the comparative safety of their own inheritances, and they are not mentioned by name. All classes, ministers of God, those who attended and helped the ministers, those who waited upon the elders, and those who were the children of the servants of the great King elected to dwell in their own places and not in Jerusalem. We must never forget that the children are included and that they have to make their own decisions as to where they are going to dwell spiritually. They cannot presume upon their fathers’ positions, for each is judged by his own works and his walk before God.

**11:4** - *“And at Jerusalem dwelt certain of the children of Judah, and of the children of Benjamin. Of the children of Judah; Athaiah the son of Uzziyah, the son of Zechariah, the son of Amariah, the son of Shephatiah, the son of Mahalaleel, of the children of Perez.”* Those who elected to live in the city of the Great King are mentioned by name.

There is a truth here that must not be overlooked—everything that a person does in this life is recorded for all generations. In this case, these descendants of Judah from Perez dwelt in Jerusalem and this was counted for their good. Yet it is also true for us that everything that we do is recorded forever in the Book of the Lord. How carefully we should live so that everything in our books makes sweet reading to the Lord when He commands the angel to take our book down for His examination.

**11:5-9** - *“And Maaseiah the son of Baruch, the son of Colhozeh, the son of Hazaiah, the son of Adaiah, the son of Joiarib, the son of Zechariah, the son of Shiloni. All the sons of Perez that dwelt at Jerusalem were four hundred threescore and eight valiant men. And these are the sons of Benjamin; Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Joed, the son of Pedaiah, the son of Kolaiah, the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ithiel, the son of Jesaiah. And after him Gabbai, Sallai, nine hundred twenty and eight. And Joel the son of Zichri was their overseer: and Judah the son of Senuah was second over the city.”*

These were the rulers responsible for the defence of the city. We must never forget that both naturally and spiritually, there is great danger in dwelling in the capital city, for it is the prime target of



the enemy's attack and wrath. If he should capture the capital then he essentially has the nation. Therefore, the attack is always directed against the headquarters of a fellowship or a church. The people who live there have to be very vigilant and accustomed to doing spiritual warfare for the attacks can be long and sustained.

## The Priests

**11:10-11** - *“Of the priests: Jedaiah the son of Joiarib, Jachin. Seraiah the son of Hilkiyah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, was the ruler of the house of God.”* These were the ministers of God responsible for the Temple which was on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, the Holy City.

As we continue our study of this and the succeeding chapters, we shall see that the Lord is meticulous about everything being done decently and in order. We need to watch carefully in our churches to ensure duties are not neglected and left to chance, or done haphazardly. Moreover, we want to remember that there are people designated for each particular function and duty.

**11:12-14** - *“And their brethren that did the work of the house were eight hundred twenty and two: and Adaiyah the son of Jeroham, the son of Pelaliah, the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah, the son of Pashur, the son of Malchiah, And his brethren, chief of the fathers, two hundred forty and two: and Amashai the son of Azareel, the son of Ahasai, the son of Meshillemoth, the son of Immer, And their brethren, mighty men of valour, an hundred twenty and eight: and their overseer was*

*Zabdiel, the son of one of the great men.*” Here we have an example of those who are engaged in battle with the enemy. They are priests, but are prepared for war, being men of courage and distinction. Such are the people engaged in spiritual warfare. Spiritual warfare is battling in prayer against the enemy forces. The Apostle Paul reminds us that we should,

“put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Eph. 6:11-13).

## **The Levites**

**11:15-18** - *“Also of the Levites: Shemaiah the son of Hashub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni; And Shabbethai and Jozabad, of the chief of the Levites, had the oversight of the outward business of the house of God. And Mattaniah the son of Micha, the son of Zabdi, the son of Asaph, was the principal to begin the thanksgiving in prayer: and Bakbukiah the second among his brethren, and Abda the son of Shammua, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun. All the Levites in the holy city were two hundred fourscore and four.”*

The Levites who waited upon the priests might be considered as performing the function of church elders. We should not overlook in this study of the Restoration Period that much was

made of the necessity of our duty with respect to thanksgivings as it relates to God's goodness towards us, His creation. We are told by the Apostle Paul that we should abound in thanksgivings in every circumstance (1 Th. 5:18). Ephesians 5:20 tells us that an even higher form of the spiritual grace of thanksgiving is to be thankful *for* all things, meaning to not only give thanks *in* a trial, but to give thanks *for* the trial.

