

The book of Ezra is a book about the times immediately after the Babylonian captivity of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Ezra was, probably, the compiler of this book, as he was of the Chronicles. He, also, penned the 119th Psalm. I personally believe that he was the penman of most of the book of Ezra, if not all. He was a Hebrew in captivity in Babylon. Ezra was a priest, and a scribe, a descendent of Eleazar. Nehemiah 12:26 "These [were] in the days of Joiakim the son of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor, and of Ezra the priest, the scribe." Nehemiah, at one time, was thought of as one book with Ezra. It appears, that Ezra had a great deal to do with it, as well.

In this book, we see the release and return of the Hebrews to their homeland from Babylon. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, lived and preached during this time. We will find that the captives came back at three different times. The first groups return was led by Zerubbabel. The next group was led by Ezra. The third group was led by Nehemiah who became governor.

Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther cover about 100 years time from about 536 B.C. to about 432 B.C. This will be a time of re-building the temple, as well as re-establishing their homeland.

One of the clear spiritual messages we must receive in this, is that God can use whomever He wants to, to bring His purpose about. As I have said so many times, the two real powers in the world are the spoken and the written Word of God. We will find that Ezra, along with Nehemiah cause the people to return to the study of God's Word. Many believe that Ezra assembled the writing of the Old Testament for that study.

This is a historical book of the events occurring after the return from captivity in Babylon. The name "Ezra" means help.

We will now begin the study in Ezra 1:1 "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and [put it] also in writing, saying,"

Jeremiah had prophesied the very things that we will read of happening, here. This is absolute evidence that the prophecies of Jeremiah were true. Cyrus was a heathen king, but God created him, the same as He created everyone else. God will move upon the mind of Cyrus, and Cyrus will do the will of God. Cyrus took Babylon on the night of Belshazzar's feast after he saw the handwriting on the wall. It appears, that God immediately moved upon Cyrus, king of Persia. What the LORD told Cyrus was so serious, that Cyrus wrote it down.

Ezra 1:2 "Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which [is] in Judah."

Cyrus was aware that the great power he had received by conquering the lands around him, was supernatural. He seems to be giving the praise to

Jehovah for putting the kingdoms of the earth in his hands. The house that was to be built in Jerusalem would certainly be for the One True God. The Persians were practicing worship of false gods at this time, but Cyrus seems to have broken from that.

Ezra 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."

This leaves absolutely no doubt at all who Cyrus was speaking of. He calls Him the LORD God of Israel. We see, also, that Cyrus is offering freedom to all who would return to Judah and build the temple. The temple is to be built in Jerusalem, but any of the captives of any of the twelve tribes, could return and work on the temple.

Ezra 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."

We see that Cyrus was insisting on the heathen, as well as the Hebrews, giving silver, gold, and goods to rebuild the temple. Cyrus was going to send from his own freewill offering, many of the temple treasures that had been taken and brought to Babylon. He asked the people of the land to do the same.

Ezra 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."

Primarily, those who rose up to go back to Jerusalem, were those of the tribes of Benjamin and of Judah. The Levites were those who had been chosen of God for His service. The priests were, also, Levites who served in the temple worship. The leaders of the various families went, also. Notice, the Spirit of God had entered them, and filled them with the desire to go and build the temple. The house of the LORD is the temple.

Ezra 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."

Those that were about them were their neighbors, whether Babylonian or Hebrew. It appears, they did exactly as Cyrus had asked them to do. Cyrus gave willingly, here, and the others added to it as they were able.

Ezra 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;"

Cyrus did not recognize the false gods of the Babylonians. He took the items from the temple in Jerusalem that had been placed in these temples of false gods, and sent them back to Judah. There were many golden cups and dishes even being used in the palace of the king. Cyrus seemed to gather up all he could find, and sent it back for the temple in Jerusalem.

Ezra 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."

Mithredath was a name which meant given by Mithre. The name was Persian. These were things in the treasury, then. There was a close accounting kept of what had been removed and sent to Jerusalem.

Ezra 1:9 "And this [is] the number of them: thirty chargers of gold, a thousand chargers of silver, nine and twenty knives,"

The chargers were called wine-coolers, but had, probably, been used in the drink offerings in the temple services. It could have even been speaking of basins, or bowls. They were very expensive, since they had been made of gold and silver. The knives, mentioned here, are thought by some to be the censers. It is not clear exactly what they were.

Ezra 1:10 "Thirty basins of gold, silver basins of a second [sort] four hundred and ten, [and] other vessels a thousand." Ezra 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."

From the number of vessels sent to Jerusalem by Cyrus, we can see that he sincerely wanted to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, and he wanted everything that belonged in it returned. Sheshbazzar was apparently the name Zerubbabel was called by in Babylon. This would be the first group of people leaving captivity to return to Jerusalem to build the temple. It is interesting that all through history, the Jews have come back from time to time into their land. They never were out from under Gentile rule for very long at a time, until in 1948 when they received their independence. This, I believe, to be the end of the Gentile rule.

Ezra 1 Questions

1. The book of Ezra is telling about what?
2. What books did Ezra, probably, have something to do with compiling.
3. Ezra was a _____, and a _____, descended from _____.
4. What other book was one time thought of as part of Ezra?
5. We see the _____ and the _____ of the Hebrews to their homeland in Ezra.
6. What prophets were active at this time?
7. The first group of those returning were led by _____.
8. The next group was led by _____.
9. Who became governor?
10. Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther cover approximately _____ years.
11. What will those who return be doing?
12. What does the author believe is a clear spiritual message in this book?
13. What are the two real powers in the world?
14. Ezra and Nehemia tried to cause the people to return to the _____ of _____.
15. Ezra is a _____ book.
16. "Ezra" means _____.
17. When did Cyrus decide to re-build the temple?
18. Whose prophecy will this fulfill?
19. What was unusual about Cyrus, king of Persia, wanting to do this?
20. When did Cyrus take Babylon?
21. Quote Ezra chapter 1 verse 2.
22. Who did Cyrus credit with his success?
23. Who does Cyrus release to go to build the temple?
24. Where would the goods, silver, and gold come from?
25. Who does Cyrus insist should give to the temple?
26. Who did the Spirit of God raise up to go?
27. Who was Cyrus' treasurer?
28. What did Cyrus have him do?
29. What was a charger?
30. How many were sent to Jerusalem?
31. What is another name for Zerrubbabel?

We will begin this lesson in Ezra 2:1 "Now these [are] the children of the province that went up out of the captivity, of those which had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon, and came again unto Jerusalem and Judah, every one unto his city;"

The Babylonian captivity lasted 70 years. This does not mean that every person was in captivity for the entire 70 years. Just as the captivity took place in stages, the release took place in stages, too. It appears, that God did not want them to lose contact with their heritage. Each person went back to his city. The Hebrews put much importance on the genealogy of their families.

Ezra 2:2 "Which came with Zerubbabel: Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mizpar, Bigvai, Rehum, Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel:"

This is a listing of the leaders of the families. Even though we see the names Nehemiah and Mordecai, this does not mean that they are the same as the prominent men with that name. The names given above are just a listing of the chief, or prince, of each family.

Ezra 2:3 "The children of Parosh, two thousand an hundred seventy and two." Ezra 2:4 "The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two." Ezra 2:5 "The children of Arah, seven hundred seventy and five." Ezra 2:6 "The children of Pahath-moab, of the children of Jeshua [and] Joab, two thousand eight hundred and twelve." Ezra 2:7 "The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four." Ezra 2:8 "The children of Zattu, nine hundred forty and five." Ezra 2:9 "The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and threescore." Ezra 2:10 "The children of Bani, six hundred forty and two." Ezra 2:11 "The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty and three." Ezra 2:12 "The children of Azgad, a thousand two hundred twenty and two." Ezra 2:13 "The children of Adonikam, six hundred sixty and six."

The number of descendents of Adonikam that go back into the land were 666. My eye immediately caught on this number, which is, also, the number of the mark of the beast. There are only two other Scriptures in the Bible on Adonikam. Ezra 8:13 "And of the last sons of Adonikam, whose names [are] these, Eliphelet, Jeiel, and Shemaiah, and with them threescore males." Putting these two Scriptures together, there is a message in it for the believers in the Lord. The latter sons, in a spiritual sense, are speaking of the believers in Christ. The two Scriptures combined seem to be a message for the believers about the mark of the beast. "Adonikam" means my Lord has arisen. "Eliphelet" means God is deliverance. "Jeiel" means carried away of God. "Shemaiah" means Jehovah hath heard. It appears from the combination of these names, that those who believe in the resurrection of the Lord will be carried away, because God has heard and He is our Deliverance. To me, this is saying believers will be saved from the mark of the beast by their catching away to God.

Ezra 2:14 "The children of Bigvai, two thousand fifty and six." Ezra 2:15 "The children of Adin, four hundred fifty and four." Ezra 2:16 "The children of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety and eight." Ezra 2:17 "The children of Bezai, three hundred twenty and three." Ezra 2:18 "The children of Jorah, an

hundred and twelve." Ezra 2:19 "The children of Hashum, two hundred twenty and three."

Verses 3 through 19, above, are listing the families, and how many of each of them came back into the land.

Ezra 2:20 "The children of Gibbar, ninety and five." Ezra 2:21 "The children of Beth-lehem, an hundred twenty and three." Ezra 2:22 "The men of Netophah, fifty and six." Ezra 2:23 "The men of Anathoth, an hundred twenty and eight." Ezra 2:24 "The children of Azmaveth, forty and two." Ezra 2:25 "The children of Kirjath-arim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty and three." Ezra 2:26 "The children of Ramah and Gaba, six hundred twenty and one." Ezra 2:27 "The men of Michmas, an hundred twenty and two." Ezra 2:28 "The men of Beth-el and Ai, two hundred twenty and three." Ezra 2:29 "The children of Nebo, fifty and two." Ezra 2:30 "The children of Magbish, an hundred fifty and six." Ezra 2:31 "The children of the other Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four." Ezra 2:32 "The children of Harim, three hundred and twenty." Ezra 2:33 "The children of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred twenty and five." Ezra 2:34 "The children of Jericho, three hundred forty and five." Ezra 2:35 "The children of Senaah, three thousand and six hundred and thirty."

This was a listing of the number of people who settled in each town. Gibbar, in verse 20 above, was speaking of Gibeon. Beth-lehem is a city that is just 4 or 5 miles out of Jerusalem. Anathoth was the birthplace of Jeremiah. It had been a city of refuge. Azmaveth was on the northern outskirts of Jerusalem. Kirjath-arim was in a very wooded area. At one time or the other, it had belonged to Judah and Benjamin. It appears, that the fathers, or grand-fathers, had told the younger generation where they were to return to after the captivity. Chephirah was about 8 miles from the outskirts of Jerusalem and was occupied by Benjamin's tribe. Beeroth was a city of Benjamin, as well. Ramah and Gaba were, also, Benjamite cities. Michmas was a town between Bethel and Jerusalem. It was of the Benjamites. Ai and Beth-el are joining cities about 12 miles from Jerusalem. All of these towns are near Jerusalem and seem to be surrounding her. We will not go into anymore of them, as we have received the picture.

Ezra 2:36 "The priests: the children of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred seventy and three." Ezra 2:37 "The children of Immer, a thousand fifty and two." Ezra 2:38 "The children of Pashur, a thousand two hundred forty and seven." Ezra 2:39 "The children of Harim, a thousand and seventeen."

This, above, is a listing of the priests according to their families. The high priest was from the house of Jeshua. These are all in the service of the LORD in the temple worship.

Ezra 2:40 "The Levites: the children of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the children of Hodaviah, seventy and four." Ezra 2:41 "The singers: the children of Asaph, an hundred twenty and eight." Ezra 2:42 "The children of the porters: the children of Shallum, the children of Ater, the children of Talmon, the children of Akkub, the children of Hatita, the children of Shobai, [in] all an hundred thirty and nine."

These were Levites in the service of the LORD, who functioned in other areas than the priests. We see a distinction of Asaph's family as singers. The porters were keepers of the gates and doors.

Ezra 2:43 "The Nethinims: the children of Ziha, the children of Hasupha, the children of Tabbaoth,"

"Nethinims" were those who were set aside to do menial work in the sanctuary.

Ezra 2:44 "The children of Keros, the children of Siaha, the children of Padon," Ezra 2:45 "The children of Lebanah, the children of Hagabah, the children of Akkub," Ezra 2:46 "The children of Hagab, the children of Shalmi, the children of Hanan," Ezra 2:47 "The children of Giddel, the children of Gahar, the children of Reaiah," Ezra 2:48 "The children of Rezin, the children of Nekoda, the children of Gazzam," Ezra 2:49 "The children of Uzza, the children of Paseah, the children of Besai," Ezra 2:50 "The children of Asnah, the children of Mehunim, the children of Nephusim," Ezra 2:51 "The children of Bakbuk, the children of Hakupha, the children of Harhur," Ezra 2:52 "The children of Bazluth, the children of Mehida, the children of Harsha," Ezra 2:53 "The children of Barkos, the children of Sisera, the children of Thamah," Ezra 2:54 "The children of Neziah, the children of Hatipha."

All of these served in the menial work connected with the temple service. This was an extremely important task.

Ezra 2:55 "The children of Solomon's servants: the children of Sotai, the children of Sophereth, the children of Peruda," Ezra 2:56 "The children of Jaalah, the children of Darkon, the children of Giddel," Ezra 2:57 "The children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattil, the children of Pochereth of Zebaim, the children of Ami."

This is so strange that this group of people would have remained in a class of servants even during their captivity in Babylon. They had been the forced laborers in the time of Solomon.

Ezra 2:58 "All the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon's servants, [were] three hundred ninety and two."

The Nethinims and the servants were, probably, grouped together, because in a sense, they were all servants. The Hebrews were very class conscious.

Ezra 2:59 "And these [were] they which went up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsa, Cherub, Addan, [and] Immer: but they could not shew their father's house, and their seed, whether they [were] of Israel:" Ezra 2:60 "The children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred fifty and two." Ezra 2:61 "And of the children of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai; which took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called after their name:" Ezra 2:62 "These sought their register [among] those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood." Ezra 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."

These were people who could not trace their ancestry back to the Hebrews. They were, possibly, of mixed blood. We see in one instance where some children of the priests were grouped along with these because of mixed marriages that keep them from having distinct genealogies. This 70 year captivity had caused some of them to lose track of their family heritage. The priest who wore the Urim and the Thummim spoke as an oracle of God. God spoke to the people through the Urim and Thummim worn by the high priest.

Ezra 2:64 The whole congregation together [was] forty and two thousand three hundred [and] threescore,

This number is more than the numbers added together here, but this is just a listing of specific people, and there were many more who went.

Ezra 2:65 "Beside their servants and their maids, of whom [there were] seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and [there were] among them two hundred singing men and singing women."

These singers were not of the Levites. They were servants. Just because a person is a servant, does not mean that he cannot sing.

Ezra 2:66 "Their horses [were] seven hundred thirty and six; their mules, two hundred forty and five;" Ezra 2:67 "Their camels, four hundred thirty and five; [their] asses, six thousand seven hundred and twenty."

This was the number of animals they took with them. This would be a tremendous help on this journey of approximately 1,000 miles. This trip would take several months at the very best. The animals would have helped in carrying their belongings. In case someone could not walk for some reason, they would ride. They were mostly used as beasts of burden, however.

Ezra 2:68 "And [some] of the chief of the fathers, when they came to the house of the LORD which [is] at Jerusalem, offered freely for the house of God to set it up in his place:"

This was like a thank offering to God for their safe return to their homeland. Each family had a leader, or a chief. He represented his entire family, when he gave.

Ezra 2:69 "They gave after their ability unto the treasure of the work threescore and one thousand drams of gold, and five thousand pound of silver, and one hundred priests' garments."

Being in captivity for so many years, they would not have great wealth to give. They gave as they were able. The dram was, possibly, a Persian gold coin. A dram was, probably, about 1/3 the weight of a shekel. That would be 1/6 of an ounce. This meant that altogether they brought approximately 160 ounces of gold. At \$400.00 per ounce, that would be approximately \$64,000.00 worth of gold. The silver would be 60,000 ounces. At \$5.00 per ounce, there was \$300,000.00 worth. This seems like a large amount to an individual, but we must take into consideration that there were thousands of people who offered this. The priests garments were made of linen.

Ezra 2:70 "So the priests, and the Levites, and [some] of the people, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, dwelt in their cities, and all Israel in their cities."

They were back to re-establish their homeland, and to build the temple in Jerusalem.

Ezra 2 Questions

1. How long did the Babylonian captivity last?
2. The release was done in _____.
3. Who had carried them into Babylon?
4. How did they know where to return?
5. Verse 2 is a listing of what?
6. How many were the descendents of Adonikam that went back into the land?
7. What is unusual about that number?
8. What were the names of Adonikam's sons?
9. Who are the latter sons speaking of, spiritually?
10. What does "Adonikam" mean?
11. What does "Eliphelet" mean?
12. What does "Jeiel" mean?
13. What does "Shemaiah" mean?
14. What does the author believe is the message in their names collectively?
15. What are the lists of verses 3 through 19 showing?
16. What are verses 20 through 35 showing about those who return?
17. What do these towns have in common?
18. Verses 36 through 39 list whom?
19. What is different about the Levites in verses 40 through 42, from those in the previous verses?
20. "Nethinims" are who?
21. Verses 44 through 54 list who?
22. What is strange about those listed in verses 55 through 57?
23. Why were the Nethinims and Solomon's servants counted together?
24. What was different about those listed in verse 59 through 63?
25. Who were the singers in verse 65?
26. How many animals did they take with them?
27. How long would the journey be?
28. Who were the chief of the fathers?
29. How much gold did they give in thanks?
30. How much silver did they give?
31. How many priestly garments did they give?

We will begin this lesson in Ezra 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."

It appears, from this, that the people first went and reclaimed their inheritance. The seventh month was Tisri on their calendar. On our calendar, it is approximately October. This was speaking of them coming to Jerusalem right after their harvest time. This month had always been special to the Hebrews. This was a time of the blowing of the trumpets. Day of atonement occurred on the tenth day of this month. This would be a time they would have their minds on their LORD. The Feast of Tabernacles occurred in this month, as well. This was a special month for all Hebrews.

Ezra 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."

Jeshua was acting high priest. His grandfather, Seraiah, was high priest at the time of the destruction of the temple before the Babylonian captivity. Zerubbabel had led this group of captives back from Babylon. Those priests and people in high authority had built the altar where they could offer burnt offerings. God had instructed them in the law of Moses how to go about offering. God had shown David that this was the only acceptable place for burnt offerings to be made.

Ezra 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."

We see, from this, that, perhaps, the bases had not been destroyed. The new altar was made to the size of the base. The altar sat upon this base. These nations, they seemed to be afraid of, were the nations around them that worshipped false gods. They would not have feared the Persians, because Cyrus had sent them to construct the temple. The following are the instructions they were keeping. Exodus 29:38 "Now this [is that] which thou shalt offer upon the altar; two lambs of the first year day by day continually." Exodus 29:39 "The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning; and the other lamb thou shalt offer at even:"

Ezra 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;"

This was a time of year that was required by the Levitical law for all males to worship. This would not be a true Feast of Tabernacles or Feast of Ingathering, but would be recognizing the days as such. The temple is not re-built at this time. This is the beginning of re-establishing worship in Jerusalem.

Ezra 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."

The "continual burnt offering" is speaking of the regular morning and evening sacrifices. We see, that the returned Hebrews kept the morning and evening sacrifices, and kept the new moons which was the beginning of a new month. They would, from this time on, keep all of the Feasts, including Passover and Pentecost. A freewill offering might be made at any time. It was not of obligation, but of their free will.

Ezra 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."

It appears, the worship began in earnest on this first day of the seventh month, and continued as if the temple was there. They had not even begun the work on the temple at this time. They had taken care of their own affairs first. They re-established their homes, and then thought of sacrificing.

Ezra 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."

We can assume from this, that the masons, carpenters, and workers received money to live on in coins while they were working on the temple. Tyre and Zidon did not have enough foodstuff, so they were paid for the cedar trees, they brought for building, in grain and other foodstuff, that was plentiful in Judah. The king of Persia had helped to finance the rebuilding of the temple out of his own funds.

Ezra 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."

This seems to be saying, that about May of the second year since they had returned, they set forward the work on the house of the LORD. Zif was their second month, which is comparable to our May. This is the same month that Solomon had laid the foundation for the temple he built. Zerubbabel seemed to be in charge of this whole operation. All young men 20 years, or older, were to come to work on the temple.

Ezra 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."

We see, from this, that the high priest would make sure that all was done according to the building of the first temple. Jeshua was that high priest. Kadmiel was of the tribe of Judah, but he was not priest. He was descended from Hodaviah. Henadad was a Levite, but not a priest.

Ezra 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."

The trumpets, blown by the priests in their priestly robes, proclaimed the victory of the building of the foundation of the temple. The cymbals were struck to show that the building had begun. We remember, the family of Asaph was in charge of the praise and worship through singing and music.

Ezra 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."

This was a time of great celebration, because the re-establishing of the temple in Jerusalem had begun. God was, and is, good. His mercy does endure forever. This was especially so for these Hebrews. God kept a remnant for them to begin again. The praising and shouting was a way of saying thank you to God. We need to do a little shouting and praising today for the goodness God has bestowed upon us all.

Ezra 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:"

The weeping from those whom remembered the greatness of the temple, before it was destroyed, was in joy. They were overwhelmed in their hearts with the prospect of it being built again.

Ezra 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 crying, and shouting with it, was just as loud as the shouting and praising. This had to be a spectacular sound with the cymbals clanging, the trumpets blowing, the weeping loudly, and the shouts of praise. Everyone had to know what was happening by the loud sounds. Wouldn't it be interesting to see a church in our day rejoicing so loudly that it would stir up the entire neighborhood? Where has our enthusiasm in the LORD gone?

Ezra 3 Questions

1. When did the children of Israel come to gather in Jerusalem?
2. What was the 7th month on their calendar?
3. What month is that on our calendar?
4. What special event had gone on during this month in times past?
5. _____ was acting high priest.
6. Who was high priest, when the temple had been destroyed?
7. Who had led the people home from Babylon?
8. Who built the altar?
9. It was built for what?
10. What was the altar set upon?
11. The nations around them worshipped _____.
12. Quote Exodus chapter 29 verses 38 and 39.
13. What Feast did they keep?
14. What is this re-establishing?
15. The "continual burnt offering" is speaking of what?
16. What other thing did they observe, mentioned in verse 5?
17. How did the freewill offering differ from the other offerings?
18. When did the worship begin in earnest?
19. Who did they give money to for their work?
20. What did they give for the cedar trees?
21. When did they begin work on the temple?
22. Who was overseeing this whole thing?
23. What did the priests do?
24. Who was called into service to work on the temple?
25. Zif on their calendar is compared to our _____.
26. Who was Kadmiel?
27. Who blew the trumpets in celebration of the foundation being laid?
28. Who struck the cymbals?
29. Asaph's family was in charge of what?
30. Quote Ezra chapter 3 verse 11.
31. Who cried over the foundation being laid?

We will begin this lesson in Ezra 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;"

The enemy of God's people would try to stop the building of the temple. Noah had the same problem from the world around him, when he was building the ark. Any person, or group of people, who decide to do something for God will face opposition from the devil. In this particular instance, the devil was using the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin.

Ezra 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 Esar-haddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither."

This has been another weapon the enemy used from the beginning. The serpent was in the garden with Adam and Eve. The enemy will infiltrate the church any chance he can get. This was no different. He tried to join in the building to sabotage the work.

Ezra 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 Bible is very plain in warning believers not to be un-equally yoked with unbelievers. It was good that Zerubbabel and Jeshua saw through their offer to help, and refused to let them help. Cyrus had not insisted on them helping, and they knew better than to include those of the world in building the temple to the LORD.

Ezra 4:4 "Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building,"

The people of the land, here, are speaking of Samaritans. They were a constant hindrance to the building of the temple by Judah and Benjamin.

Ezra 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."

These counsellors were bought to side in against Judah and Benjamin. In our day, this hindrance would be things like not being able to get building permits, or something of that order. They were trying to make it as difficult as possible to keep the temple from being built. The temple would bring a unity of the people. This is one of the things their adversaries did not want to happen.

Ezra 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."

Many believe this Ahasuerus to be the same as Xerxes mentioned in the book of Esther. They were trying to turn him against the people that had been allowed to return to Judah.

Ezra 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."

This is speaking of them having an interpreter write this letter in the Syrian language to prove to the Syrians they were part of them. Part of the reason the building had slowed down, was because of the change of kings. The people of Judah would not know whether the new king still would help with the building of the temple, or not. He would not remain king very long.

Ezra 4:8 "Rehum the chancellor and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king in this sort:"

Rehum and Shimshai were not Hebrews. They were not for the building of the temple. This Artaxerxes was easily swayed against Jerusalem.

Ezra 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," Ezra 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."

There is not much known about Asnapper. These are speaking of people, who were not of Judah and Benjamin. They would like very much to run them off, if they could and take this area for themselves. They were afraid of the temple being built, because it would give a permanence to the re-taking of the land by Judah.

Ezra 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."

These letters were for no other purpose but to stir up trouble between Artaxerxes and Judah.

Ezra 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."

It was not actually this king who had sent them. Cyrus was the king of Persia at the time they were sent to Jerusalem. The Jews had rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, and that is what they were reminding this evil king of here. They were not rebelling now, but doing what Cyrus sent them to Jerusalem to do.

Ezra 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."

They were trying to get this new king to stop Jerusalem from building a wall of protection around it. The easiest way to get the attention of this new king was to appeal to the loss of money from taxation of this province. Of course, there had been no rebellion, but they were not bothered with facts. They were trying to help themselves and not the king of Persia.

Ezra 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;"

They are pretending to look after the interest of the king of Persia. They eat salt that he had provided, is perhaps what is meant by maintenance. They are pretending to be protecting the king's interest.

Ezra 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."

Nebuchadnezzar had come against Jerusalem, because the LORD had turned him against His people. Their being unfaithful to God was what caused their destruction. The records would, possibly, show a rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar, however.

Ezra 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."

These evil men were trying to convince the king that he would lose all control over Judah, if he allowed them to continue this building program. These evil men were not really trying to help anyone, but themselves. They believed, if the king destroyed Judah, they would be able to receive this land.

Ezra 4:17 "[Then] sent the king an answer unto Rehum the chancellor, and [to] Shimshai the scribe, and [to] the rest of their companions that dwell in Samaria, and [unto] the rest beyond the river, Peace, and at such a time." Ezra 4:18 "The letter which ye sent unto us hath been plainly read before me." Ezra 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."

This evil king had received their letters, and believed what they had said. He looked in the records, and saw where Jerusalem had rebelled against them. He had believed a lie.

Ezra 4:20 "There have been mighty kings also over Jerusalem, which have ruled over all [countries] beyond the river; and toll, tribute, and custom, was paid unto them."

The mighty kings, spoken of here, could be David, Solomon, or Josiah. This was a true statement, that they did collect tribute. The remnant of the people in Jerusalem now, was not large enough to be a threat to anyone, however.

Ezra 4:21 "Give ye now commandment to cause these men to cease, and that this city be not builded, until [another] commandment shall be given from me."

He, now, gave orders that the building was to cease.

Ezra 4:22 "Take heed now that ye fail not to do this: why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings?"

They were to act immediately upon this, so the king would suffer no loss.

Ezra 4:23 Now when the copy of king Artaxerxes' letter [was] read before Rehum, and Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews, and made them to cease by force and power.

It appears, that these two men were the representatives of the king in this land. Even though the Jews had been freed and returned home, they were still under the rule of Persia. These men were speaking for the king of Persia, and forced the building to stop.

Ezra 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."

Artaxerxes reigned for less than a year. He was replaced by king Darius. Darius would allow the work to continue on as originally planned. This speaks of a period of less than 2 years interval, before the work on the temple would be legal to start again.

Ezra 4 Questions

1. The enemy of God's people will try to stop the _____ of the _____.
2. Who did Noah have difficulty with, when he was building the ark?
3. Any person, who decides to do something for the LORD, will have trouble from the _____.
4. In this particular situation, the devil was using the adversaries of _____ and _____.
5. What did these adversaries ask Jerubbabel?
6. Why did they want to join the building force?
7. Who answered their request?
8. What was the answer?
9. Who had commanded the building of the temple?
10. The Bible is very plain about believers not being _____ yoked with those of unbelief.
11. Who weakened the hands of the people of Judah?
12. Who are the people of the land in verse 4?
13. Why were the counsellors hired?
14. Why did they not want the temple built?
15. In the reign of _____, they wrote accusations against Judah.
16. Who wrote the letter to Artaxerxes?
17. Who were the chancellor and the scribe that wrote a letter?
18. Why were all of these people so opposed to Judah and Benjamin?
19. What was the purpose of the letters?
20. Who had the Jews rebelled against in the past?
21. What reason do they give this evil king for stopping them from building?
22. How did the king answer Rehum and Shimshai?
23. Who were the mighty kings mentioned in verse 20?
24. What did the king tell them to do?
25. How long did the work on the house of God cease?

We will begin this lesson in Ezra 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."

There had been a time of absolute complacency, since the foundation of the building of the temple until now. The people had decided not to do anymore work on the temple, and to spend their time building their own houses. Zechariah was actually the grand-son of Iddo. These prophets were sent of God to shake the people of Judah out of complacency. We might even say, they preached to the people.

Ezra 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 messages, these two prophets of God brought to the people from God, showed Zerubbabel and Jeshua the error of stopping the work on the temple. Zerubbabel represented the civil law, and Jeshua was over the spiritual. The people were commanded to go up the mountain and bring wood for the building. There is a great deal more on this in our lessons on the book of Haggai.

Ezra 5:3 "At the same time came to them Tatnai, governor on this side the river, and Shethar-boznai, and their companions, and said thus unto them, Who hath commanded you to build this house, and to make up this wall?"

The minute the building started up again, so did the opposition. Tatnai was governor on the other side of the river. Whether this is the Euphrates or not, I cannot say. Shethar-boznai was a Persian officer under Tatnai. Tatnai seemed to have the same rank as Zerubbabel, so it was alright to ask, but not to command the stoppage of the work.

Ezra 5:4 "Then said we unto them after this manner, What are the names of the men that make this building?"