### **The Porters**

**11:19-20** - *“Moreover the porters, Akkub, Talmon, and their brethren that kept the gates, were an hundred seventy and two. And the residue of Israel, of the priests, and the Levites, were in all the cities of Judah, every one in his inheritance.”*

The porters were people of distinction amongst the nobles in the time of David and Solomon. They were appointed by these two anointed ones of the Lord, David and Samuel, and fulfilled the duties of receptionists, being responsible for the doors and entrances to the Temple property.

### **The Nethinims**

**11:21-22** - *“But the Nethinims dwelt in Ophel: and Ziha and Gispa were over the Nethinims. The overseer also of the Levites at Jerusalem was Uzzi the son of Bani, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micha.”* Ophel was a dwelling on the southern slope of Mount Moriah, and so they were situated very near to the Temple precepts. The Nethinims waited upon the Levites, the elders, and would today be considered deacons. They were responsible for the

physical matters of the Temple service but they did not dwell in the city.

## **The Singers**

**11:23** - *“For it was the king’s commandment concerning them, that a certain portion should be for the singers, due for every day.”* Just as David had ordained that the singers were to be cared for, the king of Persia had also ordered provisions for those who ministered in the house of God, so that the blessing of God would be upon him and his heirs.

Of the sons of Asaph, the singers were over the business of the house of God. The sons of Asaph feature much in the *Hymnal of Israel*—The Psalms. It seems that this gifted and dedicated family, descendants of Asaph who was appointed by David to record, to thank, and to praise (1 Chr. 16:4-5), received the mantle of their father through many generations. How blessed it is, because of a godly life, to pass on a gift of God to those who will follow.

**11:24** - *“And Pethahiah the son of Meshezabeel, of the children of Zerah the son of Judah, was at the king’s hand in all matters concerning the people.”* This officer had been appointed by the king to collect the taxes and other levies that were imposed by the Persian government upon the people.

### ***Those who Dwelt in the Villages (11:25-36)***

**11:25-36** - *“And for the villages, with their fields, some of the children of Judah dwelt at Kirjatharba, and in the villages*

*thereof, and at Dibon, and in the villages thereof, and at Jekabzeel, and in the villages thereof, And at Jeshua, and at Moladah, and at Bethpheet, And at Hazarshual, and at Beersheba, and in the villages thereof, And at Ziklag, and at Mekonah, and in the villages thereof, And at Enrimmon, and at Zareah, and at Jarmuth, Zanoah, Adullam, and in their villages, at Lachish, and the fields thereof, at Azekah, and in the villages thereof. And they dwelt from Beersheba unto the valley of Hinnom. The children also of Benjamin from Geba dwelt at Michmash, and Aija, and Bethel, and in their villages, And at Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah, Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim, Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat, Lod, and Ono, the valley of craftsmen. And of the Levites were divisions in Judah, and in Benjamin.”*

This comprises the villages of the land inhabited by the remnant who had returned. Most of these names are found in Joshua 15:27-39 and 18:21-28, with the names reverting to those used at that time. Judah and Benjamin were in fact repossessing their original inheritance.

## Chapter 12— Those who went up with Zerubbabel

### *The Genealogy of those who went up with Zerubbabel (12:1-26)*

This could not have been compiled by Nehemiah since mention is made of Jaddua (Neh. 12:10-11) who lived some 100 years after Nehemiah. He was the high priest at the time of Alexander the Great; therefore, the compilation of this book could not have been finished until after the times of the Persians.