This had to be a statement made by Tatnai and the men with him. His inquiry was to set blame on the one who started the work.

Ezra 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]."

The workers continued the work on the temple, even after the complaint by Tatnai. The LORD was watching over them, and they were not about to stop the work, unless Darius commanded it.

Ezra 5:6 "The copy of the letter that Tatnai, governor on this side the river, and Shethar-boznai, and his companions the Apharsachites, which [were] on this side the river, sent unto Darius the king:"

The problem was the same as before. Those opposed to God did not want the temple to be built. They wrote a letter of complaint to Darius.

Ezra 5:7 "They sent a letter unto him, wherein was written thus; Unto Darius the king, all peace." Ezra 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."

They first spoke peace to the king. They continued by saying that they had gone to Judea and found a house being built to the great God. He was explaining that the temple was being built solid with stones and timber. He could easily see that for some reason, unknown to him, the work was prospering.

Ezra 5:9 "Then asked we those elders, [and] said unto them thus, Who commanded you to build this house, and to make up these walls?" Ezra 5:10 "We asked their names also, to certify thee, that we might write the names of the men that [were] the chief of them."

This was a true statement, but actually this was out of his jurisdiction. Cyrus had put Zerubbabel in charge of this area.

Ezra 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."

Of course, they were speaking of the temple that Solomon had built so many years before. They did not answer as individuals, but called themselves the servants of the most high God.

Ezra 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."

Darius would have been very familiar with this. They had been unfaithful to God by worshipping false gods, and God destroyed them by the hands of Nebuchadnezzar.

Ezra 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."

Cyrus had preceded Darius by a few years. Cyrus had become the king of Babylon at the defeat of Babylon. Actually Cyrus, was king of Persia. He had commanded the building of the temple in Jerusalem, so these servants of God were not breaking any Persian laws.

Ezra 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;" Ezra 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."

This would be something that would convince Darius that this was true. He knew that no Persian king would allow the Jews to run off with all of this gold and silver, unless he sent them with it.

Ezra 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."

This was an accurate statement of exactly what happened. If Tatnai sent these words of the Hebrews to king Darius, he was trying to get at the truth.

Ezra 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 Persians kept accurate records of various decrees their kings had made. If Cyrus had made this decree, they could not change it. This captain of Persia wanted to know for sure what was to be done about all of this. Darius would search out the truth, and get back to him.

Ezra 5 Questions

1. Who were the two prophets who brought messages to the Jews from God?
2. There had been a time of absolute _____ about the temple.
3. Zechariah was actually the _____ of Iddo.
4. Who began to build the house of God, again, immediately?
5. Who represented the civil law?
6. Who represented the spiritual?
7. Where can we read more about this renewing of the building of the temple?
8. Who was governor on this side of the river?
9. Who was the officer under him?
10. What question did he ask about the work?
11. Whose names did he try to get?
12. Why did the elders not cease work on the temple?
13. Who did Tatnai send a letter to about this situation?
14. What province was Jerusalem in?
15. How did he explain the building of the temple?
16. What did he call God?
17. Who had Cyrus put in charge of this?
18. What were they speaking of in verse 11?
19. Why did God destroy the temple before?
20. When did Cyrus decide to build the temple?
21. Why would a Persian king allow these Jews to carry off the vessels of gold from Babylon?
22. Who had Cyrus sent of the Persians to oversee the building of the temple?
23. What were they to search for?
24. If the decree was made by Cyrus, they could not _____ it.

We will begin this lesson in Ezra 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.

This is saying, that Darius sent orders for the records to be searched to see if such a decree had been made by Cyrus. They searched first in Babylon, but there was more than one place for the records to be kept. The record, in Babylon, was destroyed, if there was one.

Ezra 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:"

This was a place in the province of the Medes. It was, possibly, an extra copy of the decree that Cyrus had made. He was aware that one might be destroyed, probably. Achmetha was the capital of northern Media. Cyrus the 2nd held his court here.

Ezra 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;"

In this decree, we see more details than we had in the first chapter, where we read of Cyrus wanting to re-build the temple. They not only found the decree, but it spelled out exactly what was to be done.

Ezra 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:"

Cyrus had given from his own treasury toward this building. The Jews had put money in on this themselves, as well. It appears, from this, however, that all expenses were to be paid for by Persia.

Ezra 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."

This, also, had been done with all of the vessels found that had been taken from the temple in Jerusalem, when Zerubbabel led the first group back to Judah.

Ezra 6:6 "Now [therefore], Tatnai, governor beyond the river, Shethar-boznai, and your companions the Apharsachites, which [are] beyond the river, be ye far from thence:"

Tatnai was not to have anything to do with stopping the work. Darius sent him word to leave them alone. The message, in short was, "leave them alone".

Ezra 6:7 "Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his place."

Darius warned Tatnai not to interfere in any way with the building of this temple. They were to be left alone to build the temple to God.

Ezra 6:8 "Moreover I make a decree what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews for the building of this house of God: that of the king's goods, [even] of the tribute beyond the river, forthwith expenses be given unto these men, that they be not hindered."

Darius commanded Tatnai to give the tribute money to them to pay their men for the work on the temple. They must not be hindered in this work. Darius would make sure they did everything that Cyrus promised to do.

Ezra 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:"

Somehow, he had to know which animals they used in sacrifice. These were to be given to them in abundance, so they would have enough for their sacrifices. They were to be fed of the king's supplies. This was to be seen after every single day.

Ezra 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 wanted them to pray for him and his sons. He believed the power of their God was the true power.

Ezra 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."

There would be no more opposition, because of the punishment to be inflicted on those who opposed the building of the temple.

Ezra 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."

The decree of Darius went even further than the decree of Cyrus. He was speaking of the One True God here. He called for God to destroy any king, or people, who came against the building of the temple.

Ezra 6:13 "Then Tatnai, governor on this side the river, Shethar-boznai, and their companions, according to that which Darius the king had sent, so they did speedily."

Tatnai did exactly as the king had commanded him to do.

Ezra 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."

Haggai prophesied of a day when the house of the Lord would be far greater than anything in the past. His prophecies encouraged the people so greatly, that they worked diligently on the temple to complete it. There was no shortage of funds, because Darius had agreed to pay for the services of the people in this work. The chiefs of the fathers, and the priests, and high priests, and even Zerubbabel, were to oversee the work. All the young men 20 years old, and older, did the actual labor. Haggai and Zechariah preached and kept them with the desire to do this according to the will of God. Cyrus had written instructions that the LORD had given him, and Darius and Artaxerxes gave orders of how it was to be finished, too.

Ezra 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."

We find that from the time the foundation was laid, until its completion, the temple was 21 years in the building. After God sent Haggai and Zechariah to them, it took 4 years and 5 months. Many of the 21 years there was nothing done on it all. Adar was the twelfth month on their calendar. It would be equivalent to our March.

Ezra 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,"

This dedication was on the order of the dedication that Solomon did, when he and the people dedicated the temple the first time. This was a time of great joy, because they were re-united in fellowship with their God. They suddenly had a place of worship. At this point, the people were really home.

Ezra 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".

This number of animals offered were many less than was offered by Solomon at his dedication, and fewer even than those offered by Hezekiah. We must remember, however, that there were not nearly as many people living in Judah now as there were then. In Solomon's time, all 12 tribes were included.

Ezra 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."

Everything was done as it was prescribed in the book of Moses. We remember, that the priests were Levites, too. Not all Levites were priests, however. Some were keepers of the doors. Some were singers and musicians. All Levites were set aside for the service of the Lord. Just a few were priests.

Ezra 6:19 "And the children of the captivity kept the Passover upon the fourteenth [day] of the first month."

The returned exiles were spoken of as Israel. Not all who returned were of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Some were from the other 10 tribes, and all of the people of the various tribes, who came back into the land, kept the Passover. This day is approximately the 14th day of April by our calendar. Passover was a remembrance of the night in Egypt, when death passed over the Hebrew houses that had the blood of the lamb over and around their doors. This was the 10th plague God sent on Egypt to free the children of Israel.

Ezra 6:20 "For the priests and the Levites were purified together, all of them [were] pure, and killed the passover for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves."

The priests were anointed to the LORD, while they were in the temple for service. In this case, it seems that all of the Levites, for all of the various services were anointed with the anointing oil for service.

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

The passover lamb was eaten by all of the people sacrificing. Each family had a lamb the size their family could eat in one night. This Passover is very similar to communion that the Christians partake of. The lamb the Hebrews ate was symbolic of the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Lamb. The unleavened bread that we take at communion, also, symbolizes the body of our Lord Jesus.

Ezra 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."

The celebration of Unleavened Bread overlaps Passover. We mentioned that the unleavened bread symbolizes the LORD Jesus Christ who is the Bread of life. It must be unleavened, because He was without sin. We partake of His righteousness. "Seven" means spiritually complete. The king of Assyria recognizes the Lord as God.

Ezra 6 Questions

1. What did Darius do to find Cyrus' decree?
2. Where did they search first?
3. Where were they found?
4. What was on the roll?
5. What were the dimensions of the temple to be built?
6. Quote Ezra chapter 6 verse 4?
7. What was to be done with the gold and silver vessels, that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple?
8. Who had led the first group back to Judah from captivity?
9. What message did Tatnai receive from Darius?
10. The funds to build the temple would come from where?
11. In verse 9, we read of what being given to the Hebrews?
12. Why did Darius want to be sure they sacrificed to their God?
13. What decree did Darius make about anyone who changed the word?
14. What did he decree that would happen to anyone who tried to destroy the temple?
15. How did Tatnai take the orders from Darius?
16. Who supervised the building?
17. What three kings were in on the building of the temple?
18. How did Haggai encourage them?
19. What other prophet was helpful to the building of the temple.
20. Who did the actual work on the temple?
21. How long did it take to build the temple from the time the foundation was laid?
22. How many of those years were after the prophets came?
23. What was the example for the dedication.
24. Why were there fewer animals sacrificed here, than in Solomon's dedication?
25. When was the house finished?
26. Who kept the dedication?
27. When did they keep the Passover?
28. Who were purified for service for the Passover?
29. Who ate the passover lamb?
30. What did the passover lamb symbolize?
31. What does Passover celebrate?
32. When is Unleavened Bread celebrated?
33. Who is the Unleavened Bread?

We will begin this lesson in 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 chapter is all about the second return of the people, who had been in captivity in Babylon, to their homeland. This return was led by Ezra.

Ezra 7:2 "The son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub,"
 Ezra 7:3 "The son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth,"
 Ezra 7:4 "The son of Zerariah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki,"
 Ezra 7:5 "The son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest:"

This is showing the Ezra's right to be priest in the land. His direct lineage goes back to Phinehas, one of my favorite priests, and then on back to Aaron, who was the first high priest.

Ezra 7:6 "This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he [was] a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him."

We mentioned before that the return of the people from Babylon was gradual, over a few years. Zerubbabel led the first group, and now, Ezra was leading the second group back. Ezra had never gotten away from the Law of Moses. He had remained faithful to it through all of the hardships.

Ezra 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."

This Artaxerxes was the grandson of Darius, and the son of Xerxes. The children of Israel, priests, Levites, singers, porters, and Nethinims were more of the same class of people, who went up in the first exodus following Zerubbabel.

Ezra 7:8 "And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which [was] in the seventh year of the king." Ezra 7:9 For upon the first [day] of the first month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first [day] of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him.

We can see from these two Scriptures, that this journey took about 4 months. They left Babylon about April first on our calendar, and arrived in August. We mentioned earlier that this trip was approximately 1,000 miles.

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."

Ezra was determined to make this trip, so he could teach the law to the people, again. He wanted Israel to return to God's laws and ordinances.

Ezra 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."

We know, that without permission from the Persian king, they could not have gone back to their homeland. This decree, from the king, first, gave them permission to leave Babylon and go back to Judah. The letter that the king sent to Ezra, gave him special privileges by authority of the king. It was a letter of authority, wherever he went. Ezra was a man who had gained respect from the king as a man who kept the law and commandments of God.

Ezra 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 is the beginning of the words of the decree. The king of Persia was called king of kings, because at this time the Persians were very powerful in the known world. It is interesting, to me, that these Persian rulers recognized God. In essence, the decree is saying that the king has no argument with Ezra. He will allow Ezra to do what he desires to do.

Ezra 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."

We see, from this, that all who had been captives were now free to go. Ezra must not force them to go, but if they desired to go they could. This would stop any of the people, they had been working for, keeping them from going. They had permission of the king, which overrules anything individuals might do to stop them.

Ezra 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;"

These seven counsellors are, probably, the seven princes of Persia and Media. Ezra's purpose, as far as the king was concerned, was to check on what was happening in Judah and Jerusalem. The king had made everything available for Ezra to carry the mission out. Ezra wanted to check on the people, and make sure they had not fallen back into idolatry.

Ezra 7:15 "And to carry the silver and gold, which the king and his counsellors have freely offered unto the God of Israel, whose habitation [is] in Jerusalem,"

This would be a large sum of money in the silver and gold. The large number of Hebrews, who would be with Ezra, would be protection against highway robbery. Ezra was in charge of the silver and gold, as he was over all the people. The king of Persia had given considerably large amounts to the Hebrews for carrying on the services in their temple.

Ezra 7:16 "And all the silver and gold that thou canst find in all the province of Babylon, with the freewill offering of the people, and of the priests, offering willingly for the house of their God which [is] in Jerusalem:"

Now, we see that even the Hebrews, who remained in Babylon, would give silver and gold to be carried back into the homeland for use in the services in the temple. Ezra would be the guardian of that, as well.

Ezra 7:17 "That thou mayest buy speedily with this money bullocks, rams, lambs, with their meat offerings and their drink offerings, and offer them upon the altar of the house of your God which [is] in Jerusalem."

The money was to be used to purchase the animals for sacrifice. These were to be sacrificed immediately. This would maintain the daily sacrifices, and the sacrifices for the various feasts, and new moon celebrations.

Ezra 7:18 "And whatsoever shall seem good to thee, and to thy brethren, to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, that do after the will of your God."

The king completely trusted Ezra. He knew that Ezra would do exactly what the LORD wanted him to do. The extra silver and gold could be used to beautify the temple, or to employ people to do repairs, or whatever the LORD led Ezra to do with it.

Ezra 7:19 "The vessels also that are given thee for the service of the house of thy God, [those] deliver thou before the God of Jerusalem."

It appears, they were still finding vessels that belonged in the temple in Jerusalem. They were not to be used for anything else. They were to be carried directly to the temple.

Ezra 7:20 "And whatsoever more shall be needful for the house of thy God, which thou shalt have occasion to bestow, bestow [it] out of the king's treasure house."

This is speaking of the local treasure house. This was funds that had been gathered in Judah. Ezra was such an honorable man, the king knew he would not use more of the treasury than was necessary. He certainly would not use from the treasure for anything but for the temple. The wide authority given Ezra was, because the king trusted him.

Ezra 7:21 "And I, [even] I Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the treasurers which [are] beyond the river, that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, it be done speedily," Ezra 7:22 "Unto an hundred talents of silver, and to an hundred measures of wheat, and to an hundred baths of wine, and to an hundred baths of oil, and salt without prescribing [how much]."

We see from these two verses, that those in charge of the treasuries were not to argue with Ezra about this. They were to do exactly as Ezra requested them to do. There was a limitation, however to the top amount he could receive. Anything up to that amount they were to do quickly.

Ezra 7:23 "Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven: for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons?"

The king knew that Ezra spoke as an oracle of God. The requests he made would be made by God, Himself, through Ezra. It appears, this particular

king of Persia wanted to stay in the good graces of God. There had been some threat of war, and they wanted the LORD on their side. The historians say that this king had eighteen sons.

Ezra 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."

All who are in the service of the LORD, live of the offerings of the altar. They do not have private incomes, and should not be compelled to pay taxes. This is still true today. Many do pay taxes, but the pastors of churches are not required to pay taxes on the money they receive from the church.

Ezra 7:25 "And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that [is] in thine hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that [are] beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know [them] not."

Ezra is not just priest and scribe, here. The king wanted him to appoint Godly men to run the government, as well. It is interesting to me, to note that those who were familiar with the law of God and keep it were to be the rulers in civil affairs. Ezra was even instructed to teach the ways of the LORD to those who did not know it.

Ezra 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."

It appears, that the punishment that was inflicted on those who did not conform to the decree the king had sent, would be decided by Ezra. He would be the last word on about everything. It would be up to him to decide whether they deserved to die for their sin, or whether there would be a lesser punishment. I am sure the king feels that Ezra would be guided by the LORD in even these decisions. This was the end of the decree.

Ezra 7:27 "Blessed [be] the LORD God of our fathers, which hath put [such a thing] as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the LORD which [is] in Jerusalem:"

This had jumped back to the words of Ezra. He was totally aware that it was God that placed these things in the heart of the Persian king. We see, from this, that Ezra would use the gold and silver that was extra over the purchase of the sacrificial animals, to beautify the temple.

Ezra 7:28 "And hath extended mercy unto me before the king, and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes. And I was strengthened as the hand of the LORD my God [was] upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me."

Ezra thanked God for making the heart of the king of Persia tender toward him. Ezra was very well aware that his strength and his ability was a gift from God to him. It was a miracle that the king would allow him to go to Jerusalem. It was an even greater miracle, that he would allow more of the captive Hebrews to go with him. The greatest miracle in this is the

fact that the king trusted Ezra with his money. I believe this Persian king believed in God.

Ezra 7 Questions

1. What is chapter 7 all about?
2. Who was king of Persia at this time?
3. Who was the father of Ezra?
4. Who would lead this return to their homeland?
5. The lineage, in verses 2 and 3, shows what?
6. Who is one of the author's favorite priests?
7. Who was the first high priest?
8. What was Ezra called in verse 6?
9. The return of the people from Babylon to their homeland was?
10. Who had led the first return to Jerusalem?
11. Who went with Ezra?
12. Who was the grandson of Artaxerxes?
13. When did they leave on the trip?
14. How long did the trip take?
15. How long was the trip?
16. Ezra had prepared his heart to do what?
17. What was Artaxerxes called in verse 12?
18. What did the decree, the king sent with Ezra, allow him to do?
19. Who could go with Ezra?
20. Who agreed with the king in sending the decree?
21. What was the king's purpose in Ezra going?
22. In verse 15, we read that the _____ sent silver and gold.
23. The silver and the gold the king gave was to be used for what?
24. Anything that was left of the silver and gold, was to be used for what?
25. If they were still in need for the temple, what was Ezra authorized to do?
26. What were the limits set on this?
27. The king knew that Ezra spoke as an _____ of God.
28. In verse 25, what is Ezra, besides a priest and a scribe?
29. What were some of the punishments that Ezra could pronounce on those who would not do the law of God?
30. Who did Ezra bless in verse 27?
31. What strength did Ezra have?

We will begin this lesson in Ezra 8:1 "These [are] now the chief of their fathers, and [this is] the genealogy of them that went up with me from Babylon, in the reign of Artaxerxes the king."

This is a listing of those who went with Ezra out of Babylonian captivity back to their homeland. The genealogy could have partially been to make sure these were Hebrews leaving Babylon, but it could, also, be just because the Hebrews kept good records. Artaxerxes had given Ezra permission to take all, who wanted to go, home. He was king of Persia. There is a spiritual lesson in this for the believers. We must be willing to be redeemed, before we can actually head for our promised land, heaven. The release of the world is as important as the accepting the Lord as Redeemer.

Ezra 8:2 "Of the sons of Phinehas; Gershom: of the sons of Ithamar; Daniel: of the sons of David; Hattush." Ezra 8:3 "Of the sons of Shechaniah, of the sons of Pharosh; Zechariah: and with him were reckoned by genealogy of the males an hundred and fifty."

The different groups of people were actually different classes of families.

Ezra 8:4 "Of the sons of Pahath-moab; Elihoenai the son of Zerachiah, and with him two hundred males." Ezra 8:5 "Of the sons of Shechaniah; the son of Jahaziel, and with him three hundred males." Ezra 8:6 "Of the sons also of Adin; Ebed the son of Jonathan, and with him fifty males." Ezra 8:7 "And of the sons of Elam; Jeshaiiah the son of Athaliah, and with him seventy males." Ezra 8:8 "And of the sons of Shephatiah; Zebadiah the son of Michael, and with him fourscore males." Ezra 8:9 "Of the sons of Joab; Obadiah the son of Jehiel, and with him two hundred and eighteen males." Ezra 8:10 "And of the sons of Shelomith; the son of Josiphiah, and with him an hundred and threescore males." Ezra 8:11 "And of the sons of Bebai; Zechariah the son of Bebai, and with him twenty and eight males." Ezra 8:12 "And of the sons of Azgad; Johanan the son of Hakkatan, and with him an hundred and ten males." Ezra 8:13 "And of the last sons of Adonikam, whose names [are] these, Eliphelet, Jeiel, and Shemaiah, and with them threescore males." Ezra 8:14 "Of the sons also of Bigvai; Uthai, and Zabbud, and with them seventy males."

We dealt more fully with the family of Adonikam in the first exodus. The difference in the number of people returning on this second trip and the first was evident in the family of Adonikam. On the first trip his family had 666 going back. In this trip, there were 60. Of course, the numbers were just for the males and there were approximately 3 times that many, who would actually return, counting the women and children.

Ezra 8:15 "And I gathered them together to the river that runneth to Ahava; and there abode we in tents three days: and I viewed the people, and the priests, and found there none of the sons of Levi."

The river, spoken of here, is a small stream that flows into the Euphrates. It was about 8 days journey from Babylon. It appears, they stopped to rest the people. They abode in tents, because there were so any of them. This trip would take months, and this was the only way to house the

people on the trip. There were no Levites with them. This was very strange. 74 Levites had gone up with Zerubbabel, and this trip Ezra found none. This does not mean there were none at all, but that he saw none.

Ezra 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." Ezra 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 chief men, mentioned in verse 16, were men who had enough authority that they would be accepted by Iddo as messengers from Ezra. They were men who would be respected enough that Iddo would listen carefully to what they had to say. Iddo was the chief of the Nethinims. He was, also, the head of the Jews at Casiphai. It appears, that even though the Jews were in exile, their families were ruled over by the head of the family, as if they were a separate country. The Nethinims had been set aside to do the menial work in the temple. Ezra requested them to come, and help him by being ministers in the house of the LORD.

Ezra 8:18 "And by the good hand of our God upon us they brought us a man of understanding, of the sons of Mahli, the son of Levi, the son of Israel; and Sherebiah, with his sons and his brethren, eighteen;"

Ezra was thanking God for the good fortune of the Levites that came back to Ezra. Ezra knew this was a blessing from God. Sherebiah and Mahli may be the same person. There were eighteen that came.

Ezra 8:19 "And Hashabiah, and with him Jeshaiiah of the sons of Merari, his brethren and their sons, twenty;"

These were, also, Levites from the division of Merari.

Ezra 8:20 "Also of the Nethinims, whom David and the princes had appointed for the service of the Levites, two hundred and twenty Nethinims: all of them were expressed by name."

We remember, the Nethinims were in the service of doing the menial jobs in the temple. They were not spoken of as Nethinims, until after the captivity.

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

Ezra called the fast to prepare for the rest of the journey. He wanted the assistance of the LORD as he carried these people on this several month journey to Jerusalem. The fast was to receive instructions from God on exactly how they should proceed. They wanted no harm coming to the women and children, or to the precious cargo. Ezra knew his help was in the LORD.

Ezra 8:22 "For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God [is] upon all them for good that

seek him; but his power and his wrath [is] against all them that forsake him."

Ezra knew there were robbers along the way in the land they must pass through. He had not asked for help from the Persians, because if they were really of God, as they had told the Persian king they were, the LORD would take care of them.

Ezra 8:23 "So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was entreated of us."

This is saying, when they fasted and prayed, the LORD heard their prayer, and put into their hearts exactly what they were to do.

Ezra 8:24 "Then I separated twelve of the chief of the priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them," Ezra 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:"

This was dividing all of the silver and gold into the hands of 12 trustworthy priests, so the valuables would be scattered out and not so easily found in one place. There was a fairly large amount, since this was what the king had sent, as well as the offerings the people themselves had gathered up and sent.

Ezra 8:26 "I even weighed unto their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, and silver vessels an hundred talents, [and] of gold an hundred talents;"

If a talent weighs 125 pounds, this is speaking of 81,250 pounds of silver. The silver vessels weighed 12,500 pounds in silver. The gold, also, weighed 12,500 pounds. The gold, alone weighed 150,000 ounces. At \$400.00 per ounce, this would figure \$600,000,000.00. You can see why Ezra was concerned.

Ezra 8:27 "Also twenty basins of gold, of a thousand drams; and two vessels of fine copper, precious as gold." Ezra 8:28 "And I said unto them, Ye [are] holy unto the LORD; the vessels [are] holy also; and the silver and the gold [are] a freewill offering unto the LORD God of your fathers."

Ezra was stressing to them the necessity of getting all of these precious items for the temple through. The value in dollars and cents were important, but the idea these treasures belonged to God made this much more important. They were to guard this with their lives.

Ezra 8:29 "Watch ye, and keep [them], until ye weigh [them] before the chief of the priests and the Levites, and chief of the fathers of Israel, at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of the LORD."

Ezra weighed, and made a record of exactly what he had entrusted to each priest. They would weigh them in, when they arrived at the temple in Jerusalem. This was good record keeping. They would not be careless with the things of the LORD. Those in authority in the temple in Jerusalem would receive them, and weigh them in. There would be a record kept of that, as well.

Ezra 8:30 "So took the priests and the Levites the weight of the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, to bring [them] to Jerusalem unto the house of our God."

They did as Ezra had asked them. Each priest and Levite would be responsible for the portion of the treasure, that had been entrusted to him.

Ezra 8:31 "Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth [day] of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way."

God had protected them from all harm, as they journeyed back to their home in Judah. Ezra's fears never happened. They did not even encounter the thieves. Ezra's faith in God brought them through safely.

Ezra 8:32 "And we came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days."

This was speaking of a rest they took from their long journey. They were safe to rest, now.

Ezra 8:33 "Now on the fourth day was the silver and the gold and the vessels weighed in the house of our God by the hand of Meremoth the son of Uriah the priest; and with him [was] Eleazar the son of Phinehas; and with them [was] Jozabad the son of Jeshua, and Noadiah the son of Binnui, Levites;"

Each one of the 12, that the treasures had been entrusted to weighed them to the son of the high priest in Jerusalem. The men, mentioned in the verse above, were priests and Levites. They would put the treasures in safe keeping in the temple.

Ezra 8:34 "By number [and] by weight of every one: and all the weight was written at that time."

The weights were recorded in a record book kept at the temple. The twelve, who were responsible for the safe journey, had now shifted their responsibility to those in charge of the treasures in the temple.

Ezra 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."

Their offering was for themselves, but for all Israel, as well. This offering was very similar to the offering the people gave when Zerubbabel returned. The number of animals are smaller, because those who came out of Babylon this trip were much fewer in number.

Ezra 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."

This was speaking of the documents that Ezra brought from the king giving him authority to draw from the treasury. The lieutenants, under the

governors, were in charge of it. It appears, that they did just as the documents had requested them to do, immediately.

Ezra 8 Questions

1. Who was king when Ezra went to Jerusalem?
2. Who had permission from the king to go to Jerusalem?
3. The release of the _____ is as important as the accepting the Lord as _____.
4. What does the small number of the family of Adonikam in this journey reveal to us?
5. Where did they gather, and set up their tents for three days?
6. When Ezra viewed the people, he discovered there were no _____.
7. The river, in verse 15, flowed into what large river?
8. How far was this first stop from Babylon?
9. How many Levites had gone with Zerubbabel?
10. Who did Ezra send to Iddo to get Levites and Nethinims?
11. Why did Ezra want them?
12. How many came, mentioned in verse 18?
13. How many Nethinims came?
14. What was their job in the temple?
15. Why did Ezra proclaim a fast?
16. Why had he not asked for a Persian escort?
17. What did Ezra do for safety of the valuables they were carrying?
18. What was the value of the gold alone, not including the vessels?
19. The silver and gold were a _____ offering unto the LORD.
20. What would they do with the treasures, when they made it to Jerusalem?
21. How long did they rest in Jerusalem?
22. Who took care of the gold and silver in the temple?
23. Those who made the second trip made _____ offerings.
24. Who did they make the offerings for?
25. What happened when Ezra showed the documents from the king to the lieutenants?

We will begin this lesson in Ezra 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."

It appears, that the time between when Zerubbabel had brought the people to Jerusalem in the first return to their homeland, and until this return led by Ezra, there had been very little government. It was bad enough for the people of Israel to break God's law and marry the heathens around them, but it was even worse that the priests and leaders were involved in this, as well. All of those listed, above, were people forbidden for the Hebrews to marry. These were the very people that God had removed out of the land when He gave it to Israel.

Ezra 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."

They were doing what was right in their own sight, and forgetting the teachings of the law of God. The sad thing was they were about to commit the very same sins, that caused them to be driven out by God before. These strange wives, or husbands, would bring in their abominations to worship in Judah.

Ezra 9:3 "And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished."

Ezra was overwhelmed with grief, when he saw the extent of the sins they had committed. The renting of the clothes, show a deep mourning. Plucking out the hairs on his head and beard was an extreme show of shame and mourning for what the people had done. Sometimes, the head was shaved in grief, but this was so evil an act upon their part, that he actually tore out his hair by the roots.

Ezra 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."

It appears, that they did not know of this being a sin, or else thought the law did not apply to them. Now that Ezra had shown such terrible grief in this matter, it had frightened those who understand the magnitude of what they had done. Ezra was in a state of shock all day long.

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,"

When Ezra stopped to pray at the evening sacrifice, he fell to his knees before the LORD with both hands extended to Him.

Ezra 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."

Ezra was being ashamed for all of the people. They were so deep in sin themselves, they were not even ashamed. Ezra remembered why Israel and Judah went into captivity. He knew these people had done enough to deserve to die. This was the beginning of a prayer for them.

Ezra 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."

Ezra knew that the captivity of Israel and Judah had been a punishment from God for their sinful ways. God had turned them over to the various kings. The sins of their fathers and grandfathers were the same sins they were involved in now. They did not learn a thing from the captivity in Babylon. He was explaining that they deserved all of their difficulties for their sins.