**12:1-7** - *“Now these are the priests and the Levites that went up with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, Amariah, Malluch, Hattush, Shechaniah, Rehum, Meremoth, Iddo, Ginnetho, Abijah, Miamin, Maadiah, Bilgah, Shemaiah, and Joiarib, Jedaiah, Sallu, Amok, Hilkiyah, Jedaiah. These were the chief of the priests and of their brethren in the days of Jeshua.”* Here are 22 chief priests, presumably those who headed the courses as prescribed by King David when he instituted the Temple worship (1 Chr. 24:7-18). Eight of these names are identical to the families in David’s time. Also, the first 16 priests took part in the sealing ceremony mentioned in Nehemiah 10:2-8. The break occurs in Nehemiah 12:6 with the word “and” inserted to denote that the other six priests apparently did not have the same status as the first 16.

**12:8-9** - *“Moreover the Levites: Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah, which was over the thanksgiving, he and his brethren. Also Bakbukiah and Unni, their brethren, were over against them in the watches.”* From

these verses, we have an idea of worship in those days. It appears that the choirs faced one another. They sang antiphonally with one side singing and the others facing them responding or taking up the refrain.

**12:10-11** - *“And Jeshua begat Joiakim, Joiakim also begat Eliashib, and Eliashib begat Joiada, And Joiada begat Jonathan, and Jonathan begat Jaddua.”* These six high priests covered a period from 536 – 323 B.C., since Jaddua was the high priest who, according to Josephus, met Alexander the Great after the battle of Issus. Thus, it was not Nehemiah who compiled these genealogies.

**12:12-21** - *“And in the days of Joiakim were priests, the chief of the fathers: of Seraiah, Meraiah; of Jeremiah, Hananiah; Of Ezra, Meshullam; of Amariah, Jehohanan; Of Melicu, Jonathan; of Shebaniah, Joseph; Of Harim, Adna; of Meraioth, Helkai; Of Iddo, Zechariah; of Ginnethon, Meshullam; Of Abijah, Zichri; of Miniamin, of Moadiah, Piltai; Of Bilgah, Shammua; of Shemaiah, Jehonathan; And of Joiarib, Mattenai; of Jedaiah, Uzzi; Of Sallai, Kallai; of Amok, Eber; Of Hilkiah, Hashabiah; of Jedaiah, Nethaneel.”*

There are 20 fathers mentioned here who produced 20 sons of eminence and godliness. They are counted worthy to be in everlasting remembrance because of their righteousness (Ps. 112:6). How wonderful it is to have children, whether spiritual or natural, who will walk in the ways of righteousness and be among those whose names God will make to be remembered in all generations so that the people shall praise

them forever (Ps. 45:17). Thus, they serve as examples to us all as men of godliness and righteousness who encourage and inspire us to similar good works.

**12:22** - *“The Levites in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, and Johanan, and Jaddua, were recorded chief of the fathers: also the priests, to the reign of Darius the Persian.”* The Israelites were extremely meticulous in keeping record of their genealogies. They kept records from Moses to the Grecian Empire. The time of these records is clear for the designation of Darius III (the last Persian king) would itself signify that this book of Nehemiah was compiled at least 100 years after Nehemiah’s time as governor.

**12:23** - *“The sons of Levi, the chief of the fathers, were written in the book of the chronicles, even until the days of Johanan the son of Eliashib.”* The “book of the chronicles” is referred to as the “book of the kings” in 1 Chronicles 9:1, “So all Israel were reckoned by genealogies; and, behold, they were written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah, who were carried away to Babylon for their transgression.”

**12:24-26** - *“And the chief of the Levites: Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brethren over against them, to praise and to give thanks, according to the commandment of David the man of God, ward over against ward. Mattaniah, and Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, Akkub, were porters keeping the ward at the thresholds of the gates. These were in the days of Joiakim the son of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor, and of Ezra the priest, the scribe.”* Although



these long lists may seem to be tedious, much can be learned from them. It is a type of heaven where all the books will be opened and the dead will be judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works (Rev. 20:12).

Therefore, let us remember, dear ones, that there are two books that greatly concern us: the Book of Life in which the names of those who are saved by the blood of Jesus are entered, and our own personal book in which all our deeds are recorded. May our personal books be sweet reading to the Heavenly Father and His dear Son when They command that they are opened before them.

### ***The Preparation of the People for the Dedication of the Wall (12:27-30)***

**12:27-30** - *“And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings, and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps. And the sons of the singers gathered themselves together, both out of the plain country round about Jerusalem, and from the villages of Netophathi; Also from the house of Gilgal, and out of the fields of Geba and Azmaveth: for the singers had builded them villages round about Jerusalem. And the priests and the Levites purified themselves, and purified the people, and the gates, and the wall.”* At times of national or congregational dedications, the people come from all over. They come from far and near, and certainly there are many people not accustomed to being in the house of the Lord on a regular basis. Therefore, they must be purified. Those who live on the fringe of the Christian

life need especially to ask the Lord for a clean heart when coming into the presence of the Lord after so long a time—whether it be for a church wedding, a baby dedication, or some other event that merits their attendance.

These events are also opportunities for pastors and preachers alike to present again the demands of the Gospel of Christ to live dedicated lives and be diligent with respect to church attendance at all times, not just for these special events.

### *The Dedication of the Wall*

Each service of dedication is different, depending upon the occasion. This event can be used as a model for the dedication of a large compound.

**12:31** - *“Then I brought up the princes of Judah upon the wall, and appointed two great companies of them that gave thanks, whereof one went on the right hand upon the wall toward the dung gate.”* In essence, Nehemiah divided the people into two groups and had them march in different directions around the wall of the city. They formed a wall of praise around the city by doing this. In effect, this was a spiritual wall of protection that could not be penetrated by their enemies.

We would do well to imitate them when dedicating our physical properties to the Lord. There may also be other occasions when, for one reason or another, those spiritual walls have been broken down (Ps. 80:12). It is sometimes necessary that a fresh dedication be made by the congregation or fellowship.

Walking around or walking through a property has spiritual significance, since the Lord said to Joshua that He had given him every place the soles of his feet had trodden (Josh. 1:3). Another instance when God Himself had commanded that the people should march around a city was Jericho. There, they were commanded to march around the city 13 times (atonement for rebellion), give a loud shout on the last time around, and see the walls fall down. Here the situation was such that walking around brought the strength of the enemy down. I commend this thought of walking around a property that God has promised to give to you personally or to the congregation, that you might see the walls of the opposition come tumbling down.

The particular property that we are now using for our headquarters was obtained, in part, by godly men and women who heard from God, walked over the property, and claimed it for God. Then God spoke to us to bid for the property when the people who owned it had, in the words of one observer, “one foot in the world and one in heaven.” God ceased to bless them, with the result that they were moved upon to sell it to us for half the price that they had been offered by secular authorities.

**12:32-43** - *“And after them went Hoshaiiah, and half of the princes of Judah, And Azariah, Ezra, and Meshullam, and Benjamin, and Shemaiah, and Jeremiah, And certain of the priests’ sons with trumpets; namely, Zechariah the son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Michaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of Asaph: And his brethren, Shemaiah, and Azarael, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethaneel, and Judah, Hanani, with the musical instruments*

*of David the man of God, and Ezra the scribe before them. And at the fountain gate, which was over against them, they went up by the stairs of the city of David, at the going up of the wall, above the house of David, even unto the water gate eastward. And the other company of them that gave thanks went over against them, and I after them, and the half of the people upon the wall, from beyond the tower of the furnaces even unto the broad wall; And from above the gate of Ephraim, and above the old gate, and above the fish gate, and the tower of Hananeel, and the tower of Meah, even unto the sheep gate: and they stood still in the prison gate. So stood the two companies of them that gave thanks in the house of God, and I, and the half of the rulers with me: And the priests; Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Michaiiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah, with trumpets; And Maaseiah, and Shemaiah, and Eleazar, and Uzzi, and Jehohanan, and Malchijah, and Elam, and Ezer. And the singers sang loud, with Jezrahiah their overseer. Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced: for God had made them rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off.”* It is a great honour to be counted worthy to have a part in dedication ceremonies. These ceremonies are often a time of great rejoicing.