Ezra 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."

God always left a remnant, because they were His people, and He loved them. They had come back into the land, just a small portion of the great company of people who had originally come from Egypt. God had, once again, granted them grace to begin again, and now, they were sinning again, as they had before.

Ezra 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."

This was an amazing thing how God had extended mercy to them again. It was almost unexplainable why the Persian kings had suddenly decided to let them return to their homeland. It was even more unexplainable, why they would give all the gold and silver to rebuild the temple. The only answer was that God put this in their hearts to do. Ezra is in essence saying, God has done all of this for us to give us a new start, how can we fail him by sinning again?

Ezra 9:10 "And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken thy commandments,"

There was nothing left for Ezra to say, except to repent for all of the people. He admitted guilt for all the people.

Ezra 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."

God had warned them of the sinfulness of the people. He had run out to give the land to the Hebrews. The corruption of the nations around them and of Canaan, which they had overthrown, had been common knowledge to them from the beginning. They seemed to never learn. The abominations of the heathens were their downfall.

Ezra 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."

God had forbidden intermarriage with these people. God's law had not changed. They were still obligated to keep God's commandments not to intermarry. They had done exactly what God had forbidden them to do.

Ezra 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;"

Ezra realized as bad as the punishment had been, when they had lost their homeland and gone into captivity, it was not as bad as what they deserved. They all deserved to die.

Ezra 9:14 "Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldest not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed [us], so that [there should be] no remnant nor escaping?"

Ezra was aware that God is a loving God. He was, also, aware that He was just in His judgements. He feared that the punishment this time would be death for everyone. Ezra felt they should expect death for these terrible sins they had committed.

Ezra 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."

God is full of mercy. His righteousness was from generation to generation, but so was His mercy. There was no way they could stand and face God with these sins not atoned for.

This will continue in the next chapter.

Ezra 9 Questions

1. What terrible report came to Ezra in verse 1?
2. When had they begun committing this sin?
3. What was worse than the people committing this sin?
4. What were the Hebrews called in verse 2?
5. They were doing what was right in _____ .
6. What was so bad about the heathen marriages?
7. What did Ezra do, when he heard the news?
8. What did Ezra do, that showed the extreme sin they had committed?
9. Who assembled to Ezra?
10. When did Ezra begin to pray?
11. Did he stand and pray? Explain.
12. Who was Ezra ashamed for?
13. They had done enough to deserve to _____ .
14. The captivity of Judah and Israel had been what?
15. God always left a _____ .
16. Who had released them to return to their homes?
17. What was even more unexplainable than their release?
18. Why had this happened?
19. What was Ezra doing in verse 10?
20. What had the land been called, before they received it from God?
21. In verse 12, what had been forbidden?
22. God had punished them _____ than their iniquities deserved.
23. What question does Ezra ask the people in verse 14?
24. Quote Ezra chapter 9 verse 15.
25. God is full of _____ .

We will begin this lesson in Ezra 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."

The people saw the grief of Ezra, and heard his prayer to God to forgive them. Now, many of the people had realized the seriousness of what they had done, and they, too, began to weep. It seemed this was not just the men who were disturbed by this, but all of the people.

Ezra 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 appears, that Shechaniah believed there was hope for the LORD to forgive them, because they had repentant hearts.

Ezra 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."

This would be a drastic move on their part, since some of these people had children by the heathen wives, or husbands, they had. They were willing to make a covenant with God, that they would divorce the wives that were not Hebrews, and even give up their children that were born of them.

Ezra 10:4 "Arise; for [this] matter [belongeth] unto thee: we also [will be] with thee: be of good courage, and do [it]."

Ezra had already said to let judgement come upon those who would not obey God's law. This would be an effort to make things right. Ezra believed this might be enough repentance of what they had done, to keep the LORD from killing them.

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

The only way this would work, would be if everyone participated. Everyone, including the priests, Levites, and the people had to swear they would all do this, to get back in right standing with God.

Ezra 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."

This fast was of a personal nature. He was not eating, because he was still grieving. Johanan was grandson of the high priest and would assign a chamber to Ezra. This was a total fast.

Ezra 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;"

The divorcement of the heathen wives, husbands, and children had to be done throughout the land, so proclamation was sent for the people to gather in Jerusalem.

Ezra 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 left them no choice, but to come. The furthest settlements from Jerusalem were no more than 40 miles, so it would be fairly easy for them to come within the three days allowed. The consequences were so great if they did not come, that all came.

Ezra 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."

This would have been about December the 12th on our calendar. The month would have been Chisleu on their calendar. This is the rainy season in Judah. Perhaps, that is what is meant by the great rain.

Ezra 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."

Ezra had been put in a place of great authority by the Persian king. He, now, used that authority to speak to the people about what they must do. He was speaking to them as a spiritual leader, when he informed them of their transgressions.

Ezra 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."

It would be of no use to rid themselves of their heathen wives, if they did not realize in their hearts that they must do this, because they had sinned. The first step to being forgiven is to confess the sin.

Ezra 10:12 "Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, As thou hast said, so must we do."

Once they were made aware of their sins, they agreed to make it right. They would be divorced from the heathen.

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

It appears, that a large percentage of the population had committed this sin. It was the rainy season, and hard to move this many people. They were explaining it would take some time to implement this.

Ezra 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."

It appears, there was some sort of ceremony that took place to release the people from this marriage. It was a reverse wedding, I suppose.

Ezra 10:15 "Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah were employed about this [matter]: and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite helped them."

The dissolving of the marriages was handled by Jonathan and Jahaziah. Meshullam and Shabbethai were their helpers. This could mean they issued them bills of divorcements.

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

This took until January on our calendar, there were so many of them. On the twelfth of January, Ezra and the chiefs of the fathers checked to make sure they had completed the work.

Ezra 10:17 "And they made an end with all the men that had taken strange wives by the first day of the first month."

We see that it was not until April 1st on our calendar, that they finally had finished issuing the divorces.

Ezra 10:18 "And among the sons of the priests there were found that had taken strange wives: [namely], of the sons of Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren; Maaseiah, and Eliezer, and Jarib, and Gedaliah." Ezra 10:19 "And they gave their hands that they would put away their wives; and [being] guilty, [they offered] a ram of the flock for their trespass."

It appears, that 4 of the high priest's sons had taken these heathen wives. The "giving of their hands" meant they made solemn pledges accompanied by handshakes. This meant they agreed they would do this, and gave their word on it. The sacrifices were for them, and for others, who had committed this same sin.

Ezra 10:20 "And of the sons of Immer; Hanani, and Zebadiah." Ezra 10:21 "And of the sons of Harim; Maaseiah, and Elijah, and Shemaiah, and Jehiel, and Uzziyah." Ezra 10:22 "And of the sons of Pashur; Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethaneel, Jozabad, and Elasah."

The above names are lists of the families of the priests who took the strange women to wife.

Ezra 10:23 "Also of the Levites; Jozabad, and Shimei, and Kelaiah, (the same [is] Kelita,) Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer."

These are Levites, who were not priests.

Ezra 10:24 "Of the singers also; Eliashib: and of the porters; Shallum, and Telem, and Uri."

These were, also, in the service of the LORD in the temple, but were singers and porters. They were Levites with specified service.

Ezra 10:25 "Moreover of Israel: of the sons of Parosh; Ramiah, and Jeziah, and Malchiah, and Miamin, and Eleazar, and Malchijah, and Benaiah." Ezra 10:26 "And of the sons of Elam; Mattaniah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, and Abdi, and Jeremoth, and Eliah." Ezra 10:27 "And of the sons of Zattu; Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, and Jeremoth, and Zabad, and Aziza." Ezra 10:28 "Of the sons also of Bebai; Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, [and] Athlai." Ezra 10:29 "And of the sons of Bani; Meshullam, Malluch, and Adaiah, Jashub, and Sheal, and Ramoth." Ezra 10:30 "And of the sons of Pahath-moab; Adna, and Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezaleel, and Binnui, and Manasseh." Ezra 10:31 "And [of] the sons of Harim; Eliezer, Ishijah, Malchiah, Shemaiah, Shimeon," Ezra 10:32 "Benjamin, Malluch, [and] Shemariah." Ezra 10:33 "Of the sons of Hashum; Mattenai, Mattathah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, [and] Shimei." Ezra 10:34 "Of the sons of Bani; Maadai, Amram, and Uel," Ezra 10:35 "Benaiah, Bedeiah, Chelluh," Ezra 10:36 "Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib," Ezra 10:37 "Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasau," Ezra 10:38 "And Bani, and Binnui, Shimei," Ezra 10:39 " And Shelemiah, and Nathan, and Adaiah," Ezra 10:40 "Machnadebai, Shashai, Sharai," Ezra 10:41 "Azareel, and Shelemiah, Shemariah," Ezra 10:42 "Shallum, Amariah, [and] Joseph." Ezra 10:43 "Of the sons of Nebo; Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jadau, and Joel, Benaiah."

This was a very long list of just ordinary people, who had taken heathen wives. We can see the widespread sin that was in the land.

Ezra 10:44 "All these had taken strange wives: and [some] of them had wives by whom they had children."

This would make the divorces more difficult, when there were children born to them, by their heathen wives.

Ezra 10 Questions

1. What had Ezra done to show his shame for their sins?
2. Who joined him in the grief?
3. Who is the father of Shechaniah?
4. What hope did he express?
5. What did he suggest that they do?
6. What was the covenant they would make with God?
7. What would they do with their children by their heathen wives?
8. How did Ezra feel about this suggestion?
9. Who did Ezra make swear to the covenant agreement?
10. How was the only way this could work?
11. Who did Ezra go to see at the temple?
12. What did Ezra do at the temple?
13. Was this just a problem in Jerusalem?
14. How did they get word to those in Judah?
15. How long did they have to comply?
16. What time of year did this notice go out?
17. This was the _____ season.
18. Who had given Ezra great authority?
19. What must they do, besides get rid of their heathen wives?
20. Why would it take some time to implement this?
21. Who was issuing the divorces?
22. Who examined to see, if they were carrying this out?
23. When were all of the divorces finished?
24. What were some of the classes of people, who had committed this sin?
25. What made the divorces more difficult?

Nehemiah was at one time part of the book of Ezra. This book covers the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. It is, also, a time of return to the laws of God. Some believe that most of it is an autobiography of Nehemiah's life. It is not certain, however, who penned it.

We will now begin the verse by verse study in 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," Nehemiah 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."

Nehemiah was living at the Persian court. Chisleu is the month of December on our calendar. This 20th year is speaking of the 20th year of the reign of Artaxerxes. It appears that Hanani was the brother of Nehemiah. He came to Nehemiah to tell him of his homeland. Israel was a nation of people, but it was, also, God's family. Nehemiah wanted to know how the people who had gone back to Jerusalem from captivity were doing.

Nehemiah 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."

The gates had been burned with fire before the captivity. The walls were broken down at that time, as well. These were things that had been left undone, since their return to Jerusalem. It seems, they had never re-established themselves in their land.

Nehemiah 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,"

Nehemiah had assumed, incorrectly, that everything in Jerusalem had been totally repaired. He was not aware that there was still much to be done. Nehemiah was brokenhearted at hearing this. He fasted and prayed to find the will of God in this for himself.

Nehemiah 1:5 "And said, I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments:"

This was almost identical to what Daniel had to say. Nehemiah was a believer in God. He called Him LORD. "Beseech" means pray, in this instance. He realized the omnipotence of God. God is all powerful. God keeps covenant with mankind, when they obey His commandments.

Nehemiah 1:6 "Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned."

We see an humble man confessing to the LORD that he had sinned. The weight of the sins of his father, and of the Hebrews, seemed to weigh as heavy on his conscience as did his own sins. He confesses for them all. His plea to God was that He had not turned completely away from His people. He was saying, Please hear my prayer.

Nehemiah 1:7 "We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses."

This was speaking of the wide range of sins they committed. They mainly had totally disregarded the wishes of God for their lives, and were living to please themselves. He was aware that the condition attached to being blessed of God, included keeping God's statutes and His commandments.

Nehemiah 1:8 "Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, [If] ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations:"

God had warned them in advance through Moses, that to disobey God brought curses, one of which was scattering into foreign countries as captives. They had disregarded the Word of God, and He had done just as He had promised. Their captivity was brought on them by their own transgressions.

Nehemiah 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."

The best explanation of this Scripture is another Scripture. II Chronicles 7:14 "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." God would forgive them, if they were truly seeking forgiveness for their sins. God had saved this remnant of His people to start with again. God would gather them like a hen gathers her chicks. God loved them.

Nehemiah 1:10 "Now these [are] thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand."

It is as if Nehemiah was reminding God that these are the same people He had promised to forgive. II Chronicles 7:15 "Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer [that is made] in this place." God promised Solomon that anyone looking toward the temple and praying would be heard of Him. God had redeemed them from captivity, now He must help them even more keep their relationship with Him. They were back in their land, but not in fellowship with the LORD as they needed to be. God would bless them, but they needed someone to help them stay in fellowship with God. It seems, they were quick to drift away, if there was not someone with a strong hand to keep them from it.

Nehemiah 1:11 "O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer."

It appears, that Nehemiah had made himself useful to the king and had acquired the distinction of the king's cupbearer. It would be easy for him to be satisfied with what he had, and forget about Judah and Jerusalem. If Nehemiah was to go to Jerusalem, God would have to make it alright with Artaxerxes. Nehemiah had it in his heart to go to Jerusalem, and help with the work in rebuilding the walls and the gates. He felt he could be an asset in leading them back into good relations with God.

Nehemiah 1 Questions

1. What does the book of Nehemiah cover?
2. It is, also, a time of returning to the _____ of God.
3. Some believe it to be an _____ of Nehemiah's life.
4. Who was the father of Nehemiah?
5. The month of Chisleu is similar to what month on our calendar?
6. The twentieth year of the reign of _____ is mentioned here.
7. Who was Hanani?
8. What did Nehemiah inquire of him about?
9. Where was Nehemiah living at the time?
10. Israel was a nation of people, but it was also _____ .
11. What report did Hanani give Nehemiah?
12. What effect did this have on Nehemiah?
13. What did he do about this, besides pray?
14. What did Nehemiah call God in verse 5?
15. What does "beseech" mean?
16. When does God keep covenant with mankind?
17. In verse 6, we see an _____ man confessing.
18. What was the confession?
19. Who was he confessing for?
20. What had God said He would do to them, if they transgressed His law?
21. What was the fulfillment of that?
22. What would God do, if they repented?
23. Quote 2 Chronicles chapter 7 verse 14.
24. Why had God saved this remnant of His people?
25. What was Nehemiah reminding God of in verse 10?
26. What was missing, since they had gone back to their homeland?
27. Whose prayers was Nehemiah asking God to be attentive to?

We will begin this lesson in Nehemiah 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 of Nisan is their first month, similar to our month of April. We learned, from the last lesson, that Nehemiah was the cupbearer for the king. He had always been pleasant in the company of the king in the past. At this time, he was not able to keep from showing his sadness about Jerusalem. He was in the very presence of the king, serving him, so the king noticed the sadness in Nehemiah.

Nehemiah 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,"

This king seemed to care for the feelings of those around him. He knew Nehemiah was not sick, and he was, probably, very good to Nehemiah, so this question is understandable. He is very aware, because he realized this sickness was of Nehemiah's heart. Nehemiah was afraid, thinking he might have displeased his king.

Nehemiah 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?"

Nehemiah began with a compliment to the king. His fear of displeasing the king was not as strong as his desire to change things in Jerusalem. Nehemiah told of the things troubling him about his homeland to the king.

Nehemiah 2:4 "Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven."

Artaxerxes was a kind king. He did not like to see his faithful servant so unhappy. The question the king asked Nehemiah was sincere. He was saying, Nehemiah, what would it take to make you happy? It appears that Nehemiah prayed, before he answered the question. He did not want to request something of the king that was not the will of God for his life. His prayer was to God alone. He prayed in his heart, before he answered the king.

Nehemiah 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 was the first mention that Nehemiah even wanted to go to Jerusalem. He was not asking the king to release him, but just to reassign him to Jerusalem. He wanted to rebuild the wall, gates, and now we read, sepulchres of his ancestors.

Nehemiah 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."

The queen was named Damaspia. Since she was in the room, this was, possibly, a time of relaxing and putting away the government issues. He would be in a good mood at that time, with his wife there. He did not want to give Nehemiah up completely, but would listen to any reasonable time he might want to be away. Nehemiah explained to him the length of time it would take, and the king approved, and let him go. Nehemiah actually stayed away 12 years.

Nehemiah 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;"

The letters would declare that Nehemiah had not run away, but had been sent by the king. This would give him safe passage.

Nehemiah 2:8 "And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which [appertained] to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me."

The timbers that Nehemiah was asking for were, possibly, from trees growing in an area near Jerusalem, so they would not have to be carried far. This was a generous king, and he granted the request of Nehemiah. He realized these were not for Nehemiah's own use, but for the wall and gates that he went to repair. It would be of no use to go, if there were no materials to do the work with.

Nehemiah 2:9 "Then I came to the governors beyond the river, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me."

Not only did the king allow Nehemiah to go to Jerusalem, but he sent captains of the army and horsemen with him to give him a safe journey. The governors received Nehemiah with his proof of the blessings of the king written in the letters he had sent.

Nehemiah 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."

It appears, that not all of the governors were pleased. He was, probably, of Samaria. They were jealous of those of Judah. Sanballat and Tobiah were not eager to help Judah. Tobiah was an Ammonite, and especially did not like Judah. They would both rather see them destroyed, than the king sending Nehemiah to help them.

Nehemiah 2:11 "So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days." We see that Nehemiah still made it to Jerusalem, in spite of the opposition. After this long journey, it appears he rested three days.

Nehemiah 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."

Nehemiah was not ready, at this point, to make everyone aware of his mission. He was not part of the system in Jerusalem. It would be a shock, when he explained why he was there. He kept it very quiet, and went out to survey the damage during the night, so no one would know what he was doing.

Nehemiah 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."

This lets us know that the damage to the wall was extensive. He went to several areas of damage, to figure out how many trees he would need to repair the wall.

Nehemiah 2:14 "Then I went on to the gate of the fountain, and to the king's pool: but [there was] no place for the beast [that was] under me to pass."

This just means that all of the gates were torn down. This was, possibly, speaking of an area between two walls that was torn down.

Nehemiah 2:15 "Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall, and turned back, and entered by the gate of the valley, and [so] returned."

It appears, that he rode this animal completely around the wall. He, probably, stayed out all night looking at the damage. He came in before, or at daybreak, to keep the inhabitants from realizing what he had in mind to do.

Nehemiah 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 appears, that Nehemiah wanted to keep all of this quiet, even from the rulers, until he had his plan ready. He had not even asked for workers yet. The first thing to do was to find out what would be needed to complete the work, and then he could tell.

Nehemiah 2:17 "Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we [are] in, how Jerusalem [lieth] waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach."

After he had all of his plans ready, he told them of what he wanted to do. I am sure he, also, told them of the trees available to them to do the work. He would need their laborers to help him in the work. He explains that this would be a benefit to all of them.

Nehemiah 2:18 "Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for [this] good [work]."

At first, it was difficult for them to understand why a total stranger would want to come and do such a difficult task with nothing to gain for

himself. When he explained that God sent him to do this, they understood. He got all of the help he needed when he told them that God wanted him to do this, and the king allowed him to come and provided the timber.

Nehemiah 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?"

These three Arabs were from three different directions, but none of them wanted a wall to be built around Jerusalem. They laughed and made light of the idea of Nehemiah attempting to do this. They had forgotten the power of God. They were trying to say that Nehemiah wanted to build the wall, so he might rebel against his king. Of course, this was not true, because the king was in favor of him building the wall.

Nehemiah 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."

Nehemiah realized that God sent him on this mission. He told these Arab leaders, opposed to the building of the wall, that they would have no portion in it. God would see that the walls were re-built. Nehemiah put his trust in God.

Nehemiah 2 Questions

1. What is the month Nisan on our calendar?
2. Nehemiah was the _____ for the king.
3. What was unusual about Nehemiah serving the king in verse 1?
4. What did the king ask Nehemiah?
5. The king discerned that Nehemiah was _____ of _____.
6. What compliment did Nehemiah answer the king with?
7. Why was Nehemiah sad?
8. What did Nehemiah do, when the king asked him what his request was?
9. What was the request?
10. Who was with the king, when he was talking to Nehemiah?
11. How long would Nehemiah be gone?
12. What did Nehemiah ask the king to give him, so he could travel with no problem?
13. Where would Nehemiah get the material to build with?
14. Who went with Nehemiah?
15. Who did Nehemiah show the papers to?
16. Who opposed Nehemiah?
17. Why did they oppose?
18. How long did Nehemiah rest, when he arrived in Jerusalem?
19. When did Nehemiah go to examine the walls?
20. Why did he not tell anyone?
21. What did he find?
22. How did he travel around the wall?
23. When did Nehemiah tell them what he wanted to do?
24. When did they believe Nehemiah, and offer to help?
25. Why did the opponents of Nehemiah not want a wall built?
26. What had they forgotten?
27. Nehemiah put his trust in _____.

We will begin this lesson in Nehemiah 3:1 "Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep gate; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel."

The sheep gate seemed to be a gate in the eastern wall. It would have been appropriate for the high priest and priests to work on this wall. Not everyone wanted the wall built. Nehemiah would give credit to those who did help with the re-building. Probably, the high priest was an over-seer of the work, rather than doing the actual work. It is interesting, that as soon as the gate was finished, they sanctified it. They worked on the gate and the wall on the eastern side. This gate was called the sheep gate, because it was the gate the sheep were brought through, before sacrificing them at the temple.

Nehemiah 3:2 "And next unto him builded the men of Jericho. And next to them builded Zaccur the son of Imri."

These were men assigned to the northeast corner of the wall. Very little else is known of Zaccur, or Imri.

Nehemiah 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 fish gate was in the northern wall. It was very near the gate that is called today, the Damascus gate. The fish were brought in this gate into Jerusalem from the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River. They not only made the gate, but hung it for use, as well. The bars were an extra precaution of locking the gates to keep the enemy out.

Nehemiah 3:4 "And next unto them repaired Meremoth the son of Urijah, the son of Koz. And next unto them repaired Meshullam the son of Berechiah, the son of Meshezabeel. And next unto them repaired Zadok the son of Baana."

This appears, that these were working on the wall next to the fish gate.

Nehemiah 3:5 "And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord."

These were the people, and not their leaders, working on the wall and gates. The working people helped with the building. It seemed, the upper class did not try to stop the others from helping. They just did not work themselves.

Nehemiah 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."

This is, possibly, speaking of the Damascus gate. This gate appeared to be still standing and was repaired to fit in with the wall. Again, they

fixed it where it could be barred and locked in the event they were attacked.

Nehemiah 3:7 "And next unto them repaired Melatiah the Gibeonite, and Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon, and of Mizpah, unto the throne of the governor on this side the river."

It appears, that each group of people repaired the wall and gate that led to the town they lived in. Gibeon and Mizpay were north of the city of Jerusalem, so their people repaired the north wall and gate.

Nehemiah 3:8 "Next unto him repaired Uzziel the son of Harhaiah, of the goldsmiths. Next unto him also repaired Hananiah the son of [one of] the apothecaries, and they fortified Jerusalem unto the broad wall."

Apothecaries made perfume and ointment. The repairs did not seem to be as extensive on this side of the wall. To fortify is to strengthen something that is already there. This, possibly, means the wall was not as destroyed here, and they just worked on it and made it stronger.

Nehemiah 3:9 "And next unto them repaired Rephaiah the son of Hur, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem."

These were people who actually lived within the city limits of Jerusalem. It would be of great advantage to them personally to have the wall and gates repaired.

Nehemiah 3:10 "And next unto them repaired Jedaiah the son of Harumaph, even over against his house. And next unto him repaired Hattush the son of Hashabniah."

Again, it appears this repair was done near their home. They were wanting to help build the wall to help everyone, but would be personally benefited by protecting their own homes.

Nehemiah 3:11 "Malchijah the son of Harim, and Hashub the son of Pahath-moab, repaired the other piece, and the tower of the furnaces."

This seems to be the piece of the wall that was not repaired by those mentioned in verses 10 and 11.

Nehemiah 3:12 "And next unto him repaired Shallum the son of Haloresh, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem, he and his daughters."

It appears, that Rephaiah and Shallum each ruled half of Jerusalem. He, possibly, had no sons, so his daughters worked with him on the repair.

Nehemiah 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 1,000 cubits means 1,500 feet. This would be a very large area for repair. They, also, repaired the valley gate. In this instance it appears, the inhabitants of Zanoah did the work. They were located on the west side of Jerusalem. There were, probably, a large number of people working on the gate and wall, making it possible for them to repair such a long span.

Nehemiah 3:14 "But the dung gate repaired Malchiah the son of Rechab, the ruler of part of Beth-haccerem; he built it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof."

This was a district located close to Tekoah. Again, they built the gate and fixed it to be locked in case of war.

Nehemiah 3:15 "But the gate of the fountain repaired Shallun the son of Col-hozeh, 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."

Shallum actually ruled the district around Mizpah. Again, each of them chose a portion of the wall and a gate that was on the side their area was located on. Perhaps, it took less trouble to get to the work, since it was nearby. This fountain furnished water for the city in case of a siege. The king's garden had been watered by this fountain. The stairs could be speaking of those that had led to the temple at one time.

Nehemiah 3:16 "After him repaired Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, the ruler of the half part of Beth-zur, unto [the place] over against the sepulchres of David, and to the pool that was made, and unto the house of the mighty."

This is another Nehemiah. "Beth-zur" means house of the rock. It is located between Hebron and Jerusalem. This is one specific area that Nehemiah had wanted to repair, because of the sepulchres.

Nehemiah 3:17 "After him repaired the Levites, Rehum the son of Bani. Next unto him repaired Hashabiah, the ruler of the half part of Keilah, in his part."

We see, from this, that nearly every class of people had a few who helped with the repairs. We can, also, see that not everyone helped. Again, Keilah, here, is not speaking of a city, but of a region.

Nehemiah 3:18 "After him repaired their brethren, Bavai the son of Henadad, the ruler of the half part of Keilah."

Verses 17 and 18 are companions. Bavai ruled one half of the region and Hashabiah the other half.

Nehemiah 3:19 "And next to him repaired Ezer the son of Jeshua, the ruler of Mizpah, another piece over against the going up to the armoury at the turning [of the wall]."

We read earlier of the two who ruled one half each of Mizpah. Perhaps, this is speaking of the town, here, and not the region. The portion of the wall that he repaired was the northwestern angle. It appears in each of these corners, there was a place to easily get fighting gear. This is, possibly, what this is speaking of as the armory.

Nehemiah 3:20 "After him Baruch the son of Zabbai earnestly repaired the other piece, from the turning [of the wall] unto the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest."

It appears, that Baruch was set aside as having a burning desire to finish the wall, as Nehemiah wanted to finish it. The word "earnestly" is the key to this. This is the second section that he had worked on. The house of the high priest had to be near the wall. The high priest and the priests had worked on the eastern wall. The house of the high priest was, probably, on the eastern wall somewhere. "Eliashib" means God will restore.

Nehemiah 3:21 "After him repaired Meremoth the son of Urijah the son of Koz another piece, from the door of the house of Eliashib even to the end of the house of Eliashib."

Meremoth was a priest of a family of priests. He worked on the wall that was adjacent to the house of the high priest.

Nehemiah 3:22 "And after him repaired the priests, the men of the plain."

This is speaking of the priests who settled in the Jordan valley.

Nehemiah 3:23 "After him repaired Benjamin and Hashub over against their house. After him repaired Azariah the son of Maaseiah the son of Ananiah by his house."

This Azariah was the same one who helped Ezra teach the law. He was a Levite, as were all of the others mentioned in this verse. They had houses near the house of the high priest, and they repaired the portion of the wall near their houses.

Nehemiah 3:24 "After him repaired Binnui the son of Henadad another piece, from the house of Azariah unto the turning [of the wall], even unto the corner."

This is speaking of an area of the wall from the house of Azariah to the corner of the wall. Binnui is believed by some to be the Levite Bavai.

Nehemiah 3:25 "Palal the son of Uzai, over against the turning [of the wall], and the tower which lieth out from the king's high house, that [was] by the court of the prison. After him Pedaiah the son of Parosh."

The king's house, here, is speaking of the old palace of David. Each palace had its own prison. This would have been in the court of the palace.

Nehemiah 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."

We remember, that the Nethinims did servile work in the temple. They would have lived close to the wall, as well as the priests. Ophel was a ridge in the city of Jerusalem. It actually was located toward the Kidron valley on the edge of town. The water gate was speaking of the gate the water drained away from the temple area. There was a tower on each corner of the wall to help see intruders from a distance before they got to the wall.

Nehemiah 3:27 "After them the Tekoites repaired another piece, over against the great tower that lieth out, even unto the wall of Ophel."

The Tekoites started their repairs at the spot where the Nethinims had stopped. It seemed, all of these were spoken of as they took up the repairs, where the other stopped. This was going all around the city wall explaining, as they came to them.

Nehemiah 3:28 "From above the horse gate repaired the priests, every one over against his house."

This gate was in the eastern wall, where horses could enter the city. This would have been near the palace for the convenience of seeing David. It appears, that each priest repaired the portion nearest his own house.

Nehemiah 3:29 "After them repaired Zadok the son of Immer over against his house. After him repaired also Shemaiah the son of Shechaniah, the keeper of the east gate."

Zadok was a priest. Shemaiah was a priest, also. His distinction was that he was a keeper of the east gate. They repaired the wall at the location of their own houses.

Nehemiah 3:30 "After him repaired Hananiah the son of Shelemiah, and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph, another piece. After him repaired Meshullam the son of Berechiah over against his chamber."

These were, possibly, chief men who worked on the wall. These were not the same as the verses we just read, who repaired the wall near their own houses. These seemed not to have a house near the wall.

Nehemiah 3:31 "After him repaired Malchiah the goldsmith's son unto the place of the Nethinims, and of the merchants, over against the gate Miphkad, and to the going up of the corner."

The goldsmith would be a very respected man in the community. He worked on the eastern wall near the corner.

Nehemiah 3:32 "And between the going up of the corner unto the sheep gate repaired the goldsmiths and the merchants."

These were not priests, or high government officials. They were just average citizens who were respected, because of their businesses.