A parallel case is that of the opening of a new building when the person chosen for that honour has his or her name engraved upon a plaque that is fixed to the entrance of the building. Of how much greater honour it is to have a part in the dedication of the walls of the Holy City, where the names of the participants are written in Holy Scripture for all succeeding generations to

read. We should consider, therefore, that the names of those who participate at church dedications, and certainly they who have had a part in bringing the buildings into being, are recorded in heaven's chronicles.

### ***The Faithful Ministers of the Lord***

**12:44** - *“And at that time were some appointed over the chambers for the treasures, for the offerings, for the firstfruits, and for the tithes, to gather into them out of the fields of the cities the portions of the law for the priests and Levites: for Judah rejoiced for the priests and for the Levites that waited.”* How gratifying it is to see God's holy ministers as the centre of praise and appreciation in their congregations.

May we say here that this has to be earned and merited; never can a minister require or demand such kindness and honour. Also, it is an attitude that congregations should develop in their hearts towards their ministers for in so doing, they are opening the way for God's blessings to flow through their ministers to them. It is especially pleasing unto the Father when His ministers are so honoured. In as much as the congregations honour and bless their ministers, they are glorifying the Father who chose and ordained these men as His ministers and His representatives.

### ***The Singers and Their Special Portions***

**12:45** - *“And both the singers and the porters kept the ward of their God, and the ward of the purification, according to the commandment of David, and of Solomon his son.”* We must again

have our attention drawn to the emphasis that the anointed kings of Israel placed upon worship. A few moments of meditation on the place of worship in the annals of the history of Israel would not be amiss at this stage.

The atmosphere of heaven is permeated with songs of praise, adulation, and worship unto our Lord and our Heavenly Father. We are told in Job 38:7 that in creation "...the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy..." Before the flood, one of the patriarchs was named Mahaleel, which means "praiser of God," indicating the importance that those patriarchs placed upon this practice.

King David gave meticulous instructions concerning the singers who would offer praise and worship unto the Lord in His Holy Temple. Among such instructions, we find in Psalm 134:1, "A Song of degrees. Behold, bless ye the LORD, all ye servants of the LORD, which by night stand in the house of the LORD."

Even in the night hours there were to be singers who offered praise and worship unto the Lord. There was a continual atmosphere of worship unto the Lord throughout the hours, weeks, and months of the Jewish year. How wonderful it would be if our places of worship could also be filled constantly with sounds of His praise. In our own hearts, incense of praise and worship should constantly be arising unto the Lord.

**12:46-47** - *"For in the days of David and Asaph of old there were chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God. And all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel, and in the*

*days of Nehemiah, gave the portions of the singers and the porters, every day his portion: and they sanctified holy things unto the Levites; and the Levites sanctified them unto the children of Aaron.*” In the times of David, the whole atmosphere of the Temple was filled with singing—bringing such a joy unto the Lord. To enable these singers to attend without distraction to this sacred ministry, the rulers gave commands that their natural needs should be met with daily portions of food.

## Chapter 13 — The Return of Nehemiah and a Further Cleansing

### *The Mixed Multitudes*

**13:1-3** - *“On that day they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was found written, that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever; Because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them: howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing. Now it came to pass, when they had heard the law, that they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude.”*

On this particular historical occasion, we find that the children of Israel removed the Ammonites and Moabites from the congregation. There are many precious and awesome warnings for us here. One of these concerns the heritage, or lack of it, on the part of their father, Lot. Lot was a righteous man who made a fatal choice in life that impacted all the following generations and denied him a heritage amongst the godly.

Lot chose, with his eyes, the well-watered plains of Sodom instead of asking counsel of God. The hearts of his sons-in-law mocked him, and in fleeing from Sodom he lost his wife, who looked back. He then had sons by incest with his daughters, from whom came the nations of Ammon and Moab. They in turn always mocked Israel. Lot had nothing but a testimony of being a righteous man, but he was a righteous man who served God in the wrong place.



Beloved, let us take note and tremble. Let us serve God in the places of His appointment for our lives. For we are only rewarded as we do what God has assigned us, and are where He has placed us. We will not hit the mark if we are looking to fulfil someone else's calling.

### ***Wrong Alliances***

**13:4** - *“And before this, Eliashib the priest, having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God, was allied unto Tobiah.”* Here again is a tragic story of a man of God who made an alliance with the ungodly. Eliashib allied himself with Tobiah who was not only ungodly, but also an enemy of the people of God, even to the extent of preparing of a place for him in the house of God.

**13:5** - *“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.”* Regretfully, the enemy had entrance into the sacred place. That room, once the place where the dedicated offerings had been stored, was now polluted by the presence of Tobiah.

Tobiah was an Ammonite who should not have been in the congregation of the Lord. Moreover, he was one who mocked, laughed, scorned, and even despised the work of God (Neh. 2:19). How could the godly make such an alliance? Even within the heart of the godly there was mixture. Let us cry out, dear ones, as King David of old, “unite my heart to fear Thy name” (Ps. 86:11).

**13:6** - *“But in all this time was not I at Jerusalem: for in the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon came I unto the king, and after certain days obtained I leave of the king.”* We see here the necessity for the leader always to be at the helm of the operations. When the leader is absent, the standards often fall. Certainly this was the case when the godly Nehemiah had returned to Babylon. It can be seen even in the case of Moses when he was on Mount Sinai with God. People, left to their own discretion, will diminish the standards, whether these standards are moral, ethical, or spiritual.

The thirty-second year applies to the reign of King Artaxerxes. This would be in 432 B.C. It is not quite clear how long Nehemiah was absent, but it was a relatively short time. Yet the people had quickly fallen into this state of apostasy. As leaders, we have to be watchful at all times that the will and commandments of God are obeyed, even when we are absent on ministerial trips. May God grant that we may be surrounded with saintly assistants who will ensure the congregation stays on course when we are absent.

**13:7-8** - *“And I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God. And it grieved me sore: therefore I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber.”*

We have to go through this experience of seeing disobedience during our absence to know the grief that Nehemiah experienced. A leader’s responsibility is not only to lead a life of obedience himself, but also to make certain that those who are subordinate to him live a holy life as well.

**13:9** - *“Then I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers: and thither brought I again the vessels of the house of God, with the meat offering and the frankincense.”* Then the leader has to purify the rooms or in some cases the whole building where sin has been committed.

I have personally known cases where the whole building became so filled with leprosy that the Lord required the building be sold and destroyed. The congregation had to move to another building in order that the presence of the Lord might return to the midst of them. The Lord Himself had to cleanse the Temple twice in the short span of three years (Mt. 21:12-13; Mk. 11:15).

### ***Diverse Omissions in the Service of the Lord***

**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.”* There appears to be a sense of persecution of the godly here by those under the high priest’s jurisdiction who were not walking in the precepts of God.

How sad it is when those who have been given the privilege of God to be in the ministry and to occupy high positions of trust and authority are unfaithful.

**13:11** - *“Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken? And I gathered them together, and set them in their place.”* The leader has to confront those unfaithful ones; this is the only way whereby things can be set in order. People rarely are inclined to change by themselves.

**13:12-13** - *“Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn and the new wine and the oil unto the treasuries. And I made treasurers over the treasuries, Shelemiah the priest, and Zadok the scribe, and of the Levites, Pedaiah: and next to them was Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah: for they were counted faithful, and their office was to distribute unto their brethren.”*

As we understand the ways of God, it is those whom He counts faithful who finally inherit the offices of prestige in the household of the Lord. Remember, we are told that those who have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree or grade in the kingdom of heaven (1 Tim. 3:13). In being faithful in our earthly ministry, we do indeed assure ourselves, by His grace, of a heavenly dignity or office.

**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.”* Nehemiah does what many pious men in Scripture are recorded as having done in time of trouble—he appeals to God to remember his good works. Hezekiah made such an appeal to God, when told by the prophet Isaiah that he was to die, that the Lord heard him and extended his life by another 15 years (Isa. 38:9-20).