Nehemiah 3 Questions

1. Who builded the sheep gate.
2. What portion of the building did the high priest, probably, do?
3. Why was the gate called the sheep gate?
4. The men, in verse 2, worked on the _____ .
5. Who built the fish gate?
6. Why was it called the fish gate?
7. What were the bars on the gate for?
8. Who, of the Tekoites, did not work on their portion of the gate?
9. Verse 6 is, possibly, speaking of the _____ gate.
10. Each group of people repaired the part of the gate that was nearest their _____ .
11. Apothecaries made _____ and _____ .
12. What is different about verse 8?
13. Rephaiah ruled the half part of _____ .
14. How would some of the people be personally benefited by the repair of the wall?
15. Who ruled the other half of Jeruslaem?
16. 1,000 cubits is _____ feet.
17. Who repaired the dung gate?
18. What does "Beth-zur" mean?
19. Who had a burning desire to finish the wall, as Nehemiah had?
20. Who was Meremoth?
21. Who helped Ezra teach the law?
22. Where were the priests' houses located?
23. The king's house, in verse 25, is speaking of what?
24. The Nethinims did _____ work in the temple.
25. The water gate is speaking of what?
26. Who was keeper of the east gate?
27. Who was the goldsmith's son?

We will begin this lesson in Nehemiah 4:1 "But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews."

This was the troublemaker, we read about earlier. He did not want Jerusalem with this wall of protection. He had even accused Nehemiah of wanting to revolt against the king. They were actually mocking the Jews for taking on so large a task by so few people.

Nehemiah 4:2 "And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?"

The Samaritans had been enemies of Judah. Most of it came from jealousy. They felt the Jews were fortifying themselves against them. He could not believe that so large a task could be accomplished by this fragment of Jews, that came back from Babylonian captivity. He did not believe they would sacrifice their time and energy enough to get this job done. He was not even aware that the king had given authority to Nehemiah to cut down trees in the forest for their building materials. There is always someone saying the task the LORD has given you is an impossibility. Sanballat had underestimated the power of God working through Nehemiah.

Nehemiah 4:3 "Now Tobiah the Ammonite [was] by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall."

The Ammonites had, also, always been enemies of the people of Judah. They were saying, that the wall was built so weakly that just anything at all could tear it down. It was pretty obvious that Tobiah was listening to Sanballat. He was just agreeing with him, and trying to add something to show how weak the Jews were.

Nehemiah 4:4 "Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity:"

Nehemiah called out to God. He brought it to the attention of God that these Ammonites and Samaritans were opposed to the work on the wall. The thing that Nehemiah asked God for was for the hate to be turned again to them. Actually, Nehemiah would be pleased, if these people, who are trying to stop the work, would be taken captive themselves, so the work could continue without harassment.

Nehemiah 4:5 "And cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked [thee] to anger before the builders."

Nehemiah was telling God that these enemies were not just the enemies of Judah, but they were God's enemies, as well. They were trying to stop God's work on the wall, but they were actually insulting the name of God in

the process. They were trying to cause the builders to lose confidence in the finishing of the wall.

Nehemiah 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."

All of the insults and troublemaking these two evil men did, could not stop the work on the wall. The entire wall was completed to half the height they had planned. The people had it in their hearts to do this, and no insults could stop them.

Nehemiah 4:7 "But it came to pass, [that] when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, [and] that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth,"

All of these were the enemies of Jerusalem and Judah. They knew that with the wall it would be much harder to overthrow Jerusalem. Jealousy burned in their hearts that God had allowed the wall to be re-built. Their anger was great against Jerusalem, and Nehemiah in particular.

Nehemiah 4:8 "And conspired all of them together to come [and] to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it."

The Arabians, Ammonites, and Samaritans had decided they must stop these men of Judah now, before they built the other half of the wall. They would even attack Jerusalem, if necessary to stop this wall.

Nehemiah 4:9 "Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them."

The work was temporarily stopped to fight off their enemies, if they came. Nehemiah prayed and asked God to help. He, also, put men up and down the wall to warn of any attack.

Nehemiah 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."

The bearers of burdens had been reduced to a small number. Most of them were set as guards on the wall, and they could not continue the work. In this sense, the enemies had won for a time. The work on the wall stopped.

Nehemiah 4:11 "And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease."

The enemy was still threatening to come in, and kill all of those working on the wall.

Nehemiah 4:12 "And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us [they will be upon you]."

There were Jews who lived outside of the wall. It seemed, the people opposed to the building of the wall had told them, that they would not be

strong enough to finish the building of the wall. They threatened these people by telling them, they had ten times as many as Judah, and Judah would not stand under such pressure.

Nehemiah 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."

This warning from the adversaries caused Nehemiah to gather the people, and place them on the wall, and behind the wall armed with sword, spears, and bows. All of these threats were accomplishing the stopping of the work on the wall.

Nehemiah 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 had even found out the side the attack was supposed to come from. He alerted the rulers of people of what was planned, and then he reminded them that they should not fear, because God would fight for them. The wall would now help everyone, not just those who had been working on it. Everyone must take up arms and fight off their mutual enemy.

Nehemiah 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."

When the enemy found that Nehemiah and all of Judah knew of their plans and were prepared to fight, the enemy decided not to fight them. There seemed to be just a short pause for the preparation for war. As soon as the threat was over, Nehemiah and all of the workers went back to work on the wall.

Nehemiah 4:16 "And it came to pass from that time forth, [that] the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers [were] behind all the house of Judah."

It seemed, the threat of war had drawn all of the people together as one. Half of the people worked on the wall, while the other half stood prepared for war. All of those, who had not been willing to work on the wall, were now standing ready to defend Jerusalem.

Nehemiah 4:17 "They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, [every one] with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other [hand] held a weapon."

This is saying, that even those who were working on the wall, had a weapon ready beside them to use in case it was needed.

Nehemiah 4:18 "For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and [so] builded. And he that sounded the trumpet [was] by me."

This blowing of the trumpet in a certain area, would call the people to that area to fight. Even though the threat of war remained, they built on

the wall. The men strapped their weapons to their sides and worked with their weapons where they could instantly get their hands on them. If the trumpet blew, they would all stop working and prepare for war.

Nehemiah 4:19 "And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work [is] great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another." Nehemiah 4:20 "In what place [therefore] ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us."

The wall went completely around the city with people every few feet working on building it up. Those of Judah and Benjamin, who had come back from Babylon, were not a large number of people. The blowing of the trumpet would be necessary to bring the greatest number together to fight, wherever the war broke out.

Nehemiah 4:21 "So we laboured in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared."

They were actually ready 24 hours a day, but they worked about a 12 hour shift from sunup to sundown. Half were working, and half were standing guard at all times.

Nehemiah 4:22 "Likewise at the same time said I unto the people, Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and labour on the day."

This was for the safety of Jerusalem, but it would, also, be safer for the workers to not leave the safety of the walls. One or two men could easily be stopped and killed, when they were away from the others. This way, they would all be together all the time.

Nehemiah 4:23 "So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, [saving that] every one put them off for washing."

This is just saying, they slept in their clothes. The only time they had their clothes off, was to wash them and put them right back on. These had to be dedicated people to sacrifice like this to build the wall. Notice, Nehemiah did this, as well as the men. He set the example for them.

Nehemiah 4 Questions

1. Who was angry about them building the wall?
2. How were they mocking the Jews?
3. What description of the Jews did he use in verse 2?
4. What questions were they asking in a mocking way?
5. Why were the Samaritans upset about the wall?
6. There is always someone saying the task the LORD has given you to do is an _____.
7. How weak were they saying the wall was?
8. Tobiah was listening to _____.
9. The _____ and the _____ are opposed to the building of the wall.
10. What does Nehemiah ask God for?
11. Who were they provoking to anger, besides the workers?
12. In verse 6, we see that _____ of the wall is finished?
13. Who became angry, along with Tobiah and Sanballat, when they heard the Jews were building the wall?
14. What did they all conspire together to do?
15. What did Nehemiah do first?
16. What did they do, besides pray?
17. What hindered them from finishing the wall?
18. What were the adversaries threatening to do?
19. What did they tell the Jews, who lived out of Jerusalem?
20. What did Nehemiah do as a show of force?
21. What did Nehemiah say to the nobles?
22. As soon as the enemy had word of all they were doing to protect themselves, what did Nehemiah have his people do?
23. _____ of the men worked on the wall and _____ stood guard.
24. Those who worked on the wall had what weapons nearby to use, if necessary.
25. How would they bring the majority of the people to one area, if there was an attack?
26. How long were their workdays?
27. What did they do, when they slept?
28. This was for the safety of _____.
29. What did Nehemiah tell those who lived out of the walls of Jerusalem to do?
30. _____ set the example for them.

We will begin this lesson in Nehemiah 5:1 "And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews."

In the last lesson, we saw that The Ammonites, Samaritans, and some of the Arabians had threatened war, if they Jews did not stop the building of the wall. We, also, discovered they were on call 24 hours a day. They did not even take off their clothes to sleep. They had to stay prepared for war. From sunrise to sunset, half of the people worked on the wall with their swords strapped to their sides. The other half stood guard. We can see how this could become a problem, and how the wives would complain.

Nehemiah 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." Nehemiah 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."

We can easily see that the larger the family was, the more corn it would take to feed them. If the breadwinner had to work an extended length of time on the wall and could not provide for his family, it would cause great hardship. There had been a famine in the past, which had caused many of them to mortgage their homes and their land. It would be impossible to pay a mortgage off, if you had no funds coming in.

Nehemiah 5:4 "There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute, [and that upon] our lands and vineyards."

They had been paying tribute to the king of Persia. Even though he released them to come to their homeland, he did not let them come without them paying tribute. Judaea was like all of the other countries that Persia had controlled. They all had to pay tribute. They must get back to making money, so they could pay their bills.

Nehemiah 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."

This was a tragic situation, when the creditors put family members of those in debt in bondage. At the time this was written, people who could not pay their debts became the slaves of those they owed. Many times, a father would sell a daughter and try to keep the rest of the family together. They loved their children as much as the wealthy people loved their children, they just could not pay their debts and these were the results.

Nehemiah 5:6 "And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words."

The Hebrews were supposed to be considerate of their poorer brethren, and they were to be very lenient in such situations. It appears, the anger of Nehemiah was against those who were taking advantage of this situation.

Nehemiah 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."

"I consulted with myself" means that he thought about the situation. After he thought it out, he rebuked the nobles and the rulers for taking usury which was against the law of Moses. The nobles and rulers seemed not to heed to Nehemiah's rebuke, and he went to the people.

Nehemiah 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]."

Nehemiah and his family had been redeeming other Jews who had been enslaved. These rich nobles and rulers could do the same, if they would. They were all Hebrews and should act as brothers helping one another. They had no good answer to give Nehemiah.

Nehemiah 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?"

Nehemiah had tried to shame them into doing the right thing, and they would not. Now, he reminds them that God knows exactly what they were doing. He reminded them that their brother Hebrews were not their enemies, and they were treating them as strangers. God would not like this.

Nehemiah 5:10 "I likewise, [and] my brethren, and my servants, might exact of them money and corn: I pray you, let us leave off this usury."

It was against God's law for them to collect usury. He was insisting that they stop taking their brethren's living as a pledge. The law of God did not even allow a person to take someone's coat that he was wearing for pledge. This was worse.

Nehemiah 5:11 "Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, also the hundredth [part] of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them."

Nehemiah told them to restore all of the land and houses they had confiscated. He commanded them to even give them 1/10 of their money back. They were even to give them food back that they had taken.

Nehemiah 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."

They agreed to do exactly as Nehemiah commanded them. Nehemiah wanted to make sure they would keep their word, and he had them to take an oath in front of the priests. They would be afraid to break an oath they made to God.

Nehemiah 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."

Nehemiah gave them a vivid example that God would banish them, if they did not keep their word. The entire congregation agreed to the punishment, if they did not keep their word. "Amen" means so be it. The praise was to God for the problem being solved. The people kept this serious oath they had made.

Nehemiah 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."

Nehemiah had taken a leave of absence from being the cupbearer of Artaxerxes. Nehemiah returned to the Persian king at the end of the 12 years. Nehemiah had not eaten of the people, as most of the governors did. He had supported himself.

Nehemiah 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."

This was explaining that Nehemiah served as their governor without taking tribute for himself from the people. Nehemiah was serving the LORD the way he felt the LORD would have him serve. He was not governor to make money. He was governor to build the wall of Jerusalem. God had given him this task as his service to the LORD.

Nehemiah 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."

Nehemiah had set the example for all the others, when he and his servants worked on the wall without pay. He did not try to take advantage of his poor brothers, and buy up their land cheap. He was there for one purpose, and that was to build the wall.

Nehemiah 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."

Nehemiah was explaining the vast number of people he had to feed each day. These were daily, but they could, probably, be compared to business meetings today. A large number of these people were the rulers and Jews. Perhaps, they discussed the building of the wall at these times.

Nehemiah 5:18 "Now [that] which was prepared [for me] daily [was] one ox [and] six choice sheep; also fowls were prepared for me, and once in ten days store of all sorts of wine: yet for all this required not I the bread of the governor, because the bondage was heavy upon this people."

We are not told exactly where the funds came from for Nehemiah to acquire these things. We do know, it did not come from the people he ruled over as governor.

Nehemiah 5:19 "Think upon me, my God, for good, [according] to all that I have done for this people."

Some of the preceding Scriptures were spoken to God, as well as the people. Nehemiah was just explaining to God that he did his very best. I do not believe Nehemiah was wanting fame, or fortune. His greatest desire was that he would do the task that God placed before him to the best of his ability.

Nehemiah 5 Questions

1. Who cried out against the Jews?
2. What were the conditions we studied in the last lesson, that might cause this?
3. Who were having the hardest time feeding their families?
4. In verse 3, what drastic measures had they taken to keep going?
5. They had _____ money to pay the king's tribute.
6. Which king had they been paying tribute to?
7. They had _____ their daughters to pay their debts?
8. When Nehemiah heard their cries, how did it affect him?
9. Nehemiah's anger was against whom?
10. What was meant by "I consulted with myself"?
11. Who did Nehemiah rebuke?
12. What had Nehemiah been doing, that would have been an example for the others to do?
13. When they did not change when Nehemiah tried to shame them, what did he tell them?
14. Quote Nehemiah chapter 5 verse 10.
15. What did Nehemiah tell them to restore to the people?
16. What was their answer?
17. What did Nehemiah have them to do, to ensure that they would keep their word?
18. What threat did he tell them of, if they did not keep their word?
19. How long was Nehemiah governor?
20. How had Nehemiah lived?
21. What did the other governors before him charge the people?
22. Who did he supply to work on the wall?
23. Who ate at his table?
24. What was the daily amount of food used?
25. Quote Nehemiah chapter 5 verse 19.

We will begin this lesson in Nehemiah 6:1 "Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and [that] there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;)"

This chapter happened at the same time as the building of the wall. It is not chronologically located. It is parallel with the earlier chapters. This was speaking of the hanging of the doors in the opening of the gates as being the last thing that was done.

Nehemiah 6:2 "That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in [some one of] the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief."

Ono was very near Philistia. They felt they could not get to Nehemiah, while he was in Jerusalem with so many people around him, but they wanted to kill him. The only way to accomplish this was to get him off to himself.

Nehemiah 6:3 "And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I [am] doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?"

Nehemiah knew what they were trying to do, and he sent word to them that there was absolutely no way he could break away from the work on the wall to come out to meet them. They were not honorable men, and it would not have bothered them at all to lie to Nehemiah.

Nehemiah 6:4 "Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner."

This shows how determined they were to get rid of Nehemiah.

Nehemiah 6:5 "Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand;" Nehemiah 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."

The open letter was so that all of the Jews could see the letter. This was a lie that Sanballat told to get the people stirred up, so they would not continue the work on the wall. He was undoubtedly not aware that the king of Persia had given Nehemiah leave to build the wall. Nehemiah, nor the Jews, had no intention of rebelling. The building of the wall would keep others from attacking them successfully.

Nehemiah 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."

This shows how little he knew about the Hebrews and their God. Prophets are men of God that speak as an oracle of God. They are not under the

control of a man upon the earth, unless they are false prophets. No such thing was planned. Nehemiah had one mission, and that was to build the wall.

Nehemiah 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."

Nehemiah denied these accusations strongly. He knew that all of this had been made up by Sanballat. He made all of this up to pretend that Nehemiah was power hungry. These things were not true they were coming from the evil heart of Sanballat.

Nehemiah 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."

This was a request from Nehemiah to God for help to keep the desire strong to build the wall in all the people. Sanballat was doing all of this to turn Nehemiah's people against him. God can cause them not to listen to these lies.

Nehemiah 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 Shemaiah was not concerned about the life of Nehemiah at all. He was paid by Sanballat to prophecy something that was not even truth to Nehemiah. This reminds me so much of the way the devil operates. When he is trying to destroy a person or a church, he first tries to destroy them from without. If that does not work, then he sends the enemy inside the church pretending to be of God. It is much more difficult to stop an attack from within. This Sanballat was trying everything he could think of to stop Nehemiah.

Nehemiah 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."

If God sent Nehemiah to build the wall, God would protect him while he was doing it. He did not need to hide. God would build a hedge of protection around him. Nehemiah had received no such information from God.

Nehemiah 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."

This man was a false prophet. God opened Nehemiah's eyes, so that he understood. He did not believe this man, because he perceived he was not from God.

Nehemiah 6:13 "Therefore [was] he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and [that] they might have [matter] for an evil report, that they might reproach me."

Those who believe in the LORD have nothing to fear but God. Psalms 118:6 "The LORD [is] on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?" In the case of Nehemiah, it would have been sin to fear Sanballat. God had sent him to do this work, he could not allow Sanballat to stop him. It would be lack in faith of God on Nehemiah's part, if he did. Nehemiah had set the example for all of the workers on the wall, and he must continue to do that.

Nehemiah 6:14 "My God, think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear."

All we know of Noadiah was that she was working against Nehemiah to cause him to fear.

Nehemiah 6:15 "So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth [day] of [the month] Elul, in fifty and two days."

The wall was approximately 4 miles in length. There were many groups who worked on the wall, so it would not have been impossible for it to have been finished in 52 days. Elul, on their calendar, is approximately the same as September on our calendar.

Nehemiah 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."

The more trouble that came caused them to work harder, not slow down. These very same enemies who had done everything in their power to stop Nehemiah and the work on the wall, now realize that this was the work of God. They would have to have been totally unaware of reality, if they had not credited the supernatural hand of God in this.

Nehemiah 6:17 "Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters unto Tobiah, and [the letters] of Tobiah came unto them."

This was to stir up the people within the wall of Jerusalem. There seemed to be traitors inside of Jerusalem, who listened more to Tobiah, than they did to Nehemiah.

Nehemiah 6:18 "For [there were] many in Judah sworn unto him, because he [was] the son in law of Shechaniah the son of Arah; and his son Johanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah."

It appears, that Tobiah's family were unable to prove their kinship with Israel. They came back with Zerubbabel from captivity, however. Shechaniah was the son of Arah, or Beni-arah. Tobiah's connection to these Hebrews was through marriage.

Nehemiah 6:19 "Also they reported his good deeds before me, and uttered my words to him. [And] Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear."

This was sad, because it spoke of traitors to Judah. They were living in Jerusalem, enjoying all of the benefits, but reporting everything that Nehemiah did to Tobiah. All the time they were telling Nehemiah of the

greatness of Tobiah, they were not faithful to Judah, Nehemiah, or the building of the wall. Their loyalty was bought by Tobiah.

Nehemiah 6 Questions

1. Verse 1, speaks of one thing yet to do, what was it?
2. Who sent word to Nehemiah to get him to come away from Jerusalem and meet with them?
3. Why did they want him to come out of Jerusalem?
4. What was Nehemiah's answer to them?
5. What did Nehemiah tell them he was doing?
6. Why did it not bother them to lie to Nehemiah?
7. What showed their determination?
8. Why did they send an open letter?
9. They were not aware of what?
10. What lie were they telling about Nehemiah wanting power?
11. Prophets should be men that speak as an _____ of God.
12. If they are under the control of men on the earth, they are _____ prophets.
13. Where did Nehemiah say these evil sayings came from?
14. Why had Sanballat made up these lies?
15. What did Nehemiah ask God to strengthen?
16. What terrible message did Shemaiah give Nehemiah?
17. How does the author relate the actions of Shemaiah, here, to the devil?
18. What questions did Nehemiah send to him as an answer?
19. What did Nehemiah perceive about him?
20. Who had hired Shemaiah to say these things?
21. Quote Psalms chapter 118 verse 6.
22. Had Nehemiah feared Sanballat, it would have been a _____.
23. Who did Nehemiah ask God to think on for trying to make him fear?
24. When was the wall finished?
25. How long did it take to build it?
26. How long was the wall approximately?
27. What did the enemies of Nehemiah finally realize after the wall was finished?
28. Who sent letters to Tobiah?
29. Why were some of the people in Judah sworn to him?
30. What was sad about the people reporting Nehemiah's actions to Tobiah?

We will begin this lesson in Nehemiah 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,"

There are a number of reasons why the Levites would keep the gates of the city. One of the reasons was because Jerusalem was the city of God. It was the holy city. Another very good reason was because after the Babylonian captivity, about half of those who returned to Jerusalem were Levites. We must remember, again, that not all Levites were priests, but they were all in the service of the LORD in some capacity, or other. Now, we see why Nehemiah stayed longer than the time it took to build the wall. He was governor, and he was taking care of the city, until it got started again. The people needed a strong leader. The porters and the singers served in the temple, and they were Levites, as well.

Nehemiah 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."

The similarity in the names, here, is a little confusing, but these were two men who would rule together. Hanani seemed to be the brother of Nehemiah. The reason for making Hananiah one of the rulers was a very good one. His main attribute was that he feared God. He, probably, had worked under Nehemiah before, and Nehemiah knew that he was trustworthy. A person who truly is in correct relationship with God, so much that they fear him, would be faithful.

Nehemiah 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."

The gates were to be closed and barred at night. They were opened in the middle of the day, but even then, there would be guards closely watching everyone who entered and left the city. Nehemiah knew of the hatred Sanballat, and others like him, had for Jerusalem. Nehemiah was taking no chances.

Nehemiah 7:4 "Now the city [was] large and great: but the people [were] few therein, and the houses [were] not builded."

We must remember, that Jerusalem had been a large city. The wall covered 4 miles around it. The remnant of people, who came back from captivity in Babylon, were extremely few compared to the space in the city. They must be extremely careful that the enemy did not get within the walls. Jerusalem had been totally destroyed, when the Babylonians attacked them and took the captives. Now, they had not finished rebuilding their homes.

Nehemiah 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,"

There had been some difficulty with the people being faithful during the building of the wall. Perhaps, it was caused by some who had crept in, who were not in the genealogy register. God had put it in the heart of Nehemiah to check this register to see who were Hebrews, and who were not.

Nehemiah 7:6 "These [are] the children of the province, that went up out of the captivity, of those that had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away, and came again to Jerusalem and to Judah, every one unto his city;"

This is an accounting of who is left of Judah, in Jerusalem, and the surrounding towns.

Nehemiah 7:7 "Who came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, Baanah. The number, [I say], of the men of the people of Israel [was this];"

Zerubbabel had brought the first group back from captivity. He brought the largest number of the people back to their homeland. We find in the list of names of this group that Ezra had given, one addition by Nehemiah of Nahamani. These were the leaders. Some of the names are spelled a little differently, but they are the same people.

Nehemiah 7:8 "The children of Parosh, two thousand an hundred seventy and two." Nehemiah 7:9 "The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two." Nehemiah 7:10 "The children of Arah, six hundred fifty and two." Nehemiah 7:11 "The children of Pahath-moab, of the children of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand and eight hundred [and] eighteen." Nehemiah 7:12 "The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four." Nehemiah 7:13 "The children of Zattu, eight hundred forty and five." Nehemiah 7:14 "The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and threescore." Nehemiah 7:15 "The children of Binnui, six hundred forty and eight." Nehemiah 7:16 "The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty and eight." Nehemiah 7:17 "The children of Azgad, two thousand three hundred twenty and two." Nehemiah 7:18 "The children of Adonikam, six hundred threescore and seven."

Adonikam had one more, than in the earlier list.

Nehemiah 7:19 "The children of Bigvai, two thousand threescore and seven." Nehemiah 7:20 "The children of Adin, six hundred fifty and five." Nehemiah 7:22 "The children of Hashum, three hundred twenty and eight." Nehemiah 7:23 "The children of Bezai, three hundred twenty and four." Nehemiah 7:24 "The children of Hariph, an hundred and twelve."

Hariph is spoken of as Jorah in Ezra. Beginning with the verse below, the cities of the people who are registered is given. The families were listed before.

Nehemiah 7:25 "The children of Gibeon, ninety and five." Nehemiah 7:26 "The men of Beth-lehem and Netophah, an hundred fourscore and eight." Nehemiah 7:27 "The men of Anathoth, an hundred twenty and eight." Nehemiah 7:28 "The men of Beth-azmaveth, forty and two." Nehemiah 7:29 "The men of Kirjath-jearim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred forty and three."

"Kirjath-jearim" means city of forests. We will continue on with the people returning to their cities.

Nehemiah 7:30 "The men of Ramah and Gaba, six hundred twenty and one."
Nehemiah 7:31 "The men of Michmas, an hundred and twenty and two." Nehemiah
7:32 "The men of Beth-el and Ai, an hundred twenty and three." Nehemiah 7:33
"The men of the other Nebo, fifty and two."

There had been no other Nebo mentioned. Some of the scholars believe
the other is speaking of Acher.

Nehemiah 7:34 "The children of the other Elam, a thousand two hundred
fifty and four." Nehemiah 7:35 "The children of Harim, three hundred and
twenty." Nehemiah 7:36 "The children of Jericho, three hundred forty and
five." Nehemiah 7:37 "The children of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred
twenty and one." Nehemiah 7:38 "The children of Senaah, three thousand nine
hundred and thirty."

All of the above were listed according to their localities.

Nehemiah 7:39 "The priests: the children of Jedaiah, of the house of
Jeshua, nine hundred seventy and three." Nehemiah 7:40 "The children of
Immer, a thousand fifty and two." Nehemiah 7:41 "The children of Pashur, a
thousand two hundred forty and seven." Nehemiah 7:42 "The children of Harim,
a thousand and seventeen."

These are a listing of their priests according to their families.

Nehemiah 7:43 "The Levites: the children of Jeshua, of Kadmiel, [and]
of the children of Hodevah, seventy and four." Nehemiah 7:44 "The singers:
the children of Asaph, an hundred forty and eight." Nehemiah 7:45 "The
porters: the children of Shallum, the children of Ater, the children of
Talmon, the children of Akkub, the children of Hatita, the children of
Shobai, an hundred thirty and eight."

This above, is a listing of Levites that were not priests, and yet,
worked in the temple as singers and porters. All of the Levites were in the
service of the Lord, but not all were priests.

Nehemiah 7:46 "The Nethinims: the children of Ziha, the children of
Hashupha, the children of Tabbaoth," Nehemiah 7:47 "The children of Keros,
the children of Sia, the children of Padon," Nehemiah 7:48 "The children
of Lebana, the children of Hagaba, the children of Shalmal," Nehemiah 7:49
"The children of Hanan, the children of Giddel, the children of Gahar,"
Nehemiah 7:50 "The children of Reaiah, the children of Rezin, the children
of Nekoda," Nehemiah 7:51 "The children of Gazzam, the children of Uzza, the
children of Phaseah," Nehemiah 7:52 "The children of Besai, the children of
Meunim, the children of Nephishesim," Nehemiah 7:53 "The children of Bakkub,
the children of Hakupha, the children of Harhur," Nehemiah 7:54 "The
children of Bazlith, the children of Mehida, the children of Harsha,"
Nehemiah 7:55 "The children of Barkos, the children of Sisera, the children
of Tamah," Nehemiah 7:56 "The children of Nezhiah, the children of Hatipha."

The Nethinims did the servile work in the temple. The name Akkub,
listed in Ezra as a part of the Nethinims, is omitted in this list.

Nehemiah 7:57 "The children of Solomon's servants: the children of
Sotai, the children of Sophereth, the children of Perida," Nehemiah 7:58
"The children of Jaala, the children of Darkon, the children of Giddel,"

Nehemiah 7:59 "The children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattil, the children of Pochereth of Zebaim, the children of Amon." Nehemiah 7:60 "All the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon's servants, [were] three hundred ninety and two."

It is interesting to note that the Nethinims and Solomon's servants' children were not counted as individual families. Perhaps, they were counted together, because they were all to serve, some in the temple and some for the kings.

Nehemiah 7:61 "And these [were] they which went up [also] from Tel-melah, Tel-haresha, Cherub, Addon, and Immer: but they could not shew their father's house, nor their seed, whether they [were] of Israel."

We decided in our study on Ezra that these were, probably, those who had intermarried and lost their genealogy connections.

Nehemiah 7:62 "The children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred forty and two." Nehemiah 7:63 "And of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai, which took [one] of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite to wife, and was called after their name."

Most of these were, probably, daughters of the Hebrews, including daughters of the priests who took the name of their husbands who were not listed as Hebrews.

Nehemiah 7:64 "These sought their register [among] those that were reckoned by genealogy, but it was not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood."

The priests that married the heathens and had been removed from the register were no longer classified as priests. Priests were strictly forbidden to marry a non Hebrew.

Nehemiah 7:65 "And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood [up] a priest with Urim and Thummim."

The Urim and Thummim was a pocket behind the breastplate of the high priest. God spoke to the people through this Urim and Thummim. This was saying they must not eat of the most holy things, until they had heard from God.

Nehemiah 7:66 "The whole congregation together [was] forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore,"

This number was extremely small compared to the number who had settled Judah before their fall to Babylon. It is remarkable that the number given, here, is the same as the number in Ezra. The number is 42,360.

Nehemiah 7:67 "Beside their manservants and their maidservants, of whom [there were] seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and they had two hundred forty and five singing men and singing women."

These were not included in the servile workers given earlier. These singers were not of the Levitical tribe here. These singing men and women were in addition to the family of Asaph.

Nehemiah 7:68 "Their horses, seven hundred thirty and six: their mules, two hundred forty and five:" Nehemiah 7:69 "[Their] camels, four hundred thirty and five: six thousand seven hundred and twenty asses."

These were the animals they brought with them. There were not enough of them for everyone to ride. We may safely assume they carried the possessions of the people, and were used to carry those for one reason or another who could not walk.

Nehemiah 7:70 "And some of the chief of the fathers gave unto the work. The Tirshatha gave to the treasure a thousand drams of gold, fifty basins, five hundred and thirty priests' garments."

Tirshatha was the title of the governor of Judaea under the Persians. This was a title that had been given Nehemiah.

Nehemiah 7:71 "And [some] of the chief of the fathers gave to the treasure of the work twenty thousand drams of gold, and two thousand and two hundred pound of silver."

The heads of the families, along with Nehemiah, gave greatly to the treasures that were carried into Jerusalem.

Nehemiah 7:72 "And [that] which the rest of the people gave [was] twenty thousand drams of gold, and two thousand pound of silver, and threescore and seven priests' garments."

This was speaking of the average Hebrew and what they gave collectively.

Nehemiah 7:73 "So the priests, and the Levites, and the porters, and the singers, and [some] of the people, and the Nethinims, and all Israel, dwelt in their cities; and when the seventh month came, the children of Israel [were] in their cities."

This lists the various classes of people who went back to their homeland led by Zerubbabel. Their seventh month would be like our October. This was a several month journey. When they arrived back in their homeland, they would have to begin again to re-build. Ezra brought the second group a little later, and Nehemiah came with a few at an even later time.

The lesson that stands out in this, to me, for us is it does not matter what station in life we have. We will all go home to heaven together. Our names must be written in the Lamb's book of life, before we will be accepted into our homeland. These Hebrews had to have their genealogy correct to stay in the homeland. They traveled together, as we travel together in life. All of them take their rightful places in the service of their LORD for this to work out. Not everyone could be a priest. This is the way it is in a church, as well. We all have to take our rightful places in God's work for the church to succeed.

Nehemiah 7 Questions

1. What was done, after the wall was built and the doors set up?
2. What were some of the reasons for the Levites keeping the gates of the city of Jerusalem?
3. Not all Levites were priests, but all were in the _____ of the LORD.
4. Why did Nehemiah stay after the wall was finished?
5. Who was Nehemiah's brother?
6. Who ruled Jerusalem with Nehemiah's brother?
7. What kind of man was he?
8. When were the gates of Jerusalem to be opened?
9. When they were opened, what did they do for precautions?
10. How large was the city itself?
11. The people were _____ for that much area.
12. Why were the houses not built?
13. What did God put in Nehemiah's heart to do?
14. What could have been a reason for checking the record of the genealogy of the people?
15. Who had carried them away captive to Babylon?
16. Who led the first group returning to their homeland?
17. What does "Kirjath-jearim" mean?
18. What do most scholars believe is the other Nebo, mentioned in verse 33?
19. Verses 39 through 42 are a list of the _____.
20. What did the Nethinims do?
21. Why were Solomon's servants and the Nethinims listed together?
22. Those, in verse 61, are whom?
23. What happened to priests, who married heathen women?
24. They should not eat of the most holy things, until what happened?
25. How many were in the total congregation?
26. How many animals were carried back with them?
27. Who gave to the treasures?
28. Verse 73 is a listing of what?
29. What is a lesson Christians can receive from this lesson?
30. We must all take our _____ places in God's work for the church to succeed.

We will begin this lesson in Nehemiah 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."

This was an awareness of the people that the answers to their problems would be found in God's Word. Oh! if we could come to that conclusion in our land today. Notice the word "all". This means that the entire group, that came back to their homeland, gathered here. The people who came back were those who wanted to be in better relationship with their God. We may remember that those that came, came of their own free will. They had gathered to hear the Word of the LORD from His law.

Nehemiah 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."

"All that could hear with understanding" was, probably, speaking of children being in the group, if they were old enough to understand. Ezra was a true priest of God. He restricted no one from hearing the law read.

Nehemiah 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."

He read from the first light of morning until noon. This had to be at least 6 hours of reading without a stop. We may safely assume that some of those on the platform with him, read part of it to spare his voice. It is interesting, to me, that the reading would last this long. It is even more interesting, to me, that the people would listen for this extended time.

Nehemiah 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."

Notice, in this, Ezra was spoken of as scribe, as if he was reading a document, instead of acting as priest. This pulpit of wood was an elevated platform where all the people could plainly see him reading the Word. The people on his right and left could have been priests, but it would not have been necessary for them to be. They were, probably, chosen for their reading ability. The idea was, they must be able to accurately read the law.

Nehemiah 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:"

The fact that they stood up, showed great respect for Ezra and for the law he was holding in his hand.

Nehemiah 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."

Ezra blessing the LORD had to be speaking of high praise coming from the lips of Ezra. The people were in agreement with the praise and said, Amen. The lifting up of the hands was a sign of praise lifted to heaven to God. The bowing of the head showed they were humbled before almighty God. They worshipped and praised God in unison with Ezra.

Nehemiah 8:7 "Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people [stood] in their place."

It appeared, these Levites were familiar with the law. When there was a pause in the reading, they expounded the meaning to those who did not understand.

Nehemiah 8:8 "So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused [them] to understand the reading."

Notice, the word "distinctly" which means clearly understood.

Nehemiah 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."

Nehemiah was the civil leader. He was the governor. Ezra was the spiritual leader. The people were weeping, probably, because they were understanding where they had failed God. It was not suitable on any holy day to weep, so the Levites made them stop weeping. This day was holy unto the LORD.

Nehemiah 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."

This was, probably, Ezra giving them instructions in spiritual things. Everyone was to eat and be merry on this day. They were to share their food with those who did not have to eat, as well. The joy, spoken of here, was in the spirit. This joy was a gift from God, who gave them, and all who dare to believe, His strength.

Nehemiah 8:11 "So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day [is] holy; neither be ye grieved."

The weeping stopped. They were to rejoice in their LORD.

Nehemiah 8:12 "And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them."

The Word of God will set you free. They were joyful, because they had heard and understood the law presented to them by Ezra and his helpers. There is a real joy in being able to understand the meaning of the Scriptures we read, as well. The Bible {God's Word} is a guide to each of us to know God's will for our life.

Nehemiah 8:13 "And on the second day were gathered together the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests, and the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, even to understand the words of the law."

The reading of the law the day before was a sample of better things to come. Now, those who had authority in their homes, or in the temple, gathered, and Ezra taught them the law even more fully than before. Those who hear the Word and begin to study cannot, it seems, get enough. The more you study, the more you desire to study and it goes on and on. Humans cannot fully understand the Word of God. Each time we study, God reveals more and more of His Word to us.

Nehemiah 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 was speaking of the Feast of Tabernacles, which took place in October on our calendar. It appears, that Zerubbabel had started the Feast of Tabernacles again, but they had not dwelt in booths during that time. There were three feasts that all male Hebrews were commanded to attend each year. Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles were the three.

Nehemiah 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."

Myrtlewood grows two places in the world. One of those places is in Israel. They went out from the city to the mount and cut branches to make the booths. These were temporary structures to live in during the week of Tabernacles.

Nehemiah 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."

Those, who lived in the city, would make the booths on the top of their flat-roofed houses. The people who lived elsewhere would put their booths near the gates.

Nehemiah 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."

The time, spoken of here, was approximately hundreds of years before the time of Joshua, who is, probably, intended by Jeshua, above. Their gladness was that they knew what they were to do. They all built their little booths, and stayed in them during the Feast of Tabernacles.

Nehemiah 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."

This was speaking of Ezra reading in the book of the law of God. This was a time of not only returning to their homeland, but attempting to return to their God, as well. The solemn assembly, kept on the eighth day, is described in the following Scriptures. Leviticus 23:34 "Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month [shall be] the feast of tabernacles [for] seven days unto the LORD." Leviticus 23:35 "On the first day [shall be] an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work [therein]." Leviticus 23:36 "Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: it [is] a solemn assembly; [and] ye shall do no servile work [therein]."

Nehemiah 8 Questions

1. Where did the people gather themselves together?
2. What did they ask Ezra to do?
3. What was Ezra called in verse 1?
4. What conclusion does the author wish the people of our country would come to?
5. The people, who came out of captivity, wanted to be in _____ relationship with their _____.
6. The congregation was made up of whom?
7. When did he bring the law before the people?
8. "All that could hear with understanding", probably, meant whom?
9. How long did he read the law before them?
10. Who were some of the men on the platform with Ezra, that we can safely assume read part of the time for him?
11. What two words describe the condition of the ears of those who heard the law?
12. What did Ezra stand on to read?
13. Ezra opened the book in the sight of _____ the people.
14. Why did the people stand, when the book was opened?
15. In verse 6, Ezra did what?
16. How did the people respond?
17. The lifting of their hands was in _____.
18. Their bowed heads showed their _____.
19. What did the Levites standing by do, when there was a pause in the reading of the law?
20. Nehemiah was their _____ leader.
21. Ezra was their _____ leader.
22. Why were they weeping?
23. What did Ezra say to them about their weeping?
24. The joy of the LORD is your _____.
25. Quote Nehemiah chapter 8 verse 12.
26. The Word of God will set you _____.
27. The Bible is _____.
28. What Feast is verse 14 speaking of?
29. What had they failed to do in recent years, when celebrating Feast of Tabernacles?
30. Where did they get the material for the booths?
31. Myrtlewood grows in 2 places in the world, where is one?
32. Where would they build the booths?
33. How many days did they kept the feast?
34. Where do we find the law on this?

We will begin this lesson in Nehemiah 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."

On our calendar, this would be the 24th day of October. The children of Israel, here, were determined to repent of their sins voluntarily, and begin again with their LORD. This was not a set time they were fasting, and mourning in sackcloth, and throwing dirt upon their heads. This was a time of their own choosing. Ezra had stopped them from weeping in sorrow when they heard the law read, because it was to be a festive time.

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."

The reading of the law by Ezra had opened their eyes to the reality of their sins. They wanted to repent, so they could begin again. They separated themselves from the world around them, and confessed their sins, and the sins of their fathers.

Nehemiah 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."

This means they read the law for 3 hours, and confessed for three hours. The Levites actually read the law to them. They were sincere in their desire to seek God.

Nehemiah 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."

Jeshua, Bani, and Kadmiel represented the three families of the Levites at that time. The leaders must lead in repentance, as well. The Levitical family was not free of sin, either. They must cry out to God for themselves, and then for the people.

Nehemiah 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 people had been lying prostrate in grief before their LORD. They were, now, told to stand up and bless and praise the LORD. The Bible says the praise of the LORD should be done with both hands lifted to the LORD. This is a very humbling thing to do, but God inhabits the praises of His people. The proper way to praise the LORD is by lifting the hands, palms upward, that you might receive of the LORD. We have become so sophisticated in our churches today, that few do this. It is still important to do, especially in prayer.

Nehemiah 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."

This was a recognition of the LORD for who He really was. He is the Creator of everything. The angels in heaven even worship Him, as well. He is not only Creator, but Deliverer, and Preserver.

Nehemiah 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;"

Verse 7, above, spoke of Abram who was selected of God to be the father of all believers. His faith in God won him favor with God. His faith was counted unto him for righteousness.

Nehemiah 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 covenant that God made with Abraham was an everlasting covenant. The following Scriptures are the covenant God made with Abram who became Abraham. Genesis 12:1 "Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:" Genesis 12:2 "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:" Genesis 12:3 "And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." The land God promised Abraham was inhabited by seven heathen families, when God gave it to the Israelites. Deuteronomy 7:1 "When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou;" God removed these 7 heathen families, and gave the land to His family Israel.

Nehemiah 9:9 "And didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heardest their cry by the Red sea;"

These Israelites had been freed from hard labor in Egypt, when God sent ten plagues on Egypt. Pharaoh released them, after the death of all the firstborn in Egypt. God even opened the Red Sea that these same Israelites could walk over on dry ground. At the same time, He drowned all of the Egyptian soldiers who tried to follow them.

Nehemiah 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."

God had defamed all the false gods of Egypt, and caused all the nations, who knew of His act, to realize that He was the True God. They did not know that He could be their God. They called Him the God of Israel.

Nehemiah 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."

This is, again, speaking of the opening of the Red Sea to give Israel passage through the midst of the sea, and causing the Egyptian soldiers to drown.

Nehemiah 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."

The presence of the LORD crossed the wilderness with them. His presence was seen of them in the fire by night and the smoke by day. They moved when the fire, or smoke, moved, and stopped when it stopped. He led them as a Father would a helpless child. He is the Light of the world. They would not dwell in darkness. The Light of the world was with them.

Nehemiah 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:"

God came down the mountain and spoke the ten commandments to them. It frightened them so badly, they asked Moses to speak to God for them. They were without excuse, when they sinned with the golden calf, while Moses was on the mount getting the ten commandment on stone. He was gone 40 days and nights, but that was no excuse. They had heard in their ears, before he went up the mountain, these same commandments.

Nehemiah 9:14 "And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant:"

This was speaking of the Levitical law and commandments. There were over 625 of them in the book of Leviticus. God gave them laws of religion, civil laws, dietary laws, etc. Moses received them of God, and gave them to them. These same laws were spoken of by the Jews as the law of Moses.

Nehemiah 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."

The manna that fell from heaven fed them for their 40 year journey across the wilderness. When they had no water, Moses struck the Rock, and water came forth to quench their thirst. Look, with me, at what Jesus said about this Bread. John 6:50 "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die." John 6:51 "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." I Corinthians 10:4 "And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."

Nehemiah 9:16 "But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments,"

This one verse is the story of these Israelites. The LORD would forgive them, and they would fall back into sin, over and over.

Nehemiah 9:17 "And refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but thou [art] a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not."

They had been slaves in Egypt. They were so rebellious, they turned against God, and started to go back to Egypt. Moses prayed for them and God forgave them.

Nehemiah 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;" Nehemiah 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."

The mercy of God always outweighed His judgement. They deserved to die for their sins, but God forgave them. This was the story of the Israelites the entire 40 years of their wandering in the wilderness.

Nehemiah 9 Questions

1. On the 24th day of the month, what did the children of Israel do?
2. When had they been convinced they needed to repent of their sins?
3. Verse 2 tells us they _____ themselves from all strangers.
4. They stood and _____ their sins, and their father's iniquities.
5. What did they do for 1/4 of the day?
6. Who represented the three families of Levites at the time in this chapter?
7. The Levitical family must cry out to God for _____, and then for the _____.
8. What are the people told to do in verse 5?
9. How should you praise the LORD?
10. What do they say about God in verse 6?
11. He is not only Creator, but _____, and _____.
12. Where was Abram living, when God selected him?
13. His _____ in God won him favor with God.
14. What kind of covenant did God make with Abram?
15. Quote Genesis chapter 12 verses 1, 2, and 3.
16. How many heathen people were living in the land God promised Abraham?
17. Where were the Israelites living in hard bondage, when God heard their cry?
18. What did God do for them at the Red Sea?
19. God had _____ the false gods of Egypt.
20. The nations around called God the God of _____
21. God led them with what?
22. At Mount Sinai, God spoke what to the people directly?
23. What did they ask of Moses, because they were frightened of God?
24. While Moses was on the mountain receiving the ten commandments on stone, what did the people do?
25. What law is verse 14 speaking of?
26. What is another name for it?
27. Who was the Bread from heaven that fed them on their journey?
28. What did Jesus call Himself in John chapter 6 verse 51?
29. Where does He call Himself the spiritual Rock?
30. The _____ of God always outweighs His judgement?

We will begin this lesson in Nehemiah 9:20 "Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst."

This was speaking of the nearly 3 million people being fed for the 40 years with manna that fell from heaven. The water, spoken of here, was the water that flowed from the Rock. This is, however, the first and only mention of the Holy Spirit being their instructor, in the Old Testament.

Nehemiah 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."

There were so many miracles God had done for them in the wilderness journey, that we tend to forget the miracle of their clothes lasting 40 years. Not only did their feet not swell, but their shoes did not wear out either. These were really great miracles within themselves.

Nehemiah 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."

We discussed in the previous lesson, how God took the land away from the 7 nations that lived in the area of the promised land, and gave it to the Israelites. The land was divided into 12 parts, and each tribe received their part. Sihon was king of Heshbon. Og was the Amorite king of Bashan. The giants came from this territory.

Nehemiah 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]."

Approximately 75 people went into Egypt, and the nation of Israel, approximately 3,000,000, came out of Egypt. This was a tremendous increase. This near 3,000,000 people took the land of promise and dwelled in it, as God had promised.

Nehemiah 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."

When they went in and took the land, as God had commanded them to do, God was with them and they won their battles. In most instances, God had instructed them to kill the people of the lands they conquered. They never did seem to quite rid the land of the Ammonites, Moabites, and the other five tribes. The Philistines were a constant thorn for them, as well.

Nehemiah 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."

This truly was a land of milk and honey, as God had promised them. The olive trees and the vineyards were already planted by the people they overran. The children of Israel wanted for nothing. God had kept his covenant with Abraham.

Nehemiah 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."

To be blessed beyond any other nation of the world, there was only one thing God asked of them. He asked them to keep His commandments and be faithful to Him. They did not do even that. They rebelled against God. They were disobedient at every turn. God sent them prophets to warn them, and they killed their prophets. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel were all said {by historians} to have been murdered. They angered the LORD by worshipping false gods, as well.

Nehemiah 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."

It seemed to be a never-ending cycle. They would sin against God and bring His wrath upon them. Many times, His wrath was carried out by them losing a very important battle and losing many men. They would repent, and God would forgive them. They seemed to never learn. God sent judges, prophets, and priests to help them. God sent those like Samson and David to defeat their enemies. It was all the same. As soon as they were out of trouble, they returned to their false gods. The judges, Othniel and Ehud, were spoken of as saviours. When each judge was in control, God would give peace to Israel.

Nehemiah 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 is another way of saying the previous verse. It seemed not to matter how great the help had been from God, they still would turn again to the false gods after their trouble was momentarily gone. Notice, God forgave them because He was merciful, not because they deserved to be forgiven.

Nehemiah 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."

All of the wars they lost, and the famines that came, were to drive them back to the LORD and the law. They were a proud rebellious people, who felt they did not need the LORD. They did not keep the law, and did not even try to know what God's law said. They wanted to be like the world around them.

Nehemiah 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."

God waited several hundred years for them to repent and turn to Him with a pure heart. He sent prophets to warn them of their evil deeds, and they took no heed. He waited about 260 years for the ten tribes to repent and turn to Him, but they did not. They went into captivity about 135 years before the tribe of Judah and Benjamin did. The main difference I saw in this, was the ten tribes did not have any kings who truly loved God and kept his commandments, and Judah had a few kings who sought God. Eventually, even Judah got so far away from God, that they were taken into Babylonian captivity.

Nehemiah 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."

God loved them so much, that He always saved a remnant to start again. At the time this is being spoken, that remnant had come back to Judah to begin, again. Notice, God's mercy was what saved them.

Nehemiah 9:32 "Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble seem little before thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day."

The kings of Assyria were the rod of God's anger. They were the instrument God used to punish the people, and make them repent. This was a reminder of the greatness of God. The people must never forget the punishment that came upon them for their sins. God is merciful and keeps His covenant. It is man who breaks the covenant.

Nehemiah 9:33 "Howbeit thou [art] just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly:"

This was admitting that as bad as the punishment had been from God on His people, they had brought it upon themselves by their sins. God had done what was right. It was the wickedness of the people that had brought on the terrible times.

Nehemiah 9:34 "Neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments and thy testimonies, wherewith thou didst testify against them."

The Israelites were the only people in the world who had been given the law of God. All they had to do was live by that law. The ten tribes of Israel had no kings who kept God's law. There were a few like Asa, Hezekiah, and Josiah of the tribes of Judah that did right in God's sight. Even they were overwhelmed finally by the sins of the people, and God punished Judah, too. Verse 34 is saying, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Nehemiah 9:35 "For they have not served thee in their kingdom, and in thy great goodness that thou gavest them, and in the large and fat land which thou gavest before them, neither turned they from their wicked works."

While Israel and Judah were free and were not subjects to a foreign land, they did not serve God. They had everything, and threw it away in disobedience.

Nehemiah 9:36 "Behold, we [are] servants this day, and [for] the land that thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold, we [are] servants in it:"

Even though the king of Persia had let them come back to their homeland to live, they were not out from under his domination. They still had to pay tribute to him. The children of Israel had never really been completely free since then, until 1948. Off and on they were in the land, but under domination of some other country.

Nehemiah 9:37 "And it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins: also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we [are] in great distress."

What God had intended to bless the children of Israel with, had in turn, blessed the kings who they were subject to. The Persian king was their master as they were speaking these words.

Nehemiah 9:38 "And because of all this we make a sure [covenant], and write [it]; and our princes, Levites, [and] priests, seal [unto it]."

This was re-establishing a covenant with their God. They did not want these same problems to come upon them, again. All of the leaders would sign this covenant, they had written down promising to seek God and His ways from henceforth.

Nehemiah 10 Questions

1. How many years did God provide manna for the Israelites?
2. How did he quench their thirst?
3. What is the good spirit in verse 1?
4. What miracles, that happened on their journey, were mentioned in verse 21.
5. God took the promised land away from _____ nations, and gave it to Israel.
6. Sihon was king of _____.
7. Og was the _____ king of Bashan
8. Their children also _____ thou as the stars of heaven.
9. From the approximately 75 people who went into Egypt, _____ came out.
10. In most instances, God had instructed them to _____ the people of the lands they conquered.
11. The _____ were a constant thorn for them, as well.
12. What was already growing in the land they took?
13. God had promised them a land of _____ and _____.
14. Nevertheless, they were _____.
15. What was the one thing God asked from the Israelites?
16. What did God do to cause them to return to Him?
17. Who did God send to warn them of their sins?
18. When they turned to God and repented, what did God do?
19. Which of the judges had been spoken of as saviours?
20. All the wars they lost, and the famines they suffered, were to drive them back to _____ and the _____.
21. God waited several hundred years, before He did what to them?
22. Why was Judah's captivity over a hundred years after the ten tribes' captivity?
23. God loved them so much, He always saved a _____.
24. God's _____ saved them.
25. The king's of Assyria were the _____ of God' anger.
26. Was God unfair with them?
27. Who were some of the good kings?
28. Who had let them come back to their homeland?
29. Were they truly free?
30. When did they become completely free?
31. What were they going to do, to show God their sincerity in keeping the covenant with Him?

This chapter is devoted to those who made covenant with God. We will now begin this lesson in Nehemiah 10:1 "Now those that sealed [were], Nehemiah, the Tirshatha, the son of Hachaliah, and Zidkijah,"

Nehemiah was the civil leader {Tirshatha}. Zidkijah, here, was, probably, speaking of Zadok. It appears, this Zadok was Nehemiah's secretary. "Sealed", in this verse, means make a mark.

Nehemiah 10:2 "Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah," Nehemiah 10:3 "Pashur, Amariah, Malchijah," Nehemiah 10:4 "Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch," Nehemiah 10:5 "Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah," Nehemiah 10:6 "Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch," Nehemiah 10:7 "Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin," Nehemiah 10:8 "Maaziah, Bilgai, Shemaiah: these [were] the priests."

These verses listed the heads of the priestly houses. It was important that they signed this covenant, because they actually were the leaders of the people in spiritual things. Seraiah was mentioned first, because he was the head of high priestly family.

Nehemiah 10:9 "And the Levites: both Jeshua the son of Azaniah, Binnui of the sons of Henadad, Kadmiel;" Nehemiah 10:10 "And their brethren, Shebaniah, Hodijah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan," Nehemiah 10:11 "Micha, Rehob, Hashabiah," Nehemiah 10:12 "Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah," Nehemiah 10:13 "Hodijah, Bani, Beninu."

Beginning with verse 9, we see a list of the heads of the houses of the Levites, who were not priests. All priests had to be of the Levitical tribe, and they, also, had to be descended from Aaron. The Levites, other than the priests, did things like singing and keeping the doors. They were in service to the LORD, but in a different capacity than the priests. Binnui had taken the place of Kadmiel. Jeshua, Binnui, and Kadmiel were the three who were the chief of the families of the Levites at that time.

Nehemiah 10:14 "The chief of the people; Parosh, Pahath-moab, Elam, Zatthu, Bani," Nehemiah 10:15 "Bunni, Azgad, Bebai," Nehemiah 10:16 "Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin," Nehemiah 10:17 "Ater, Hizkijah, Azzur," Nehemiah 10:18 "Hodijah, Hashum, Bezai," Nehemiah 10:19 "Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai," Nehemiah 10:20 "Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir," Nehemiah 10:21 "Meshezabeel, Zadok, Jaddua," Nehemiah 10:22 "Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah," Nehemiah 10:23 "Hoshea, Hananiah, Hashub," Nehemiah 10:24 "Hallohesh, Pileha, Shobek," Nehemiah 10:25 "Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah," Nehemiah 10:26 "And Ahijah, Hanan, Anan," Nehemiah 10:27 "Malluch, Harim, Baanah."

These lists of names in the verses above were showing the chief of each family that signed the covenant. The chief of each family signed for the entire family. Just because a member of the family did not specifically sign, did not eliminate them from keeping the covenant. They, in a sense, signed when their chief signed for them.

Nehemiah 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;"

This seems a little unusual to separate these out, but they were not really separated. The people, in verse 28 above, each had a chief, of their family who signed the covenant for them. The priests, here, are sons and grandsons of the head of each priestly family. The head of the family signed for them. This is saying, that these people, in verse 28, had all been signed for by the heads of their families which were listed individually in the verses through 27.

Nehemiah 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 is saying, they verbally agreed to live by the covenant agreement the heads of their families signed for them. They had heard the agreement read aloud, and they agreed to the conditions of the covenant. They were saying they accepted the mark their leader had made as a binding agreement on them. They were aware there would be curses, if they did not keep the commandments of the LORD. They, also, knew they would be blessed, if they kept the commandments.

Nehemiah 10:30 "And that we would not give our daughters unto the people of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons:"

One of the very serious promises they made was not to intermarry with the heathens around them. They were to marry only other Hebrews.

Nehemiah 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."

This was saying, they would keep the sabbath holy. They would not buy or sell, on the sabbath, or on any holy day. It was, also, saying they would keep the sabbatical year holy. They would let the land lie in rest on the seventh year. This spoke of the jubilee at the end of the seventh seven years, as well. Every debt would be canceled at that time, as the Levitical law prescribed.

Nehemiah 10:32 "Also we made ordinances for us, to charge ourselves yearly with the third part of a shekel for the service of the house of our God;"

This was a special voluntary tax that all of the people imposed upon themselves to take care of the service in the temple. The 1/6 of an ounce was a very small amount, but even the poor had to pay this once a year.

Nehemiah 10:33 "For the shewbread, and for the continual meat offering, and for the continual burnt offering, of the sabbaths, of the new moons, for the set feasts, and for the holy [things], and for the sin offerings to make an atonement for Israel, and [for] all the work of the house of our God."

The shewbread was very important. It symbolized the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. This small amount of money they would bring in would not be enough to pay for animals for the burnt offerings, but it was symbolic that all of the people should support the temple, regardless of how poor they were. This way they would feel they were a part of it. All of these offerings and feasts were to be practiced again. They were going back to the letter of the law. The showbread was 12 small loaves each week. The continual meat offering was flour and oil mingled together. It was offered twice a day. The offering of the sabbath was two lambs with meat and drink offerings. On new moons, the offerings were two bullocks, one ram, seven lambs accompanied with the meat and drink offerings. The set feasts were Passover, Pentecost {Feast of Weeks} and Tabernacles. The sin offering was for Day of Atonement. Each of these feasts had specific offerings mentioned in the book of Numbers.

Nehemiah 10:34 "And we cast the lots among the priests, the Levites, and the people, for the wood offering, to bring [it] into the house of our God, after the houses of our fathers, at times appointed year by year, to burn upon the altar of the LORD our God, as [it is] written in the law:"

Someone had to provide the wood to burn the offerings. The families responsible for bringing in the wood at a certain time were decided by casting lots. Wood was hard to find at that time, it had to be thought of as a ministry.

Nehemiah 10:35 "And to bring the firstfruits of our ground, and the firstfruits of all fruit of all trees, year by year, unto the house of the LORD:"

Firstfruits offerings were required of everything that was grown. It was a very good way to be sure you would have a good crop abundantly provided by God. Even this had been dropped for years. The practice was reinstated to keep the law.

Nehemiah 10:36 "Also the firstborn of our sons, and of our cattle, as [it is] written in the law, and the firstlings of our herds and of our flocks, to bring to the house of our God, unto the priests that minister in the house of our God:"

The firstborn son had to be purchased back from God with a silver shekel. He belonged to God. All of the firstborn cattle, herds, and flocks must be offered on the eighth day.

Nehemiah 10:37 "And [that] we should bring the firstfruits of our dough, and our offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine and of oil, unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and the tithes of our ground unto the Levites, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of our tillage."

This was not limited to the fruit of the trees, but included all things that grew of nature. The first of the crop belonged to God. These offerings were for the Levites to live of. They shared with the altar. The Levites did not own land. They lived of the offerings.

Nehemiah 10:38 "And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes: and the Levites shall bring up the

tithe of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure house."

All of the tithes were taken to the temple and turned over to the priests. The priests allotted the offerings out between all of the Levites.

Nehemiah 10:39 "For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the offering of the corn, of the new wine, and the oil, unto the chambers, where [are] the vessels of the sanctuary, and the priests that minister, and the porters, and the singers: and we will not forsake the house of our God."

This was a promise from these Israelites to take the responsibility of the support of the temple upon themselves. They turned their offerings of corn, wine, oil, and all of their other things they brought as a tithe to the temple. The temple treasury would be in the sanctuary. All of those called to the service of the LORD, whether they be priests, porters, singers or other workers would live of the offerings.

There is a lesson in this for the Christian. When we become Christians, we go into covenant relationship with God. We must take responsibility for our portion of the care and upkeep of our church. We must not shirk our duty of giving our portion of money to the church we attend.