### ***The Profaning of the Sabbath Day***

**13:15-18** - *“In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day: and I testified*

*against them in the day wherein they sold victuals. 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. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath.”*

In our days we keep the Lord’s Day, Sunday, as a holy day wherein we do no work, but count it as a day of rest. However, many people, even Christians, tend to look upon the Lord’s Day as like any other, and work or shop as usual. As the Israelites of old, we attend services in which we worship God and attend unto the preaching of His Word.

Many of the Lord’s people, however, tend to neglect the assembling of themselves together. Paul warned against this in his day in Hebrews 10:25, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”

Church services should be treasured as a blessed privilege. The judgment of God came upon those who were living in Judah prior to the siege by the Babylonians (586 B.C.) because they did not keep the Lord’s Sabbaths, even though they were warned that God would kindle a fire in the gates of the city of Jerusalem and devour or destroy their palaces. Let us be diligent to keep our Lord’s Day as the day devoted to His service, for therein lies much blessing and the promise of long life (See

Jeremiah 17:19-27). If we profane the Lord's Day, we will miss many blessings from God.

**13:19-22** - *“And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath: and some of my servants set I at the gates, that there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath day. So the merchants and sellers of all kind of ware lodged without Jerusalem once or twice. Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye about the wall? if ye do so again, I will lay hands on you. From that time forth came they no more on the sabbath. 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.”*

Therefore, Nehemiah took appropriate measures to ensure obedience to the Word of God and His commandments. This is the duty of a leader.

### ***The Sin of Mixed Marriages***

**13:23-24** - *“In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab: And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people.”*  
 In the Law which God gave through Moses, He said (concerning heathen nations), “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. 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” (Deut. 7:4).

This was the sin of the people from time immemorial. We find it first in Genesis 6:2, “That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.” The result of those marriages was that “there were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown” (Gen. 6:4).

The phrase “men of renown” signifies those who opposed God, as did Nimrod (Gen. 10:9). Therefore, this intermarriage brought on the judgment of the flood. The importance in choosing a marriage partner cannot be overemphasised. That partner will influence us for good or evil. It is essential that we not only marry a Christian, but also ensure that this same Christian is one who has the same call of God upon his life. Otherwise, the marriage becomes disastrous. The Apostle Paul said that we are not to be unequally yoked (2 Cor. 6:14).

**13:25-26** - *“And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves. Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was*

*beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin.”* As one looks at the history of Israel, there was a constant breaking of God’s commandment, with the consequence that even the wisest man who ever lived was guilty of this very sin, as Nehemiah reminds them.

The consequence of Solomon’s sin was division of the nation into two kingdoms after his death. We must not forget that later in the history of Israel, because of an alliance with Ahab (who had married Jezebel, daughter of the king of Zidon), the godly King Jehoshaphat’s son, Jehoram of Judah married the daughter of Jezebel, Athaliah. Athaliah then corrupted Judah and later destroyed the royal seed (2 Ki. 11:1-20).

**13:27** - *“Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to transgress against our God in marrying strange wives?”*

Let us remember that in the time of Ezra there had been similar dealings with those who had taken strange wives. That was barely 20 years previously. When sin is dealt with, we must ensure that that spirit does not return. This sin plagued Israel, as it continues to plague the Church today, in one form or another.

**13:28** - *“And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was son in law to Sanballat the Horonite: therefore I chased him from me.”* Here we see that the wrong alliance of the father is also manifested in the son. The result of a wrong alliance is that it is passed to one’s children. This was true of Eliashib. Now in the case of Eli the high priest, in permitting his sons



to remain in the priesthood, judgment was pronounced upon him and all his seed culminating with Abiathar being put out of the ministry by King Solomon (1 Ki. 2:27).

There are many ministers of God who have done the same. The consequence is that their sons make wrong marriages, sometimes even with unbelievers, with the result that both the fathers and their sons are put out of the ministry.