Nehemiah 11 Questions

1. Nehemiah was the _____ leader.
2. What other name was he called in verse 1?
3. What was another name for Zidkijah?
4. In verse 1, what did "sealed" mean?
5. Verse 2 through 8 list whom?
6. Why was it so important for them to sign this covenant?
7. Why was Seraiah mentioned first?
8. Who are listed in verse 9 through 13?
9. Who were the three of the chiefs of the Levitical families at that time?
10. Who were listed in verse 14 through 27?
11. Beginning in verse 28, who were the people mentioned?
12. Verse 29 was saying, they verbally agreed to live by what?
13. What were they aware of?
14. They agreed not to marry the _____.
15. What times did verse 31 say, they would remember and observe?
16. What was one of the things that happened on jubilee?
17. What voluntary tax did they impose on themselves?
18. What were some of the things the tax would be used for, mentioned in verse 33?
19. What was the shewbread?
20. What was the offering for new moons?
21. How did they decide who would provide the wood?
22. The firstborn son was purchased back from God with a _____.
23. What of their firstfruits were they supposed to bring to the temple?
24. Who were the tithes turned over to, to distribute?
25. What was the promise in verse 39 really?
26. Where was the temple treasury?
27. What lesson for the Christians do we find here?

We will begin this lesson in Nehemiah 11:1 "And the rulers of the people dwelt at Jerusalem: the rest of the people also cast lots, to bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem the holy city, and nine parts [to dwell] in [other] cities."

It seemed, at this time, it was very important to increase the size of Jerusalem. The rulers were already living there. The reasons for this were, probably, several. One of the reasons would be that they must have the wall protected. Another reason could have been that in the event the out-lying cities and farms were destroyed, there would still be a remnant in Jerusalem. Another very good reason for them increasing the number in Jerusalem, would be to have innkeepers for those who came here to worship in the temple. This brought greater protection to the rulers, as well. The last reason I will give was the fact that countries were sometimes judged by the size of their capitol city.

Nehemiah 11:2 "And the people blessed all the men, that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem."

It appears, from this, that some volunteered even before they were selected by lot. These were loyal to their land. They moved their homes and their families into the wall of Jerusalem.

Nehemiah 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."

The chief of the province was speaking of those in authority within Judah. Of course, they lived in Jerusalem. Those who lived outside and ministered in Jerusalem were, possibly, those mentioned here.

Nehemiah 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;"

This seems to be a listing of the families of Judah and Benjamin, who dwelt within the city walls. This did not mean they no other tribes were represented, because we know for sure that some of the Levites lived in Jerusalem. We, also, know that some of the tribe of Ephraim and Manasseh, as well, lived there. The Nethinims were not a tribe, and some of them lived there, as well.

Nehemiah 11:5 "And Maaseiah the son of Baruch, the son of Col-hozeh, the son of Hazaiah, the son of Adaiah, the son of Joiarib, the son of Zechariah, the son of Shiloni." Nehemiah 11:6 "All the sons of Perez that dwelt at Jerusalem [were] four hundred threescore and eight valiant men."

The sons of Perez who were inside the wall, were there for defending the city. That was what was meant by them being valiant men. They numbered 468 men. Counting their families, this would be a great portion of the over 20,000 needed for the city.

Nehemiah 11:7 "And these [are] the sons of Benjamin; Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Joed, the son of Pedaiiah, the son of Kolaiah, the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ithiel, the son of Jesaiah." Nehemiah 11:8 "And after him Gabbai, Sallai, nine hundred twenty and eight."

Those of Benjamin, who came to dwell inside the city wall, were 928.

Nehemiah 11:9 "And Joel the son of Zichri [was] their overseer: and Judah the son of Senuah [was] second over the city."

Joel had a job very similar to what the mayor of a modern city would have. His assistant, who would take his place if anything happened to him, was Senuah.

Nehemiah 11:10 "Of the priests: Jedaiah the son of Joiarib, Jachin." Nehemiah 11:11 "Seraiah the son of Hilkiyah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, [was] the ruler of the house of God."

These were speaking of the heads of the families of priests. Some of them already had homes next to the walls of the city. Seraiah was the head of the high priestly family.

Nehemiah 11:12 And their brethren that did the work of the house [were] eight hundred twenty and two: and Adaiah the son of Jeroham, the son of Pelaliah, the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah, the son of Pashur, the son of Malchiah, Nehemiah 11:13 "And his brethren, chief of the fathers, two hundred forty and two: and Amashai the son of Azareel, the son of Ahasai, the son of Meshillemoth, the son of Immer," Nehemiah 11:14 "And their brethren, mighty men of valour, an hundred twenty and eight: and their overseer [was] Zabdiel, the son of [one of] the great men."

All of these were families in the service of the LORD in a lesser capacity than the ones mentioned earlier. They were all Levites. All of them together were 1192. Mighty men of valour, in this instance, was pertaining to the service of the LORD.

Nehemiah 11:15 "Also of the Levites: Shemaiah the son of Hashub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni;" Nehemiah 11:16 "And Shabbethai and Jozabad, of the chief of the Levites, [had] the oversight of the outward business of the house of God."

Shemaiah was descended from Merari, one of the three Levitical families that all the others descended from. It appears, he was in charge of the affairs of the church in worldly matters. He was in charge of the treasury, and Shabbethai and Jozabad were his subordinates. This service, they did for the LORD, would be like a deacon in the church today. In the book of Acts, there were men who were set aside to serve tables. All these did the same thing at a different time.

Nehemiah 11:17 "And Mattaniah the son of Micha, the son of Zabdi, the son of Asaph, [was] the principal to begin the thanksgiving in prayer: and Bakbukiah the second among his brethren, and Abda the son of Shammua, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun."

Asaph's descendents would be called to the service of leading the praise and worship in song and music. They were musicians and singers. In our churches today, Mattaniah would be choir leader.

Nehemiah 11:18 "All the Levites in the holy city [were] two hundred fourscore and four."

This was a certain group of Levites and not the whole, that made up the 284. The priests and the porters were Levites, too, but not included in this number. They were given separately.

Nehemiah 11:19 "Moreover the porters, Akkub, Talmon, and their brethren that kept the gates, [were] an hundred seventy and two."

These were Levites, as well, but with a different service to perform. They were keepers of the gates. Obviously, they did not need 172 all at once. They took shifts, so the gates were watched at all times.

Nehemiah 11:20 "And the residue of Israel, of the priests, [and] the Levites, [were] in all the cities of Judah, every one in his inheritance."

These were just speaking of the others who did not live in Jerusalem, but lived in the adjoining towns and countryside.

Nehemiah 11:21 "But the Nethinims dwelt in Ophel: and Ziha and Gispa [were] over the Nethinims."

Ophel was a fortified suburb of Jerusalem. It was not far from the temple hill. The Nethinims did servile work in the temple. They had to be near for this purpose. Ziha and Gispa were their leaders.

Nehemiah 11:22 "The overseer also of the Levites at Jerusalem [was] Uzzi the son of Bani, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micha. Of the sons of Asaph, the singers [were] over the business of the house of God."

Uzzi seemed to be in charge of the business inside the house of God. Another name for Uzzi was Huzzi.

Nehemiah 11:23 "For [it was] the king's commandment concerning them, that a certain portion should be for the singers, due for every day."

The king, intended here, was Artaxerxes. It appears, he had set aside some funds to care for the living of the singers every day.

Nehemiah 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."

Pethahiah seemed to be in charge of anything, where the king was dealing with the Jewish people. His service was to take care of problems that might occur involving the king and the people.

Nehemiah 11:25 "And for the villages, with their fields, [some] of the children of Judah dwelt at Kirjath-arba, and [in] the villages thereof, and at Dibon, and [in] the villages thereof, and at Jekabzeel, and [in] the

villages thereof," Nehemiah 11:26 "And at Jeshua, and at Moladah, and at Beth-phelet," Nehemiah 11:27 "And at Hazar-shual, and at Beer-sheba, and [in] the villages thereof," Nehemiah 11:28 "And at Ziklag, and at Mekonah, and in the villages thereof," Nehemiah 11:29 "And at En-rimmon, and at Zareah, and at Jarmuth," Nehemiah 11:30 "Zanoah, Adullam, and [in] their villages, at Lachish, and the fields thereof, at Azekah, and [in] the villages thereof. And they dwelt from Beer-sheba unto the valley of Hinnom."

The above are a listing of the little villages where the people of Judah, who did not live inside the wall of Jerusalem, lived. Some of them lived on farms around these areas, but most of them lived in the little villages and worked their fields from there. From Beer-sheba to the valley of Hinnom was speaking of Judah as far as it reached from the south and the north. There were 17 places listed for Judah.

Nehemiah 11:31 "The children also of Benjamin from Geba [dwelt] at Michmash, and Aiya, and Beth-el, and [in] their villages," Nehemiah 11:32 "[And] at Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah," Nehemiah 11:33 "Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim," Nehemiah 11:34 "Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat," Nehemiah 11:35 "Lod, and Ono, the valley of craftsmen."

There were 15, if Geba was, also, to be included in the little villages mentioned belonging to the descendants of Benjamin, who did not live in Jerusalem itself. Lod is called Lydda in the book of Acts. Perhaps, they were woodworkers, which would cause them to be called the valley of craftsmen.

Nehemiah 11:36 "And of the Levites [were] divisions [in] Judah, [and] in Benjamin."

Even though the tribes of Judah and Benjamin were both called Judah, they still separated into their individual tribes. They did not lose their distinction as being 2 of the tribes of Israel. The Levites were scattered among both tribes.

Nehemiah 12 Questions

1. The rulers of the people dwelt at _____.
2. In verse 1, why did they cast lots?
3. Why was it important for a tenth of the people to dwell in Jerusalem?
4. The country blessed all the men that did what?
5. The chief of the province was speaking of whom?
6. What was verse 4 a listing of?
7. How many of the sons of Perez dwelt at Jeruslaem?
8. They were there to _____ the city.
9. How many of Benjamin came to dwell inside the city wall?
10. Joel had a job very similar to what the _____ of a modern city would have.
11. Who was his assistant?
12. Verses 10 and 11 were listing who?
13. Who was the head of the high priestly family?
14. The Levites, whose leaders were listed in verses 12 through 14, were a total of _____.
15. Shemaiah was descended from _____.
16. What was he in charge of?
17. Who were his assistants?
18. Who could you compare them with in our churches today?
19. What were Asaph's descendents called to do?
20. Mattaniah would be _____ in a modern church.
21. What did the porters do?
22. Where did 90% of the general population live?
23. The Nethinims lived in _____.
24. Where was that located?
25. Who was overseer of the Levites at Jerusalem?
26. Who had ordered a certain portion to be given the singers?
27. Pethahiah was in charge of what?
28. How many little towns of Judah were there?
29. How many towns were there of Benjamin?
30. The Levites were _____ among the other tribes.

We will begin this lesson in Nehemiah 12:1 "Now these [are] the priests and the Levites that went up with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra,"

Jeshua was the high priest in Zerubbabel's time. Seraiah was the high priest murdered by Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah and Ezra, here, were not the same as those who have books named for them.

Nehemiah 12:2 "Amariah, Malluch, Hattush," Nehemiah 12:3 "Shechaniah, Rehum, Meremoth," Nehemiah 12:4 "Iddo, Ginnetho, Abijah,"

We must take time, here, and recognize that Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was descended from this Abijah. His wife, Elisabeth, was descended from Aaron. They were both descended from the priestly family of Aaron, in fact.

Nehemiah 12:5 "Miamin, Maadiah, Bilgah," Nehemiah 12:6 "Shemaiah, and Joiarib, Jedaiah," Nehemiah 12:7 "Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah, Jedaiah. These [were] the chief of the priests and of their brethren in the days of Jeshua."

All of the names listed were the names of the chief of each of the priestly families.

Nehemiah 12:8 "Moreover the Levites: Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, [and] Mattaniah, [which was] over the thanksgiving, he and his brethren." Nehemiah 12:9 "Also Bakbukiah and Unni, their brethren, [were] over against them in the watches."

We must continue to remember that Jeshua, Binnui, and Kadmiel were the leaders of the three divisions of the Levitical tribe. The others, mentioned here, were heads of families of the Levites.

Nehemiah 12:10 "And Jeshua begat Joiakim, Joiakim also begat Eliashib, and Eliashib begat Joiada," Nehemiah 12:11 "And Joiada begat Jonathan, and Jonathan begat Jaddua."

Jeshua was the high priest of Zerubbabel's time. Eliashab was mentioned as high priest, after Nehemiah reached Jerusalem. Joiada was in office 36 years. It was believed that Jonathan murdered his brother Jeshua, in the temple, so that he might be high priest. All of those listed above were high priests.

Nehemiah 12:12 "And in the days of Joiakim were priests, the chief of the fathers: of Seraiah, Meraiah; of Jeremiah, Hananiah;"

This was the beginning of a list of the priestly families, starting with the high priest, Joiakim. Each of those mentioned, above, were the head of their priestly family.

Nehemiah 12:13 "Of Ezra, Meshullam; of Amariah, Jehohanan;" Nehemiah 12:14 "Of Melicu, Jonathan; of Shebaniah, Joseph;" Nehemiah 12:15 "Of Harim, Adna; of Meraioth, Helkai;" Nehemiah 12:16 "Of Iddo, Zechariah; of

Ginnethon, Meshullam;" Nehemiah 12:17 "Of Abijah, Zichri; of Miniamin, of Moadiah, Piltai;" Nehemiah 12:18 "Of Bilgah, Shammua; of Shemaiah, Jehonathan;" Nehemiah 12:19 "And of Joiarib, Mattenai; of Jedaiah, Uzzi;" Nehemiah 12:20 "Of Sallai, Kallai; of Amok, Eber;" Nehemiah 12:21 "Of Hilkiah, Hashabiah; of Jedaiah, Nethaneel."

The families of Jedaiah and Joiarib did not put their mark to the covenant supposedly. They were, probably, listed toward the last for that reason. These were all the men who were the heads of priestly families.

Nehemiah 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 only thing that I can make of this is, perhaps, they had the Levites recorded as the chief of the fathers, up until the time that Darius reigned.

Nehemiah 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."

We know from our previous studies in Chronicles, that there were records kept of all of the heads of the families, and particularly of the civil and spiritual leaders. They thought it very important to keep an accurate genealogy of each family. The book of chronicles, mentioned above, was a record book other than the Chronicles in the Bible. It was terribly important to keep that type of record of the Levitical families during the Old Testament to see who could be high priest or priest. We are not told exactly why the record keeping ceased in the time of Johanan. When the Lord Jesus came to the earth, He was the High Priest forever. The ministry before the time of Jesus' visit to the earth was by family heritage. It was ministering the law. After Jesus was crucified, the ministry is of the Spirit. Anyone who has the Spirit of God dwelling within them can minister. In fact, everyone who is a believer should minister in some capacity.

Nehemiah 12:24 "And the chief of the Levites: Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brethren over against them, to praise [and] to give thanks, according to the commandment of David the man of God, ward over against ward."

David had re-set the functions of the temple up, just before he died. David truly was a man after God's own heart. Again, we see the beginning of the listing of the chief Levitical families.

Nehemiah 12:25 "Mattaniah, and Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, Akkub, [were] porters keeping the ward at the thresholds of the gates." Nehemiah 12:26 These [were] in the days of Joiakim the son of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor, and of Ezra the priest, the scribe."

We see the keepers of the gates above. Perhaps, the keepers of the treasury door, as well. Nehemiah was a civil leader in the office of governor. Ezra, as priest and scribe, was a spiritual leader.

Nehemiah 12:27 "And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings, and with singing, [with] cymbals, psalteries, and with harps."

We do not know exactly when the dedication of the wall took place. Some scholars believe it was dedicated at the end of its completion. Others believe it was dedicated after Nehemiah went back to see the king of Persia. It really does not matter when it was done. Some people do not believe in dedicating things like a wall of a city. To those people who believe in God, everything they come in contact with should be dedicated to God. This dedication would be a festive occasion. There would be much singing, playing of instruments, praising God, and blowing of the victory trumpet. This was a time of thanking God for His protection. The wall was a deterrent. God is our protection, and He was theirs.

Nehemiah 12:28 "And the sons of the singers gathered themselves together, both out of the plain country round about Jerusalem, and from the villages of Netophathi;" Nehemiah 12:29 "Also from the house of Gilgal, and out of the fields of Geba and Azmaveth: for the singers had builded them villages round about Jerusalem."

We remember, from an earlier lesson, the little towns the people lived in around Jerusalem. The singers and musicians were all Levites. The towns, they had chosen to live in, would be fairly close to Jerusalem. They periodically had to come to Jerusalem to minister with their music and song.

Nehemiah 12:30 "And the priests and the Levites purified themselves, and purified the people, and the gates, and the wall."

The purification of the priests and Levites was of a spiritual nature. The purification of gates and wall would be of a more physical nature.

Nehemiah 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:"

This was not just the chiefs of the Levites that climbed upon the wall, but the chiefs of the government, as well. The wall was a protection for the temple, but it was, also, a protection for people, as well. This was just saying, that people were spread across the wall.

Nehemiah 12:32 "And after them went Hoshaiiah, and half of the princes of Judah,"

The singers led a march of the princes. Hoshaiiah was, probably, speaking of Hoshea.

Nehemiah 12:33 "And Azariah, Ezra, and Meshullam,"

In the procession, next came the priests Azariah, Ezra, and then Meshullam.

Nehemiah 12:34 "Judah, and Benjamin, and Shemaiah, and Jeremiah,"

This was speaking of a group of people who were from the tribes of Benjamin and Judah next. Shemaiah and Jeremiah, again, were from priestly families. It appears, the priests and the people were mingled in together in this procession.

Nehemiah 12:35 "And [certain] of the priests' sons with trumpets; [namely], Zechariah the son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Michaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of Asaph:" Nehemiah 12:36 "And his brethren, Shemaiah, and Azarael, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethaneel, and Judah, Hanani, with the musical instruments of David the man of God, and Ezra the scribe before them."

These trumpets would be blown in victory by the priests' sons. The musical instruments would be played, and the singers would sing praises. This procession across the wall was to be a victorious march. After this, would come another group of Levites led by Zechariah. Ezra would be acting as a scribe here.

Nehemiah 12:37 "And at the fountain gate, which was over against them, they went up by the stairs of the city of David, at the going up of the wall, above the house of David, even unto the water gate eastward."

This was another group, who would mount another section of the wall from the stairs that went up the inside of the wall.

Nehemiah 12:38 "And the other [company of them that gave] thanks went over against [them], and I after them, and the half of the people upon the wall, from beyond the tower of the furnaces even unto the broad wall;" Nehemiah 12:39 "And from above the gate of Ephraim, and above the old gate, and above the fish gate, and the tower of Hananeel, and the tower of Meah, even unto the sheep gate: and they stood still in the prison gate."

Nehemiah was with this group. They started at the same place the other group had started, and went in the opposite direction. Some of this was on the eastern wall.

Nehemiah 12:40 "So stood the two [companies of them that gave] thanks in the house of God, and I, and the half of the rulers with me:"

A great deal of the wall was covered with all these people. It would have been a very strong wall to hold up the weight of that many people.

Nehemiah 12:41 "And the priests; Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Michaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, [and] Hananiah, with trumpets;"

These were the priests that were blowing the trumpets.

Nehemiah 12:42 "And Maaseiah, and Shemaiah, and Eleazar, and Uzzi, and Jehohanan, and Malchijah, and Elam, and Ezer. And the singers sang loud, with Jezrahiah [their] overseer."

The first mentioned, here, were playing instruments and the singers were singing. This had to be a tremendous, victorious sound of praise rising up to God.

Nehemiah 12:43 "Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced: for God had made them rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off."

It was a long-standing tradition to sacrifice at dedications. Nehemiah completed the dedication by the priests offering tremendous numbers of sacrifices. Everyone participated. This was a time of national joy and triumph. Another time the women had participated in a time of tremendous joy, had been just after the crossing of the Red Sea.

Nehemiah 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."

Perhaps, we can safely assume that Nehemiah did some of the appointing. Some of these things were of a spiritual consequence, so we may assume the high priest appointed some of those men. We know the law had been read to all of the people, so there would be no excuse for not giving the portion that was their obligation to give. The priests and the Levites lived of these offerings. The priests and the Levites were not allowed to work aside from in the service of the LORD. They waited until the offerings were made to receive their portion.

Nehemiah 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."

The singers and the porters were in the service of the LORD. They did not have other occupations. They lived of the daily portions that were allotted to them. They were purified, as were the priests, because they were in the service of the LORD. David and Solomon had instituted the musicians and the doorkeepers in the temple that Solomon built.

Nehemiah 12:46 "For in the days of David and Asaph of old [there were] chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God."

The book of Psalms is a book of songs to be sung in worship. Asaph was the head of the singers in the temple in Solomon's temple. Many of the Psalms speak of being for Asaph. David felt that thanksgiving and praise in song was a vital part of worship. He was a singer and a musician himself. He wrote most of the Psalms, which are songs.

Nehemiah 12:47 "And all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel, and in the days of Nehemiah, gave the portions of the singers and the porters, every day his portion: and they sanctified [holy things] unto the Levites; and the Levites sanctified [them] unto the children of Aaron."

This was explaining that the singers and musicians had a daily portion. The Levites received of the things offered on the altar. The high priest and the priests received of the offerings of the altar, also.

Nehemiah 13 Questions

1. Who was the high priest in Zerubbabel's time?
2. Which high priest was murdered by Nebuchadnezzar?
3. Who was descended from Abijah?
4. Who was Elisabeth, mother of John, descended from?
5. Who were Jeshua, Binnui, and Kadmiel?
6. When was Eliashab high priest?
7. Who did Jonothan murder to become high priest?
8. Which of the priests did not put their mark on the covenant?
9. There were records kept of all the heads of families of the Hebrews, especially of whom?
10. Why did the genealogies become unimportant after Jesus?
11. Nehemiah was a _____ leader in the office of governor.
12. When were the two times people believe the wall was dedicated?
13. To all who believe in God, _____ should be dedicated.
14. The singers and musicians were all _____.
15. Who were purified for the dedication of the wall?
16. Who were some of the people who would be on the wall?
17. Did the ordinary people get on the wall?
18. Who blew the trumpets?
19. What kind of songs would they sing?
20. Who led the second group to mount the wall?
21. Who was in the midst of them?
22. Name the priests that blew the trumpets.
23. Who was involved in all of the rejoicing that was going on?
24. Who did the appointing in verse 44?
25. Who got a daily portion?
26. When did much of the ministry of singing begin?
27. What are the Psalms?

We will begin this lesson in Nehemiah 13:1 "On that day they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was found written, that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever;"

I am not certain just exactly which day this was speaking of. It seemed to be a fairly regular happening in the time of Nehemiah. This could have been on one of the feast days, but was not necessarily so. Deuteronomy 23:3 "An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the LORD for ever:" The Ammonites and Moabites were descended from the sons of Lot and his two daughters.

Nehemiah 13:2 "Because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them: howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing."

The very same statement is made in Deuteronomy chapter 23 verse 4. It is interesting that the curse was not because they were descended from their mothers through an act of incest with Lot, their father.

Nehemiah 13:3 "Now it came to pass, when they had heard the law, that they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude."

God had strictly forbidden the marriage of Hebrews with the heathens.

Nehemiah 13:4 "And before this, Eliashib the priest, having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God, [was] allied unto Tobiah:"

Eliashib was high priest, and he should have known not to be involved with Tobiah. Nehemiah had a great deal of trouble from him, when he was building the wall of Jerusalem. That was not the reason for the problem here, however. It was Eliashib who said who could stay in the chamber of the house of the LORD.

Nehemiah 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."

It is interesting that the high priest would do such a sinful thing. It appears, that many times the high priest, or even the pastor of a church today, think they are above the law of God. They get the idea that whatever they do is alright. The high priest and the pastor, both, should set an example of holiness. It was terrible to give him any chamber, but to put him in the chamber where the sacred things had been kept, was an abomination. The meat offering for twice a day, symbolized the body of Jesus. The frankincense accompanied the meat offering. The offerings that had been made to give to the Levitical tribe were holy, as well. The priest had done a terrible thing.

Nehemiah 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:"

It appears that when this happened, Nehemiah was out of the country. He had gone back to report to Artaxerxes. He was, in a sense, king of Babylon, because he had defeated them. He seemed to be extremely fond of Nehemiah, and allowed him to go back to Jerusalem.

Nehemiah 13:7 "And I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God."

The courts of the house of God had been a special place for just the Levites. Primarily, it was a place for the priests' families. This particular room had been a place to hold the daily meat offerings, the frankincense, and the sacred vessels. It had, also, been used for the storing of the offerings. Tobiah was an enemy of Nehemiah, an enemy of Jerusalem, and an enemy of the temple. This was a terrible sin.

Nehemiah 13:8 "And it grieved me sore: therefore I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber."

Nehemiah did not wait to tell him to move his things out. He moved them for him. All of this had happened, while Nehemiah was away. He immediately attacked the problem, as soon as he was aware of it when he returned. The high priest was supposed to watch and not allow something like this to happen. He had committed this sin himself.

Nehemiah 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."

This cleaning was more than just sweeping out the area. This was speaking of a ceremonial cleansing, as well as a physical cleansing. He could not put the holy things back into this chamber, until it was purified.

Nehemiah 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."

It appears, that they had failed to furnish the needs of the Levites, other than the priests. The Levites had to go to work to support their families. When Nehemiah went to see the king, the level of worship in the temple deteriorated.

Nehemiah 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."

It appears, that Nehemiah had to do what the high priest should have done. Nehemiah met with the rulers, and reprimanded them for allowing this situation to occur. The profaning of the temple would have been the fault of the high priest and the priests. The fault of the Levites not receiving their portion was the fault of the rulers and nobles.

Nehemiah 13:12 "Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn and the new wine and the oil unto the treasuries."

When Nehemiah came back, the people became serious about their worship again. It was as if they wanted Nehemiah to know they were living right. There must be a strong leader for the people to remain faithful.

Nehemiah 13:13 "And I made treasurers over the treasuries, Shelemiah the priest, and Zadok the scribe, and of the Levites, Pedaiiah: 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."

Nehemiah put treasurers over the treasuries. He chose the men above, because they were faithful to God. The high priest had been in charge of them earlier, but Nehemiah did not trust him any longer. The four treasurers that Nehemiah chose were a priest, a Levite, a layman of rank, and a scribe. They were not only to receive the tithe, but distribute it, as well.

Nehemiah 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."

We see that Nehemiah was doing the best he could, and he had nothing to do with the error the priests, and high priest, and the people had gotten into while he was gone. Now that he had come back, he tried to straighten all of it out. He wanted God to remember the good things he had done.

Nehemiah 13:15 "In those days saw I in Judah [some] treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all [manner of] burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day: and I testified [against them] in the day wherein they sold victuals."

This was a breaking of the covenant they had made with God. This was not only a breaking of the covenant they made, but also, was a breaking of the ten commandments of God. Nehemiah testified against them for these sins. The commandment is Exodus 20:8 "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy."

Nehemiah 13:16 "There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem."

The sin was not of the men of Tyre in this. They were not breaking the law living in Jerusalem. They did not observe Sabbath either. The sin was that of the Hebrews, for buying the fish and wares on the sabbath.

Nehemiah 13:17 "Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing [is] this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day?"

The covenant they had made with God, just a few years prior to this, had strictly forbidden this type of thing. There was a curse that went with the breaking of the sabbath. Those most able to pay the tithes and to keep the sabbath, were the greatest offenders. The nobles were the guilty in this case.

Nehemiah 13:18 "Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath."

The following was a warning that Jeremiah brought to the people, when he was speaking as an oracle of God. Jeremiah 17:27 "But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched."

Nehemiah 13:19 "And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath: and [some] of my servants set I at the gates, [that] there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath day."

The sabbath begins on Friday night about dark and goes to Saturday night about the same time. Nehemiah stopped the people from bringing in to sell to the people by having the gates locked on Friday night, and not opened until after sabbath was over.

Nehemiah 13:20 "So the merchants and sellers of all kind of ware lodged without Jerusalem once or twice."

This was, probably, before the word got around, that they would not be able to enter Jerusalem on the sabbath.

Nehemiah 13:21 "Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye about the wall? if ye do [so] again, I will lay hands on you. From that time forth came they no [more] on the sabbath."

Nehemiah threatened to arrest the merchants, who came to Jerusalem and waited outside the gates. This made a noisy sabbath, and Nehemiah would not allow this. This kept them away.

Nehemiah 13:22 "And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and [that] they should come [and] keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath day. Remember me, O my God, [concerning] this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy."

Nehemiah was doing everything he could to cause the LORD to overlook the sin they had committed about the sabbath. These Levites had been already assigned this duty, when the gates were re-built. They were to treat this as if it were a gate to the temple. The whole city of Jerusalem had fallen away from the type of faithfulness God required while Nehemiah had been away. He was trying to re-establish order in their worship now.

Nehemiah 13:23 "In those days also saw I Jews [that] had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, [and] of Moab:" Nehemiah 13:24 "And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people."

These wives of Ashdod were Philistines. The other two were Ammonites and Moabites. All of these were forbidden for the Jews to marry. Their children were not even speaking Hebrew.

Nehemiah 13:25 "And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, [saying], Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves."

The cursing had to be of those who had intermarried. Smote them means they were beaten. It seems to be a very cruel punishment to pull their hair out, but that was done, also. All of this was to force them to swear they would not intermarry.

Nehemiah 13:26 "Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin."

In 1 Kings, there is an extensive study on the sins of Solomon, that were brought on by marrying women who worshipped false gods. The women were called strange women, because they were not Hebrews. It is still a bad thing for those who believe in Christ to marry those who do not. God greatly loved and blessed Solomon, but he sinned greatly because of his wives. Solomon's punishment should have been enough to convince all of them how evil this sin was.

Nehemiah 13:27 "Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to transgress against our God in marrying strange wives?"

If Nehemiah had not stopped this at this point, it would have become more and more common. This was one of the main reasons God had destroyed Jerusalem before. Nehemiah did not want that to happen again.

Nehemiah 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."

This was one of the main problems. The priests were not setting the right kind of example for the people. The grandson of the high priest had married Sanballat's daughter. Not only was Sanballat a heathen, but he was an enemy of Jerusalem, and especially of Nehemiah. He fought Nehemiah, and tried to keep him from building the wall. Nehemiah actually ran the son of Joiada off to live with Sanballat's daughter and Sanballat.

Nehemiah 13:29 "Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites."

I would have to agree with Nehemiah that a sin was worse for a high priest to commit, because he should be more aware of God's wishes than the average person. This is true of preachers in our day, as well. They should set an example of a holy life before their people. Nehemiah was asking God not to hold him responsible for what the priests did.

Nehemiah 13:30 "Thus cleansed I them from all strangers, and appointed the wards of the priests and the Levites, every one in his business;" Nehemiah 13:31 "And for the wood offering, at times appointed, and for the firstfruits. Remember me, O my God, for good."

Again, Nehemiah wanted God to remember the good things he had done, and overlook the things that he fell short in. I can truly say that it appeared that Nehemiah desired to please God with all his heart. He had actually established the wood offering for the first time. He, also, re-established the firstfruits offerings. This was almost a plea from Nehemiah to God to remember only the good he had done. This is probably the cry of all believers, as well. Lord, remember the little good I did, and forget my shortcomings.

Nehemiah 14 Questions

1. What did they read in the audience of the people?
2. What was found written in the book?
3. Why were they forbidden in the congregation?
4. After they heard this read, who did they separate out from Israel?
5. Who was the priest Eliashib allied unto?
6. When had Nehemiah had trouble from Tobiah?
7. What had the priest prepared for him?
8. What had been there before?
9. What did the meat offering symbolize?
10. Where was Nehemiah, when this happened?
11. Tobiah an enemy of whom?
12. What did Nehemiah do about this?
13. Who should have been watching for this type of sin?
14. What had happened to the Levites, while Nehemiah was away?
15. Who did Nehemiah contend with about this?
16. What did all of Judah bring as a tithe?
17. What four people did Nehemiah choose to be treasurers?
18. Why did he choose them?
19. What does Nehemiah ask of God in verse 14?
20. How were some of the people breaking the sabbath?
21. Quote Exodus chapter 20 verse 8.
22. Who brought fish to Jerusalem on the sabbath?
23. What did Nehemiah do to stop them?
24. After he did this, what did the merchants do?
25. What did Nehemiah threaten to do to them?
26. In verse 23, who had the Jews married?
27. What did Nehemiah do to them?
28. Who did Nehemiah chase out of Jerusalem?
29. Who had set a bad example for the people?
30. What does Nehemiah want God to remember?

The book of Esther is an unusual book in that it seems to stand alone. It is not connected to historical chronology of the Hebrews. This is a beautiful story of how a young Jewish girl saves her people. It is unknown who penned the book of Esther. Many scholars do not like to include the book of Esther in the Bible, because it does not directly mention the name of God. In this book, however, we see the hand of God at work to save his people in a foreign land. The setting for this is Persia. It happens during the years of captivity of the Israelites. One of the lessons to be learned in this is "you reap what you sow". The feast of Purim is instituted in this little book. In my opinion, this is a very spiritual book. It causes us to see God, even though it does not call His name.

We will begin now in Esther 1:1 "Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, (this [is] Ahasuerus which reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, [over] an hundred and seven and twenty provinces:)"

Ahasuerus is, possibly, the same as Xerxes. A province, at this time, was an area that had its own governor. We can see that this ruler had great world power. This would have included Judaea.

Esther 1:2 "[That] in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which [was] in Shushan the palace,"

Shushan, the palace, sat on a hill. It was in the area of Shushan the city, but was separate.

Esther 1:3 In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, [being] before him:"

This was like a diplomatic dinner. This dinner, probably, included as many as 15,000 people. The governors of the various provinces had gathered for this feast. It appears from the verse above, that his servants were included in this celebration. The nobles, mentioned, were, possibly, some of the Medes who held high favor with Persia, even though they were a captured nation, as well.

Esther 1:4 "When he shewed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty many days, [even] an hundred and fourscore days."

This 180 days is a lengthy time of festivity in their land. Possibly, a few of the governors and nobles would come, and when they left, another group would come. We are not told for sure but 180 days is a long time for one party to last. He was showing off his wealth and power to the subordinate rulers of his provinces.

Esther 1:5 "And when these days were expired, the king made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, seven days, in the court of the garden of the king's palace;" It was not unusual for a feast of this kind to last for 7 days. This court was estimated to be about 350 feet long by 250 feet wide. It seems, there was a building setting in the middle of it. To accommodate the large numbers

of people, it would have been necessary for it to be this large. This feast was for everyone. The servants of the king and all the people, small and great, joined in the feast.

Esther 1:6 "[Where were] white, green, and blue, [hangings], fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble: the beds [were of] gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black, marble."

This court was magnificent. The hangings could have been used as a type of awning to shade the people from the heat, since the court, probably, had no roof. The beds, mentioned, were actually couches where the people reclined. They were, probably, made of the precious metals, silver and gold, because there was so much wealth. The pillars of marble were, possibly, limestone blue. The floors were of the same material as the pillars, and some other colors that made a mosaic design. There were 4 different mosaics mixed and matched to make a beautiful floor.

Esther 1:7 "And they gave [them] drink in vessels of gold, (the vessels being diverse one from another,) and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king."

The fact that the drinking cups were of gold, just showed the extreme wealth of the Persian king. It is interesting, to me, that the cups were different. Perhaps, it would have been easier for each one to keep up with his cup that way. It certainly would have been more expensive to make them different. This would have taken many barrels of wine to have enough to furnish so large a party.

Esther 1:8 "And the drinking [was] according to the law; none did compel: for so the king had appointed to all the officers of his house, that they should do according to every man's pleasure."

It was usually understood that the officers must all drink. This generally led to many getting drunk. It is interesting, to me, that the edict of the king, here, allowed each person to decide for himself whether he would drink, or not. It appears, the king wanted to treat all of these people as guests, and not as his subjects.

Esther 1:9 "Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women [in] the royal house which [belonged] to king Ahasuerus."

This shows that the men and women had separate feasts. We mentioned before, that the feast was like a diplomatic dinner. Vashti was the wife of the king. She was queen, because she was married to the king. It was in his royal house that Vashti held the feast for the women. "Vashti" means beautiful. This was, probably, a name the king gave her, after they were married. Many believe her real name was Amestris.

Esther 1:10 "On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king," Esther 1:11 "To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to shew the people and the princes her beauty: for she [was] fair to look on."

On the seventh day of the feast, it seems the king had too much to drink, and asked seven of his eunuchs to go and get the queen. He wanted to exhibit her before the men at his party to show her great beauty. We may assume that he wanted her to remove her veil of covering. He was very proud of all his possessions and he counted the queen as part of his possessions. To present the queen in such a manner as this was a breach in Persian etiquette.

Esther 1:12 "But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by [his] chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him."

Vashti had to realize that it might cost her her life to refuse to obey the command of her king, who was, also, her husband. She, perhaps, would rather lose her life, than become shamed by such an exhibit. This was as if he were showing her off for the envy of the other men. Her refusal to come would greatly shame her husband before his subordinates. He would, possibly, not have asked such a thing, had he not been drinking. She would have to be severely punished, and it had to be known publicly for him to regain his self-respect. Most kings would have had her killed for such an act of disobedience.

Esther 1:13 "Then the king said to the wise men, which knew the times, (for so [was] the king's manner toward all that knew law and judgment:"

Even in his heated anger, he did not act hastily. He left the judgement of what her punishment should be to the law of the land. The king wanted to do what was right in this case.

Esther 1:14 "And the next unto him [was] Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, [and] Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, which saw the king's face, [and] which sat the first in the kingdom;)"

Carshena and Shethar were his trusted advisers. Next to them, were the seven princes. All of them sat near the king at the table of the feast, and were treated with great respect. They had high offices directly under the king. We may assume that some of them were Medes, from the mention of "Persia and Media" here.

Esther 1:15 "What shall we do unto the queen Vashti according to law, because she hath not performed the commandment of the king Ahasuerus by the chamberlains?"

Notice "we" in the verse above. The king did not want to make this decision himself in the heat of the moment of anger. Another thing that speaks highly of the king was that he wanted it to be according to the law.

Esther 1:16 "And Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the people that [are] in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus."

The public shame that she had brought on the king would affect the entire kingdom. A king could not expect the people to do as he commanded, unless his queen set the example of obedience. The Persians had been so sure

this would never happen, that there was no specific law against it. The advisers and the king would have to decide what would be appropriate punishment.

Esther 1:17 "For [this] deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it shall be reported, The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not."

The husband was the absolute ruler over his wife and children, in this heathen land. The queen's act might cause all of the women to rebel against their husbands.

Esther 1:18 "[Likewise] shall the ladies of Persia and Media say this day unto all the king's princes, which have heard of the deed of the queen. Thus [shall there arise] too much contempt and wrath."

In the Persia and Media, women were thought to be under the complete rule of their husbands. This act of Vashti's would affect not only the women of the ordinary citizens, but would affect the wives of the princes. They thought they might lose control of their family. The queen was an example for all of the women of the land for good, or evil. Whatever she did, the other women did, too. A good lesson is to be learned here. We can see that our lives influence others by the actions we take.

Esther 1:19 "If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, That Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she."

Generally, the problems in the home between a husband and a wife would have been kept very secret. He would have put her away from him, but it would not have been known publicly. Since she had disgraced him before the entire land, this punishment must be public, as well. We might say, he divorced her, and threw her out. It was not enough to punish her. They wrote a law, so this would not happen again with any of their wives.

Esther 1:20 "And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire, (for it is great,) all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small."

They wanted this to strike fear into their wives, so that this would not happen again. This was not just for Persia, but for all the provinces, as well.

Esther 1:21 "And the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did according to the word of Memucan:"

They all decided this was a good solution to a difficult problem. It would, also, let all of the king's subjects know that the king did not let Vashti get away with this.

Esther 1:22 "For he sent letters into all the king's provinces, into every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after

their language, that every man should bear rule in his own house, and that [it] should be published according to the language of every people."

Persia was a country that lived by different rules than our country. The Bible teaches that the father should be the rule of his own house. This does not mean that he is to be a tyrant, however. It, also, is speaking of the family unit. This is not something that should have been a law of the land. Morality cannot be legislated. The family unit, with the father as the head, is symbolic of our heavenly relationship with our Father.

Esther 1 Questions

1. What is unusual about the book of Esther?
2. What is the book about?
3. Who was the penman?
4. Why did some of the scholars not want this book in the Bible?
5. The setting for this is _____.
6. What feast is instituted in the book of Esther?
7. What is a message for all of us in this book?
8. The author believes this is a very _____ book.
9. Where did Ahasuerus reign?
10. Who was this Ahasuerus?
11. What was a province at this time?
12. Where was the palace of the king?
13. What year of his reign did he have the great feast?
14. Who were invited?
15. This was like a _____ dinner.
16. How large were some of these celebrations?
17. Who were the nobles mentioned, probably?
18. There was festivity in the land for _____ days.
19. How long did the actual feast last?
20. How big was the court?
21. What were the hangings, probably?
22. The couches were made of what?
23. The pillars were made of what?
24. What made up the floor?
25. They drank out of _____ _____?
26. What was unusual about them?
27. What were they drinking?
28. What was different about the drinking at this feast, than what usually happened?
29. Who was the queen?
30. What does her name mean?
31. What could have been her real name?
32. What did the king request Vashti to do?
33. What answer did she give him?
34. Who did the king consult about her punishment?
35. Who would Vashti's disobedience of the king affect?
36. What royal commandment went forth to all the lands the king ruled?
37. How would this help the king?
38. What punishment was inflicted upon Vashti?
39. What was in the letter he sent to all the lands?
40. _____ cannot be legislated.

We will begin this lesson in Esther 2:1 "After these things, when the wrath of king Ahasuerus was appeased, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her."

The indication, here, is that he was sorry he had listened to his advisors and put Vashti away. None of this would have happened, had he not been drinking. After he settled down and thought about what had happened, he had to realize that this was his fault, and not hers. He cannot change her punishment, however, because he had made it a law.

Esther 2:2 "Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king:" Esther 2:3 "And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, unto the custody of Hege the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women; and let their things for purification be given [them]:"

The king's servants had discovered the sadness of the king at the loss of his queen. In an oriental palace, there are separate apartments for the women away from the men. We saw that, in the Palace of king David. These young, beautiful virgins were to be gathered from the many provinces that Xerxes ruled. They would be brought to the women's quarters at the palace, and prepared to meet the king. Most of these young women would not have fine clothes to wear, so they would be provided for them to wear before the king. Even though they were virgins, they would be purified in some way. This took approximately a year for the purification. This, possibly, meant that they were bathed and clothed in the garments provided. It, also, meant they were perfumed and rubbed with ointment in the purification.

Esther 2:4 "And let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king; and he did so."

The king was lonesome, and by his own edict he could not get Vashti back, so he agreed to the suggestion. He sent for the maidens to be brought. In the next few verses, we can see that the hand of the LORD was in all that had happened.

Esther 2:5 "[Now] in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name [was] Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite;"

During the Babylonian captivity, Mordecai had been taken to Shushan. This is the first mention of a Jew in this book. We read of a Mordecai in Ezra and in Nehemiah, It is, probably, not the same person. The Mordecai, here, was a Benjamite.

Esther 2:6 "Who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away."

There were a number of captivities that took place. This one seems to have been fairly early on. This was, probably, the second captivity, because of the capture of Jeconiah. Nebuchadnezzar was king of Babylon at the time.

Esther 2:7 "And he brought up Hadassah, that [is], Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid [was] fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter."

Hadassah is another name for Esther. It appears, that her mother and father were dead, and Mordecai had raised her. It was Mordecai that brought Esther up to be shown to the king for a possible wife. She was a virgin, and she was very beautiful.

Esther 2:8 "So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women."

It seems, that many beautiful maidens from throughout the provinces were brought to the women's apartments to be prepared to be viewed by the king. Hegai was the eunuch that was in charge of the women, who would be viewed by the king.

Esther 2:9 And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens, [which were] meet to be given her, out of the king's house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the best [place] of the house of the women.

It seems, that when Hegai saw Esther, he was pleased with her, and he wanted every advantage shown her. He assigned 7 maidservants to her and gave her the nicest of the women's apartments. He saw that all of her needs were met, while she was waiting. We may safely assume that the LORD caused the king to be pleased with Esther.

Esther 2:10 "Esther had not shewed her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not shew [it]."

This just means that she did not reveal to the king that she was a Hebrew. Mordecai did not even allow her to tell the king that he had raised her.

Esther 2:11 "And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her."

Mordecai was very interested in Esther, since she was like a daughter to him. He was allowed to walk before the court of the women, because he had been made a eunuch to serve the king.

Esther 2:12 "Now when every maid's turn was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women, (for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, [to wit], six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, and with [other] things for the purifying of the women;)"

Some of them had, probably, been out in the sun, and rough skin would not be becoming to a queen. After the twelve months in the apartments of the women, they would appear before the king to be selected. This oil of myrrh was perfume that was generally for the wedding bed. This was something to

make her smell nice. During this time, she would have her skin rubbed with oil, so she would be soft to touch. She was groomed to appear as a queen. During this time, she was, probably, taught the duties of the queen as well.

Esther 2:13 "Then thus came [every] maiden unto the king; whatsoever she desired was given her to go with her out of the house of the women unto the king's house."

This is just saying, that every one of these maidens, individually, were given whatever clothes and ornaments they wanted to wear.

Esther 2:14 "In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's chamberlain, which kept the concubines: she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she were called by name."

The second house was for the king's concubines. It appears, that each of them stayed the night with the king and the next morning was carried to the house for his concubines. Shaashgaz was, also, a eunuch who took care of the king's concubines. They would never go again to the king, unless he called for them. If he called for one, she would be called by name, because he was pleased with her.

Esther 2:15 "Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her."

Esther's father was Mordecai's uncle. It seemed, each of these maidens went to see the king, and spent the night with him. When Esther's turn came, it was interesting that she did not demand any ornaments, or extra clothes. She just took what Hegai, the king's chamberlain gave her. They all loved her, because this proved she was not greedy, or demanding.

Esther 2:16 "So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which [is] the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign."

The month Tebeth is, probably, speaking of the month of January on our calendar. Four years had passed since Vashti had been put away for disobeying the king. Esther would be accepted, or rejected, of the king on this night.

Esther 2:17 "And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti."

The king loved Esther above all the other women. She was his choice of all the beautiful virgins of the provinces. He loved her so much, that he chose her to be his queen. He crowned her queen immediately.

Esther 2:18 "Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, [even] Esther's feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the state of the king."

All joyful occasions were accompanied by a feast. The king announced this feast to celebrate Esther's becoming queen. He sent gifts and released the provinces from taxes and fighting in war, for a time to celebrate his queen.

Esther 2:19 "And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai sat in the king's gate."

These had to be the maidens that had been chosen from the provinces. Mordecai sitting in the king's gate, showed that he was one of the king's servants.

Esther 2:20 "Esther had not [yet] shewed her kindred nor her people; as Mordecai had charged her: for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him."

Esther showed great respect to Mordecai, as she would a father. She had not told the king, or anyone else, that she was a Hebrew, or that she was raised by Mordecai. Mordecai thought it best that she not tell, and she obeyed his wishes.

Esther 2:21 "In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus."

These two men were highly regarded by the king. They were eunuchs that guarded the door to his sleeping chamber. They would have had an advantage, if they decided to kill the king, because they were trusted and could surprise him in his sleep.

Esther 2:22 "And the thing was known to Mordecai, who told [it] unto Esther the queen; and Esther certified the king [thereof] in Mordecai's name."

Somehow Mordecai got word to Esther of their plan to kill the king. Esther told the king of their plot against his life. She, also, told him that it was Mordecai that sent the warning to him. She still did not reveal that she was related to Mordecai.

Esther 2:23 "And when inquisition was made of the matter, it was found out; therefore they were both hanged on a tree: and it was written in the book of the chronicles before the king."

The king had this checked out, and found it to be true. He had them both hung in punishment. This is a matter of historical record.

Esther 2 Questions

1. When the king got over his anger, he remembered _____.
2. None of this would have happened, had he not been _____.
3. What did he realize about the whole thing, after he thought about it?
4. Why could he not change her punishment?
5. What did the king's servants say to him?
6. The apartments of the women were _____ from the men's.
7. How long would they take for purification?
8. The maiden that pleased the king shall be _____.
9. Who was the Jew that was in the palace?
10. What tribe was he from?
11. Who had taken him captive?
12. What was another name for Esther?
13. What relation was she to Mordecai?
14. Why did Mordecai raise her?
15. Where was Esther brought?
16. Who was Hegai?
17. What special favor did the king show Esther, even before she became his queen?
18. What does verse 10 mean?
19. How did Mordecai check on Esther?
20. What was given to the maidens after the 12 months of grooming?
21. What was the second house they were taken to, after being with the king?
22. Who was Esther's father?
23. How did Esther find favour with those who had kept her, before she went to the king?
24. When was she taken to the king?
25. The king loved Esther _____ all the other women.
26. Esther was _____ by the king.
27. What was the name of the feast the king gave?
28. Esther treated Mordecai as a _____.
29. Who plotted to kill the king?
30. How was their plan stopped?
31. What happened to these two men?

We will begin this lesson in Esther 3:1 "After these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that [were] with him."

We do not know for sure exactly how much later this occurred. We can safely assume that it was several years, however. There had been no mention of Haman, up until this time. There is nothing known about Agagite. For whatever reason, Haman had been elevated up to second in command under the king.

Esther 3:2 "And all the king's servants, that [were] in the king's gate, bowed, and revered Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did [him] reverence."

It was an oriental custom to bow to the king. Perhaps, Haman had been someone who had not been regarded highly, and the order to bow to him would give him some respect. All of the servants of the king, who were about the level of Mordecai in authority, bowed to Haman. Mordecai refused to bow to him.

Esther 3:3 "Then the king's servants, which [were] in the king's gate, said unto Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the king's commandment?"

It appears, the servants did not want Mordecai to get into trouble for not bowing to Haman. They asked him why he didn't just go ahead and bow, and keep down trouble.

Esther 3:4 "Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand: for he had told them that he [was] a Jew."

It appears, that Mordecai had explained to them that he was a Hebrew, and they were forbidden by their God to bow to a man. When he paid no attention to their warning, they told Haman. They were, probably, afraid if they did not, Haman would punish them. They did not know whether Haman would accept that as an excuse not to bow, or not.

Esther 3:5 "And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath."

It is very apparent, to me, that Haman had not ever had much power before, and the power he had, now, as number two man, made him excessively proud of himself.

Esther 3:6 "And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that [were] throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, [even] the people of Mordecai."

Haman was a very evil man. He would like to destroy all of the Jews in the kingdom of Persia, instead of just killing Mordecai. In the process, Mordecai and all of his relatives would die.

Esther 3:7 "In the first month, that [is], the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that [is], the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, [to] the twelfth [month], that [is], the month Adar."

This first month was the same as Abib, or our April. Esther married the king on the seventh year, so it appears she had been married to him over 4 years, when this happened. It appears, that Haman cast lots {pur} to see what day and month he would set the massacre of the Jews. Adar would have been the same as our March.

Esther 3:8 "And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws [are] diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it [is] not for the king's profit to suffer them."

There were, probably, a large number of Jews in this area at this time. Many of them had been allowed to go back to their homeland, but some, for one reason or another, had not gone back home. Haman was trying to stir the king up against them, by telling him they did not keep his laws. He was the same as accusing them of being traitors to the king.

Esther 3:9 "If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring [it] into the king's treasuries."

The king had trusted Haman enough, that he made him the next in authority to him. He had no reason to doubt that what Haman said was not true. Haman was trying to prove his sincerity in protecting the king by offering to pay for the destruction of them.

Esther 3:10 "And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews' enemy."

This is the signet ring of the king. Anything it was stamped on was an order of the king automatically. Haman hated the Jews.

Esther 3:11 "And the king said unto Haman, The silver [is] given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee."

Of course, the king would not allow Haman to use his own money for this purpose. Haman could have all the silver he found on these people for himself, after he killed them. The king felt that he could trust Haman, and he told him to do whatever he felt was necessary to do.

Esther 3:12 "Then were the king's scribes called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors that [were] over every province, and to the rulers of every people of every province according to the writing thereof, and [to] every people after their language; in the name of king Ahasuerus was it written, and sealed with the king's ring."

These scribes would draw up the edict that would be sealed with the king's signet ring. They were always handy, because the king would have them draw up edicts for himself. It seems, in this case, the king did not even know what the wording of the edict was. He trusted Haman with all of that. This was sent to every province, so it had to be sent to Judah, as well.

Esther 3:13 "And the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, [even] upon the thirteenth [day] of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and [to take] the spoil of them for a prey."

The letters were sent very much like our pony express worked. The letters were taken by horseback. They would be carried, until the horse and rider came to another station, and sent them by horseback from there. The contents of these edicts were that all of the Hebrew people should be killed, even the women and the children. They should be killed on March 13, which was several months away.

Esther 3:14 "The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, that they should be ready against that day."

Each province was to do their own killing on that particular day. It is difficult to understand why one person could have that much hate built up within him. He had planned to kill all the Jews. This reminds me of the hate that Hitler had.

Esther 3:15 "The posts went out, being hastened by the king's commandment, and the decree was given in Shushan the palace. And the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed."

There was no reason to rush to get the letters out, but Haman wanted to make sure everyone knew. The people of Shushan could not understand this. The Persians had been good to the Jews in the past. Probably, the king was not informed of the exact content of the letters. At least, we have not seen a Scripture where he knew. Remember, he had given his signet to Haman. Haman did the preliminaries. It seemed that Haman and the king were drinking friends.

Esther 3 Questions

1. Who did king Ahasuerus promote to second in command?
2. Who bowed to him?
3. Who was the exception to that?
4. It was an _____ custom to bow to the king.
5. What question did the other servants ask Mordecai?
6. Why was it so important to Haman, that they bow to him?
7. When did they tell Haman about Mordecai?
8. How did Haman feel about Mordecai not bowing?
9. Who did Haman really want to kill?
10. What does "pur" mean?
11. What month is the same as the first month mentioned in verse 7?
12. What lie did Haman tell the king?
13. Did Haman tell him the people were the Jews?
14. What did Haman suggest they do about this?
15. What did the king give Haman to use, that was a symbol of his authority?
16. What benefit does the king tell Haman will be his?
17. When were the scribes called to write the edict?
18. Who will the edicts be sent to?
19. Why did the king not know what was in the edict?
20. How were the letters sent?
21. Who were to be killed?
22. When was this to happen?
23. After the edict went out, what did Haman and the king do?
24. Why did the people of Shushan not understand this edict?
25. How could the king, possibly, not know what the edict said?

We will begin this lesson in Esther 4:1 "When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry;"

Haman made sure that the king did not know what the edict said, until it was too late to stop it. Now, it seems to be common knowledge even to the Jews themselves. When Mordecai heard of this, he went out in the middle of the street so all could see, and rent his clothes, and threw ashes upon his head in mourning. Either thing that he had done would have revealed mourning, but this is a very deep type of mourning. He cried out with a loud voice as well, which drew the attention of the people to him. However, he was crying to God, as well.

Esther 4:2 "And came even before the king's gate: for none [might] enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth."

He had, possibly, gone all over the town in this manner. He lived in the palace, so he had come back there, still mourning. He might arouse the attention of Esther with his cries. No one could come inside the gate in mourning clothes, so he must stay outside the gate.

Esther 4:3 "And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, [there was] great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes."

There was no way to stop this, but by God. They were fasting, praying, and mourning in hope the LORD would see their problem, and come to their rescue.

Esther 4:4 "So Esther's maids and her chamberlains came and told [it] her. Then was the queen exceedingly grieved; and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him: but he received [it] not."

The chamberlains, here, were the eunuchs who served Esther. The queen had many maids who helped her. One of the jobs the eunuchs did, was to keep Esther in touch with what was happening outside the palace walls. They ran errands for her, and did things that her maids could not do. One of them took clothing out to Mordecai for her. Mordecai was so grieved, he would not be comforted, or take the clothing.

Esther 4:5 "Then called Esther for Hatach, [one] of the king's chamberlains, whom he had appointed to attend upon her, and gave him a commandment to Mordecai, to know what it [was], and why it [was]."

Esther wanted to hear from Mordecai exactly what this was all about, and how this edict was made.

Esther 4:6 "So Hatach went forth to Mordecai unto the street of the city, which [was] before the king's gate." Esther 4:7 "And Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him, and of the sum of the money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the Jews, to destroy them."

Mordecai did not know that Haman had tricked the king into this edict. The king had not written this, Haman had. The mistake the king had made was to let Haman use his signet ring.

Esther 4:8 "Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was given at Shushan to destroy them, to shew [it] unto Esther, and to declare [it] unto her, and to charge her that she should go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him, and to make request before him for her people."

This was a big load to put on the head of Esther. If the edict was carried out, she would die the same as all of the other Jews, however. The king did not know that she was a Jew. Haman did not know that at this point, either. Mordecai sent her a copy of the edict, so she would know in detail what it said. Mordecai knew that the king loved Esther. He felt if anyone could sway him to stop this senseless murder of the Jews, it would be Esther.

Esther 4:9 "And Hatach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai."

Hatach must have suspicioned that Esther, too, was a Jew. He was her servant, so it was not likely he would tell anyone.

Esther 4:10 "Again Esther spake unto Hatach, and gave him commandment unto Mordecai;" Esther 4:11 "All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, [there is] one law of his to put [him] to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden scepter, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days."

Esther explained to Mordecai, that if she went in to the king, when he did not call for her, he would have the right to kill her. There was one exception to the rule. If the king reached out his scepter to her she could live and have audience with him. She knew if she went in, it could mean her death.

Esther 4:12 "And they told to Mordecai Esther's words."

The messenger took the message to Mordecai and waited for his answer to take back to Esther.

Esther 4:13 "Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews."

It would make no difference at all, that she was the queen. If they killed the rest of the Jews, they would kill her, also. Someone would tell the king that she was a Jew and he would have to kill Esther along with all the rest, because it was the law.

Esther 4:14 "For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, [then] shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for [such] a time as this?"

Mordecai was sure that God would stop the murder of the Jews. If Esther did not do what she could, God would do it another way. There had been many people who had given their lives to save their fellowman. This was what Mordecai was asking Esther to do, here. If it was the will of God for Esther to do this and she did not, God might destroy her himself. Mordecai, now, believed that was why Esther was chosen by the king. He believed that God placed her there to help her people.

Esther 4:15 "Then Esther bade [them] return Mordecai [this answer],"
Esther 4:16 "Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which [is] not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish."

Esther had gathered up all the courage she had. She decided to go ahead and speak to the king, even if it meant her death. She did want them to fast and pray for her safety. She would do the same with her maids. It was almost as if she was saying I might perish either way, so what do I really have to lose. We are all going to die sometime. The important thing is to make our lives have a purpose. She had realized that the life of all the Jews was worth taking the risk.

Esther 4:17 "So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him."

This was saying he gathered the Jews together and proclaimed a three day fast. Many of the Jews realized the seriousness of the edict, and they would have gladly fasted with him to try, to get help from God.

Esther 4 Questions

1. When Mordecai heard the edict, what did he do?
2. Where did Mordecai do this?
3. Why did he choose the place for this show of mourning?
4. Why could he not enter the king's gate?
5. Who was mourning, besides Mordecai?
6. What was the Jew's only help?
7. Who told Esther about Mordecai?
8. What did she send to Mordecai?
9. Would he take it?
10. Who were the chamberlains, here?
11. Who did she send to ask Mordecai, what the problem was?
12. Who had promised to pay money to have the killing done?
13. Mordecai did not know that Haman had _____ the king into getting this sealed with his ring.
14. What did Mordecai give to Esther's chamberlain?
15. What did Mordecai ask Esther to do to stop this?
16. The king did not know that she was a _____.
17. Why did Mordecai want Esther to speak to the king?
18. What law did Esther remind Mordecai of?
19. How is the only way she could keep from being killed?
20. How long had it been, since she had been called to the king?
21. What word did Mordecai send Esther in verse 13?
22. What was Mordecai sure that God would do?
23. Why did Mordecai believe that Esther had become queen?
24. What did she insist Mordecai do. if she agreed to go in to the king unannounced?
25. Who fasted with Esther?

We will begin this lesson in Esther 5:1 "Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on [her] royal [apparel], and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house."