**13:29** - *“Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites.”* Here we note that eternal remembrance is made of those who have defiled their holy calling by wrong marriages. Is there hope for those that have already made wrong marriages but still desire to go on with God? We believe so. God specializes in making the marred vessel into one of honour. He can bring beauty out of chaos, light out of darkness. Trust Him, dear ones.

**13:30-31** - *“Thus cleansed I them from all strangers, and appointed the wards of the priests and the Levites, every one in his business; And for the wood offering, at times appointed, and for the firstfruits. Remember me, O my God, for good.”* Beloved, let our lives so shine as lights upon a hill that all may see our good works and glorify God!



## *EPILOGUE*

As we come to the close of this study of the Restoration Period, we do so with a note of sadness. What should have been such a triumphant time for the nation degenerated into the old sins that brought them into captivity centuries earlier.

These mixed marriages brought judgment time and again upon the children of Israel. Let us take diligent heed and be forewarned that, in our own lives and those of our children, only God's wrath will come upon these wrong alliances in marriage. They are the result of not heeding God's Word. Therefore, the friendships and alliances that we make are very important, as is the church we attend, for who our children will meet and eventually marry depends upon those decisions.

Let us cry out and ask God to join us to the right partner for our lives in marriage, and to do likewise for our children. In so doing, we will enjoy His blessing upon our lives both now and for all eternity.

The Restoration Era paralleled the Reformation of the Middle Ages. It was, however, only a pale resemblance on the part of Israel to the glory of Solomon's Temple as the Reformation was to the Early Church.

We are now looking toward the restoration of the Church to reach an even greater level than that of the early New Testament Church on the day of Pentecost. She is going to be a glorious Bride of Christ without spot or blemish filled with power and glory. Let

us look up into the face of our glorious Lord for our redemption draweth nigh. Praise the Lord!

It would be amiss to close this Book on the Restoration Era without a very well-earned tribute to two great men—Ezra and Nehemiah.

*Ezra* was the teaching priest. His assiduous attention to the law of God and his heart preparation achieved by prayer and study of God's law has earned him a place of endearment in the heart of every pious Jew throughout all the succeeding generations. He therefore is an apt role model for all teachers of righteousness in the Church Age, especially in these End Times when God will be glorifying and making His Word honourable in the sight of all nations.

Let us therefore give ourselves to the daily study of God's Holy Word so that the truths revealed therein may take root in our own hearts and bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness in our own lives. May we teach transgressors the ways of God that sinners might be converted to the Lord. As we turn many to righteousness, so shall we shine as the stars forever and ever!

*Nehemiah* is the model for all pastors, administrators, and those who have the responsibility of the care of others. He was a wise, firm, and yet generous man whose heart was concerned for social justice. He possessed a bountiful eye that observed the needs of the poor whom he protected against the rich predators who would buy their land and children for nought. In turn, he fed the poor at his own table and at his own expense. Truly, he is a model for us all that we may, by the grace of God, have the loving, caring and

generous spirit for those less fortunate than ourselves. So be it, dear Jesus.

May the Lord raise a generation of Ezras and Nehemiahs who will bring His people back to Himself.

## *A Personal Note*

In this book, we have studied the historical restoration of Israel as a nation and its relative application to the Church in our day. We have seen that the Word of God is full of examples and prayers for personal restoration for His people. King David prayed, “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation,” and then cried out in triumph and gratitude that “He restoreth my soul” (Ps. 51:12, 23:3). The Lord mercifully brought David back into a personal relationship with Him after his sin of murder and adultery.

The prophet Joel gave a promise concerning the restoration of the economy when he said, “And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you. And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you...” (Joel 2:25-26). Moreover, the Lord Jesus Himself gave the beautiful parable of the prodigal son whose father said, “For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found” (Lk. 15:24).

Concerning physical health, there is the account in Matthew 12:10-13 of the Lord speaking to the man with a withered hand, “Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched *it* forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.”

Dear ones, may this book not just be a miscellaneous account of the Lord’s goodness to Israel in restoring them to their land,

temple, and city, but a personal experience whereby you meet the Lord either for spiritual, economic, or physical restoration. He loves you and wants to be your Restorer.

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