This was as dangerous for Esther, as it was for Daniel to walk into the lion's den. Her life would be taken, or spared, with the wishes of her king and husband. The three days of fasting had taken place. She was assured the LORD was with her. She put on the garments of the queen to go to her king on his royal throne. She did not rush into the throne room unannounced. She waited outside, but in full view of the king. He was seated on his throne looking toward the very spot in the inner court where she was standing. She was beautiful and he was full of love for her, we must remember.

Esther 5:2 "And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, [that] she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that [was] in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre."

When he reached out his sceptre to her, it showed that he was not angry with her for coming to him unannounced. She was forgiven for any error on her part in coming. The king knew that Esther was not a selfish woman from past experience. He knew something of real importance was troubling her, or she would not have taken this chance. Her touch of the sceptre extended to her was her humbly thanking him for receiving her.

Esther 5:3 "Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what [is] thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom."

It was very obvious from this statement, that he had great love for Esther. In calling her his queen, he was saying he accepted her as his wife. He respected her, it was obvious. He would have to admire her courage, as well. This is a type and shadow of the Christians drawing near to the throne of God. He has reached out and invited us to come. It is important that we touch Him, as well. The king offered her anything she wanted unto the half of the kingdom. It is interesting, again, that the Christians will be joint-heirs with Jesus. He has offered to share with us, as well.

Esther 5:4 "And Esther answered, If [it seem] good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him."

We know that was not the real reason that she came. At the point of him offering her half of his kingdom, she could have asked for the life of the Jews. That would have gotten a yes, or a no, quickly, but Esther was smarter than that. There were many people still praying for her. She had the wisdom of God guiding her every word. It would have been unusual for her to ask the king to come to dinner, but it was extremely unusual for her to ask Haman to come, too. Men and women in Persia did not eat together, unless it was a private family affair. Haman thought of himself even more highly than before, after she made this request for him to come.

Esther 5:5 "Then the king said, Cause Haman to make haste, that he may do as Esther hath said. So the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared."

The king gave Haman permission to come. They came to the banquet as Esther had requested.

Esther 5:6 "And the king said unto Esther at the banquet of wine, What [is] thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: and what [is] thy request? even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed."

The king was aware that this banquet was not the request that Esther risked her life for. Again, he repeated that he would give her up to half of the kingdom, if that was her desire. We may assume that Esther still did not feel sure of herself in this matter, and that the LORD was leading her in every word she uttered.

Esther 5:7 "Then answered Esther, and said, My petition and my request [is];" Esther 5:8 "If I have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to perform my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them, and I will do to morrow as the king hath said."

We cannot assume to guess why Esther put this off another day, except the Lord had her to do it. She knew she had found favor with the king, or he would not have offered her half the kingdom. She was saying, "give me one more day and I will tell you my request".

Esther 5:9 "Then went Haman forth that day joyful and with a glad heart: but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai."

Haman was feeling really proud of himself for being invited to the queen's banquet twice with the king. He still hated Mordecai. What did Mordecai have to lose? What more could Haman do to him than kill him? Haman was totally unaware that Esther was a Jew.

Esther 5:10 "Nevertheless Haman refrained himself: and when he came home, he sent and called for his friends, and Zeresh his wife." Esther 5:11 "And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all [the things] wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king." Esther 5:12 "Haman said moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but myself; and to morrow am I invited unto her also with the king."

Haman had ten sons, and he was bragging to them, his wife, and friends of his great standing with the king and, now, with the queen.

Esther 5:13 "Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate."

His hate for Mordecai was so great that he could not even enjoy the fact that the king and queen were his friends.

Esther 5:14 "Then said Zeresh his wife and all his friends unto him, Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high, and to morrow speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon: then go thou in merrily with the king unto the banquet. And the thing pleased Haman; and he caused the gallows to be made."

Since the king and queen thought so much of Haman, he should have no difficulty hanging one Jew. If fifty feet was the correct height here, it meant he wanted people all over town to see him hang Mordecai. He would be able to take revenge on him in that way. Haman was pleased with this idea, and he immediately had the gallows built.

The lesson, here, is obvious. Whatever you reap, you sow. Hate destroys you, regardless of whom you hate. Haman would be destroyed for his great hate of Mordecai and the Jews.

Esther 5 Questions

1. When did Esther decide to go see the king?
2. How was she dressed?
3. Where did she stand?
4. Where was the king?
5. How dangerous was this for Esther?
6. What must we remember about the king's feelings toward Esther?
7. What did the king do, when he saw Esther?
8. What did Esther do, as she drew near?
9. What did the king ask her?
10. What did he call her, when he asked?
11. What did the king offer her?
12. What is verse 3 a type and shadow of?
13. What did Esther ask the king and Haman to do?
14. What was unusual about this?
15. Why did Esther not immediately ask for the Jews to be saved?
16. In verse 5, what was necessary for the king to do, before Haman came?
17. What question did the king ask Esther at the banquet?
18. What did he offer her again?
19. In verse 7 and 8, what was she really asking for?
20. How did Haman feel about being invited to the queen's banquet with the king?
21. What spoiled it for him?
22. Who was Haman bragging to about his relationship with the king and queen?
23. What did his wife and friends suggest, that he do about Mordecai?
24. Haman was totally unaware that Esther was a _____.
25. How tall was the gallows said to be?

We will begin this lesson in Esther 6:1 "On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king."

The prayers of those who had been fasting have been heard of God. This was the only explanation for the king to suddenly want to look at the book of records, because he could not sleep. The king had the historical record read to him.

Esther 6:2 "And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus."

Mordecai had saved the life of the king, when his two chamberlains, who kept his bedroom door, had plotted to kill him.

Esther 6:3 "And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him."

The king would certainly want to reward the man, Mordecai, who had saved his life. He found no record where that had been done and after asking the reader of the record about it, he said nothing had been done to reward him.

Esther 6:4 "And the king said, Who [is] in the court? Now Haman was come into the outward court of the king's house, to speak unto the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him."

God has a sense of humor, as we will see in these next few verses. The intentions of Haman were to hang Mordecai, not to honor him. Haman was a friend of the king, and was in the palace at the time.

Esther 6:5 "And the king's servants said unto him, Behold, Haman standeth in the court. And the king said, Let him come in."

The king brought Haman in for an entirely different reason than what Haman supposed.

Esther 6:6 "So Haman came in. And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?"

Haman was so self-centered that he never once thought that the man the king wanted to honor could be anyone, except himself.

Esther 6:7 "And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delighteth to honour," Esther 6:8 "Let the royal apparel be brought which the king [useth] to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head:"

Haman really went to the extreme in the blessings he told the king to bestow upon this man, because he believed he was the man, himself. He told

the king to dress him as a king and put the king's crown upon his head, as if he were king. You can see, from this, that Haman really wanted to be king, himself.

Esther 6:9 "And let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man [withal] whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour."

Haman was so conceited, that he could see himself as king. For him to be led around town by a high official of the government, was the height of pride. He was about to fall to the lowest ebb of disgrace. The very man he wanted to hang was to be honored the way he wanted to be honored himself.

Esther 6:10 "Then the king said to Haman, Make haste, [and] take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate: let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken."

Haman hated Mordecai. The king had waited too long already to honor Mordecai, so he told Haman to hurry. This proud Haman would have to lead the horse carrying his worst enemy.

Esther 6:11 "Then took Haman the apparel and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and brought him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour."

Haman had no choice in this. He had to do it because the king had commanded him to. This was the most humiliating thing that could possibly happen to him. He gave no reply to the king for fear of being demoted.

Esther 6:12 "And Mordecai came again to the king's gate. But Haman hastened to his house mourning, and having his head covered."

He had no sympathy, when Mordecai had been mourning, now it was his turn. He hung his head in shame, and went home.

Esther 6:13 "And Haman told Zeresh his wife and all his friends every [thing] that had befallen him. Then said his wise men and Zeresh his wife unto him, If Mordecai [be] of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him."

His wife and his friends could see the hand of God in this. The wise men, here, are Magicians, or star gazers. They realized that Haman would not win this battle against the Jews. Mordecai was the friend of the king. If he was a Jew, the king would turn this edict back against Haman. He was doomed. Everyone, who he thought would say something good to him, have said he would surely fall.

Esther 6:14 "And while they [were] yet talking with him, came the king's chamberlains, and hastened to bring Haman unto the banquet that Esther had prepared."

This was the second banquet that Haman and the king had been invited to attend by the queen. These chamberlains were working for Esther, and they came for Haman. Esther, or the king, were not aware of the embarrassment that had befallen Haman.

Esther 6 Questions

1. When the king could not sleep, what did he command to be done?
2. What does the author believe the reason for him not being able to sleep was?
3. What did he find in the records?
4. Mordecai had saved the life of the _____.
5. What question did the king ask his servants?
6. What was the answer to the question?
7. What makes the author believe that God has a sense of humor?
8. Who did the king ask about what honor should be paid to Mordecai?
9. Who did Haman think the king was trying to honor?
10. What was Haman's suggestion for the king to do, to honor the man?
11. What was Haman having the king to do, to this man that would make it appear that he was king?
12. Who had to lead Mordecai around town and honor him?
13. After Haman had led Mordecai through town what did he do?
14. Who did Haman tell of his embarrassing situation?
15. What was a Magician?
16. What did Haman's family and friends and the Magicians tell Haman would happen to him?
17. Who came to get Haman?
18. Why did they come?
19. _____ or the _____ are not aware of Haman's embarrassment.

We will begin this lesson in Esther 7:1 "So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen."

This was speaking of the second banquet. We saw in the last lesson, the humiliation of this self-centered Haman. He still was not aware that Esther was a Jew. The king had granted the queen both requests to come to her banquet, but he knew that was not really her request of him. He had already offered her half of the kingdom, if that was what she desired.

Esther 7:2 "And the king said again unto Esther on the second day at the banquet of wine, What [is] thy petition, queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee: and what [is] thy request? and it shall be performed, [even] to the half of the kingdom."

The king offered, again, to grant Esther's request. He loved her and he wanted her to be happy.

Esther 7:3 "Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request:"

This had to be a shock to the king, that anyone would threaten the life of his queen. He did not know that Esther was Hebrew. She had never told him, and he had never asked, up until now. She first asked him to save her life, and then she asked for the lives of her people.

Esther 7:4 "For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage."

The king, possibly, still had no idea of what she was speaking. He did not write the edict to kill all of the Jews. Haman had written the edict, and sealed it with the king's signet ring. She actually believed the king had sold their lives to the wicked Haman. She said she would have understood, if he had people to take their place, but she did not understand the destruction with nothing to gain. She thought that Haman was going to pay the king for the Jews that were killed. She was saying he would not have near enough money to pay for the lives. "Countervail", in this instance, means equalize. The king would lose far more than Haman could pay.

Esther 7:5 "Then the king Ahasuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?"

The king was still not aware that this was connected with the edict. He asked Esther who would dare to kill the queen?

Esther 7:6 "And Esther said, The adversary and enemy [is] this wicked Haman. Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen."

The king had not even suspicioned Haman. Haman suddenly remembered what the wise men had told him would happen to him. Esther called Haman an adversary of the king.

Esther 7:7 "And the king arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath [went] into the palace garden: and Haman stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen; for he saw that there was evil determined against him by the king."

The king was not quick to kill someone. He walked into the garden, possibly, to try to sort out this whole thing. He really wanted to kill Haman for trying to kill Esther. Haman caught him gone to the garden and began to plead for his life to be spared. He realized the king would kill him, if Esther did not stop him.

Esther 7:8 "Then the king returned out of the palace garden into the place of the banquet of wine; and Haman was fallen upon the bed whereon Esther [was]. Then said the king, Will he force the queen also before me in the house? As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face."

The couches for reclining were in the banqueting room, and it appeared that Esther had been reclining on one of them. Haman was so desperate for Esther to ask the king to spare his life, that he fell upon the bed face down where Esther was. The king walked back into the room and was furious with Haman. He accused Haman of trying to rape Esther in his presence. It appears, the attendants grabbed Haman and covered his head to take him to execute him.

Esther 7:9 "And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. Then the king said, Hang him thereon."

The very gallows that Haman had built to kill Mordecai on, would be where he would hang. Haman had sown the wind, and would now reap the whirlwind. Harbonah reminded the king that Mordecai had saved his life, and this Haman had wanted to kill him. The prophecy of the wise men had come true.

Esther 7:10 "So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified."

Haman's life had been wicked. He lived by violence, and he died by violence. He had wanted to be a famous man, and died as an infamous man. Haman died on the gallows he built for Mordecai. The king's wrath subsided after Haman had paid for his crime with his life. This really did not save Esther's life or the Jews, however. The edict still stood. We will see in the next lesson what was done about that.

Esther 7 Questions

1. Who came to banquet with Esther the queen?
2. In the last lesson, we saw the _____ of this wicked Haman.
3. He still was not aware that Esther was a _____.
4. What question did the king ask Esther at this banquet?
5. What did he offer to give her?
6. What did she say that was a shock to the king?
7. What did she say had been done to them, that she believed the king had done.
8. Why did the king have no idea what she was speaking of?
9. What does "countervail" mean here?
10. What questions did Ahasuerus ask Esther in verse 5?
11. What did she call Haman in verse 6?
12. How did this affect Haman?
13. Why did the king walk into the garden?
14. Who did Haman ask to save him?
15. Haman realized what about the king?
16. When the king returned from the garden, where was Haman?
17. What did the king say to him?
18. What was the bed really?
19. What was meant by them covering Haman's head?
20. Who reminded the king that the gallows for Haman were already ready?
21. When was the king's wrath pacified?

We will begin this lesson in Esther 8:1 "On that day did the king Ahasuerus give the house of Haman the Jews' enemy unto Esther the queen. And Mordecai came before the king; for Esther had told what he [was] unto her."

The wicked Haman was dead. In Persia, when a man did what Haman had done, and was executed for his crimes, everything he possessed became property of the government. In this case, the king was the recipient. This day, spoken of here, then, was the day of his execution. The king was very sorry for the trouble Haman had caused Esther, and he gave Haman's property to the queen. When Esther admitted that she was a Jew, she, also, revealed to the king that Mordecai had raised her, as if he were her father. Mordecai had been greatly honored recently for saving the life of the king. It was a logical conclusion, that he would take Haman's place as number two man in the country.

Esther 8:2 "And the king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman."

We have discussed how the signet ring was a sign of authority. The king took it from the finger of Haman, before he executed him. The king wore it himself, until he put it on the finger of Mordecai. This ring gave Mordecai the right to speak for the king. Mordecai was like a chief of staff. Esther did not give the house to Mordecai, because it was a gift to her from Ahasuerus. She let Mordecai live in the house.

Esther 8:3 "And Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews."

Haman was dead, but his wicked edict was still in place. The terrible thing was it was sealed with the signet of the king. Esther went, again without permission, to speak to the king. He held his sceptre out to her again, and she fell at her king's feet. She was so troubled for her people that there were tears in her eyes. She did not blame the king, but knew that he was the only chance to save her people, aside from God.

Esther 8:4 "Then the king held out the golden sceptre toward Esther. So Esther arose, and stood before the king,"

The king loved Esther so much that he did not like to see her cry. He, also, did not like to see his queen face first before him. He raised his sceptre for her to stand.

Esther 8:5 "And said, If it please the king, and if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing [seem] right before the king, and I [be] pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews which [are] in all the king's provinces:"

Notice, she mentioned twice, "if she had found favour in his eyes". What she was asking was impossible, because once the seal of the king was on

the letters, they were law. She blamed the whole thing on Haman, and somehow believed the king could rescind the orders, because they were given by Haman.

Esther 8:6 "For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?"

Nothing would please the king more than to reverse the letters, if it were possible, because Esther was a Jew. It would be difficult for her to see her people die, even if the king could save her.

Esther 8:7 "Then the king Ahasuerus said unto Esther the queen and to Mordecai the Jew, Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hand upon the Jews."

Now we find the true reason for the king killing Haman. The king did not want the Jews killed either.

Esther 8:8 "Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name, and seal [it] with the king's ring: for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse."

The king could do nothing about the edict that went forth to kill the Jews, because it had the king's seal upon it. He was now telling Mordecai to do whatever he thought would help in this situation and put the seal of the king upon it. The king had no idea how to help the situation that Haman created, but gave Mordecai permission to do whatever he could.

Esther 8:9 "Then were the king's scribes called at that time in the third month, that [is], the month Sivan, on the three and twentieth [day] thereof; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded unto the Jews, and to the lieutenants, and the deputies and rulers of the provinces which [are] from India unto Ethiopia, an hundred twenty and seven provinces, unto every province according to the writing thereof, and unto every people after their language, and to the Jews according to their writing, and according to their language."

We can see from this, that Haman wanted to annihilate the Jews. His hate for them was so great, he did not want any to live, even in Judah. The third month would be the same as our June. Sivan is a Babylonian name having to do with a false god, it is not Hebrew. Mordecai gathered the scribes and sent letters to each of the 127 provinces in their own language, a letter sealed with the king's signet. It was just as much law as the one Haman had sent.

Esther 8:10 "And he wrote in the king Ahasuerus' name, and sealed [it] with the king's ring, and sent letters by posts on horseback, [and] riders on mules, camels, [and] young dromedaries:"

We spoke earlier of how their mail system was very similar to our pony express.

Esther 8:11 "Wherein the king granted the Jews which [were] in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province

that would assault them, [both] little ones and women, and [to take] the spoil of them for a prey,"

All of the people of the provinces were actually controlled by the king of Persia. They did not have a right to bear arms. This edict would give them permission to fight back on the day that all the Jews were to be killed. They were to kill the ones who had intended to kill them in the same manner the first edict had prescribed. They could, also, take spoil of those they killed. This was, now, a law giving them the right to defend themselves.

Esther 8:12 "Upon one day in all the provinces of king Ahasuerus, [namely], upon the thirteenth [day] of the twelfth month, which [is] the month Adar."

The first edict had set this day as the day to kill the Jews. Now, the second edict gave the Jews permission to fight back. This would be a one day war, and then both edicts would not be the law any longer.

Esther 8:13 "The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province [was] published unto all people, and that the Jews should be ready against that day to avenge themselves on their enemies."

Mordecai had it distributed locally, as well. Anywhere there were Jews, there was, also, permission given for them to defend themselves.

Esther 8:14 "[So] the posts that rode upon mules [and] camels went out, being hastened and pressed on by the king's commandment. And the decree was given at Shushan the palace."

These letters were sent early, so there would be time for other communications, if necessary. These letters were even distributed in the palace.

Esther 8:15 "And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad."

This was a robe of royalty. It was interesting that the colors would be blue and white. White speaks of righteousness, and blue speaks of the heavenly. Purple speaks of royalty. The king was not aware of these meanings, but the LORD was. This just meant that he had on his robes of the second in command in the country. This great crown of gold was just a little shorter than the king's. This reminds me of the robes that Joseph was given, when he became second in command in Egypt. The people rejoiced. This was the answer the LORD gave to the prayers and fasting the people had done.

Esther 8:16 "The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour."

The Jews were no longer sad and living in the shadow of the death that Haman intended to bring. They had the light, and life of God renewed within them. This would bring joy unspeakable.

Esther 8:17 "And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a

feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them."

It was very obvious that God was with them. Some of the Persians feared when that day came, that some of the Jews would kill them. They converted and became Jews, themselves, to keep that from happening.

Esther 8 Questions

1. Who did the king give Haman's house to?
2. What day was spoken of in verse 1?
3. When did Esther reveal to the king that she was related to Mordecai?
4. Who would take Haman's place as number two under the king?
5. Who did the king give his signet ring to?
6. Esther set _____ over the house of Haman.
7. The signet ring was a sign of _____.
8. Mordecai was like a _____ of _____.
9. Haman was dead, but his wicked _____ was in place.
10. When Esther went to the king unannounced, what did she do?
11. Who was she blaming for the edict?
12. How did the king show he accepted her?
13. Why did the king want her to stand?
14. What did Esther say twice in verse 5?
15. Why was what she was asking impossible?
16. What questions did she ask the king in verse 6?
17. What reason did the king give for having executed Haman?
18. Who could reverse an edict with the seal of the king on it?
19. What did the king give Mordecai permission to do?
20. Why had Haman sent this edict to all of the provinces?
21. How many provinces were there?
22. What did Mordecai do to stop the slaughter of the Jews?
23. Why could the Jews not fight back, before the letter Mordecai sent?
24. What did the new edict say?
25. How long would the war last?
26. How were the edicts sent to the provinces?
27. How was Mordecai dressed now?
28. Quote Esther chapter 8 verse 16.
29. How did the Jews celebrate?
30. Who became Jews, because of the second edict?

We will begin this lesson in Esther 9:1 "Now in the twelfth month, that [is], the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king's commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them, (though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them;)"

This was speaking of that specific day that Haman had set for them to kill all of the Jews. The Jews had permission, through Mordecai's edict, to fight and protect themselves.

Esther 9:2 "The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such as sought their hurt: and no man could withstand them; for the fear of them fell upon all people."

This was not speaking of just the Jewish cities, but all of the cities where there were groups of Jews living. This second edict had frightened the people, so that they could not withstand the Jews.

Esther 9:3 "And all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the deputies, and officers of the king, helped the Jews; because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them."

It was a fearful thing in all the provinces for the second in command to be a Jew himself. The lieutenants, deputies, and officers were afraid to fight against the Jews for fear of reprisal.

Esther 9:4 "For Mordecai [was] great in the king's house, and his fame went out throughout all the provinces: for this man Mordecai waxed greater and greater."

It was almost as if Mordecai was leading the country himself. It appeared the king had turned much of his authority over to Mordecai. He was not only the second in command, but was the relative of the queen. He had power in Persia, as Joseph had in Egypt.

Esther 9:5 "Thus the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and slaughter, and destruction, and did what they would unto those that hated them." Esther 9:6 "And in Shushan the palace the Jews slew and destroyed five hundred men."

It appears, that the Jews were not just killing at random, but were actually killing those who wanted to kill them. The palace area was about 100 acres, and this was where the 500 were killed. These were homes of prominent Persians. They, possibly, did not like the idea of a Jew taking Haman's place.

Esther 9:7 "And Parshandatha, and Dalphon, and Aspatha," Esther 9:8 "And Poratha, and Adalia, and Aridatha," Esther 9:9 "And Parmashta, and Arisai, and Aridai, and Vajezatha," Esther 9:10 "The ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews, slew they; but on the spoil laid they not their hand."

The ten sons of Haman were, probably, still a threat to Mordecai and the Jews. The fact that the Jews did not take spoil from them showed this was not done for self gain, but to stop an enemy.

Esther 9:11 "On that day the number of those that were slain in Shushan the palace was brought before the king." Esther 9:12 "And the king said unto Esther the queen, The Jews have slain and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the palace, and the ten sons of Haman; what have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? now what [is] thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: or what [is] thy request further? and it shall be done."

This just meant that the leaders of the armies reported to the king the number that had been killed. The king had offered Esther up to half of the kingdom, so he told her of this great loss at the palace, explaining to her that the numbers in all of the provinces must be tremendous. He asked Esther if she was satisfied with this number, or what else did she want to satisfy herself and the Jews.

Esther 9:13 "Then said Esther, If it please the king, let it be granted to the Jews which [are] in Shushan to do to morrow also according unto this day's decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged upon the gallows."

This seems a little bloodthirsty from such a beautiful queen. Why she wanted so many killed, I do not know. I can understand the hanging of the ten sons of Haman, however.

Esther 9:14 "And the king commanded it so to be done: and the decree was given at Shushan; and they hanged Haman's ten sons." Esther 9:15 "For the Jews that [were] in Shushan gathered themselves together on the fourteenth day also of the month Adar, and slew three hundred men at Shushan; but on the prey they laid not their hand."

The Jews killed another 300 in Shushan, but they did not take their valuables. Again, this was the killing of the people who hated the Jews. The Jews were not killing them to get their possessions.

Esther 9:16 "But the other Jews that [were] in the king's provinces gathered themselves together, and stood for their lives, and had rest from their enemies, and slew of their foes seventy and five thousand, but they laid not their hands on the prey,"

It appears, that the war in the provinces lasted for just the one day. It was almost as if they were punishing those who had hated the Jews. The one day they killed 75,000, but they did not do it to get their possessions either. The Jews did not take their possessions.

Esther 9:17 "On the thirteenth day of the month Adar; and on the fourteenth day of the same rested they, and made it a day of feasting and gladness."

Immediately after their great victory, there was a time of celebration. They rested and rejoiced in the fact that the LORD had delivered their enemies into their hands. It was obvious that this was not the work of man, but of God.

Esther 9:18 "But the Jews that [were] at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth [day] thereof, and on the fourteenth thereof; and on the fifteenth [day] of the same they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness."

The Jews in Shushan waited one more day to celebrate because the killing of their enemies had lasted one more day. The feasting and gladness was for the fact that those who hated the Jews were no more.

Esther 9:19 "Therefore the Jews of the villages, that dwelt in the unwalled towns, made the fourteenth day of the month Adar [a day of] gladness and feasting, and a good day, and of sending portions one to another."

This time that was set aside for celebration from year to year is still recognized by the Jews today. The 14th day Adar is about the same as our March.

Esther 9:20 "And Mordecai wrote these things, and sent letters unto all the Jews that [were] in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, [both] nigh and far," Esther 9:21 "To stablish [this] among them, that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same, yearly," Esther 9:22 "As the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day: that they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor."

These two days would be established as a day of festivity and giving of gifts to the poor forever. Mordecai sent letters to the Jews in all the provinces, so that they would keep these days each year in memory of this event. This would be a time set aside for unselfish giving to the poor, and a time of festivity throughout the land. God had seen their terrible plight, and turned their sorrow into joy. We must continue to remember, that the Jews had gone into sackcloth, and ashes, and tore their clothes in mourning. They prayed and fasted. It was the answer to these prayers that brought all of this about.

Esther 9:23 "And the Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written unto them;" Esther 9:24 "Because Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, that [is], the lot, to consume them, and to destroy them;"

"Pur" we remember was lots. This was established as a Jewish holiday forever. It was called Purim.

Esther 9:25 "But when [Esther] came before the king, he commanded by letters that his wicked device, which he devised against the Jews, should return upon his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows."

This was speaking of Haman's wicked device. He and his ten sons were hanged for this evil they had tried to do.

Esther 9:26 "Wherefore they called these days Purim after the name of Pur. Therefore for all the words of this letter, and [of that] which they had seen concerning this matter, and which had come unto them,"

Pur is the Persian name of the lots Haman had used. It is interesting that a Jewish holiday would start with a Persian word. The "im" on the end of the word is a Hebrew ending. They did not want to forget the happenings, here.

Esther 9:27 "The Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as joined themselves unto them, so as it should not fail, that they would keep these two days according to their writing, and according to their [appointed] time every year;" Esther 9:28 "And [that] these days [should be] remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; and [that] these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their seed."

It appears, that this was not an optional celebration. It was required of all Jews for all generations. The day before Purim was a day of fasting to celebrate the fact of Esther's fast. The book of Esther was read at these celebrations.

Esther 9:29 "Then Esther the queen, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew, wrote with all authority, to confirm this second letter of Purim."

Perhaps, the reason that Esther mentioned that she was the daughter of Abihail, was so that all of the people would realize that she was Hebrew, also. She might be the queen of Persia, but she was Jew by birth. It was unusual for a queen to be involved in such a letter, but her authority as queen added to the authority of Mordecai as second in command.

Esther 9:30 "And he sent the letters unto all the Jews, to the hundred twenty and seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, [with] words of peace and truth,"

The Jews were scattered in those days. They had not all come back to their homeland, when they had been given that option. The fact that they were in a foreign land did not give them the right to overlook Purim. Mordecai and Esther wanted them to know there would be peace for them during the reign of Xerxes and Esther.

Esther 9:31 "To confirm these days of Purim in their times [appointed], according as Mordecai the Jew and Esther the queen had enjoined them, and as they had decreed for themselves and for their seed, the matters of the fastings and their cry."

Mordecai and Esther set the example by agreeing to keep the feast of Purim themselves and for their descendents.

Esther 9:32 "And the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim; and it was written in the book."

This was written in the record book to make sure that it would always be remembered. The book spoken of is the book of the chronicles.

We will continue this lesson on with Esther 10:1 "And the king Ahasuerus laid a tribute upon the land, and [upon] the isles of the sea."

Possibly, this was a re-assessing of the tribute. The king of Persia had lost part of his territory in a battle with Greece. This, perhaps, is to re-adjust the tribute to a more fair amount.

Esther 10:2 "And all the acts of his power and of his might, and the declaration of the greatness of Mordecai, whereunto the king advanced him, [are] they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia?"

It appears, that Mordecai became a very powerful second in command. The record book for Persia, also, contains the events of Media. This explains that Mordecai found favor with the king. The only way the king could advance him was in the money he made and in the authority. Since he was second in command, the only office left if he were promoted would have been king.

Esther 10:3 "For Mordecai the Jew [was] next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed."

Mordecai in Persia was much like Joseph in Egypt. As long as he lived, he helped his people.

Esther 9 Questions

1. What was their 12th month?
2. What did the Jews do on the day Haman had planned for the Jews to be killed?
3. How did the Jews get permission to protect themselves?
4. Why could the people not withstand the Jews?
5. Why did the officers help the Jews?
6. What happened to Mordecai, after he took office?
7. Mordecai's power in Persia was compared to Joseph's power in _____.
8. Who did the Jews kill?
9. How many were killed at Shushan?
10. How large was the palace area?
11. Who were the sons of Haman, who were killed?
12. Why do you suppose they did not take the spoil?
13. When the king heard the number killed at Shushan, what did he ask Esther?
14. What answer did she give the king?
15. How were Haman's sons killed?
16. How many more were killed in Shushan on the second day?
17. How many were killed in the provinces?
18. When did the Jews in the province begin to celebrate?
19. Who suggested this as a celebration for forever?
20. Who wrote letters to the provinces for this to be a celebration every year?
21. What does "pur" mean?
22. What would the festival be named?
23. Who wrote with Mordecai to the provinces the second time?
24. Why did Esther speak of herself as the daughter of Abihail?
25. Where was all of this recorded?

*Thank you for taking your time to study these books of Ezra,
Nehemiah and Esther. May God richly bless you,
as you continue to read and study His Word.*

**Love the Lord Ministries
P.O. Box 197
Winthrop, AR 71866
(870) 381-7393
LTLministries@yahoo.com**