

Book of Nehemia

Commentary

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Introduction

* See the introduction to the historical books of the post-exilic period | The Kingdom of Persia.

1. The Book of Ezra and Nehemiah were one book called Ezra in the Hebrew Torah, the Septuagint, and the Latin translation (Vulgate) until 1563 AD. Then, they separated in the sixteenth century under the names Ezra I and Ezra II. Then, under the names Ezra and Nehemiah.

2. It is the last historical book of the Old Testament, as it is a continuation of the history of the Jews. In the book, we find the news of the completion of the walls of Jerusalem and the renewal and reforms of Nehemiah for the affairs of the people according to the law.

3. The book's writer is Nehemiah, who was a captive. He is called the governor (Nehemiah 8: 9 + 10: 1), translated as a cupbearer to the king, as King Artaxerxes Longimanus chose him to be his cupbearer, which is a very important position for them. The cupbearer always sees the face of the king and brings him wine that pleases his heart and makes him happy. The cupbearer asked the king for whatever he wanted while he was happy. Thus, he requested the governorship of Jerusalem at a time like this. The king trusted the cupbearer, as he would serve him drink, which could be poisoned (so the cupbearer would taste it first).

4. Nehemiah was zealous for the city of his fathers and asked the king to repair its walls, so he sent him as governor of Jerusalem to build its walls and arrange the affairs of the Jewish state. Nehemiah went to Jerusalem thirteen years after Ezra went up to Jerusalem. Nehemiah left all the luxury of the king's palace that he enjoyed for his love for his people and, first and foremost, for his love for God.

5. Nehemiah's mission was difficult, as he faced strong resistance from the enemies, the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Samaritans, and the other neighbouring peoples. The enemies had usurped the land while the people were in captivity, and after the people returned, the enemies feared that the people would regain their usurped lands and properties. They were even greedy to seize more lands from the people, so they feared building the walls of Jerusalem. These enemies had a natural enmity with the people of Israel.

6. Nehemiah was concerned with worshipping and reciting the Book of the Law and writing a covenant to keep the commandments of the Lord, which was signed by the leaders, priests, Levites, and all the people.

7. After ruling the Jews for 12 years [compare (Nehemiah 13: 6, 7) with (Nehemiah 2: 1-9)], he returned to Artaxerxes to give an account of the previous mandate to build the wall and the city... etc. So, Artaxerxes commissioned him to return again. Thus, he obtained a second mandate to rule. He returned to rule for 14 years after that.

8. In the absence of Nehemiah, evil increased in Jerusalem. They neglected the Sabbath, daily offerings, and tithes and married foreign and pagan women. The prophet Malachi prophesied about this period. After Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem again, he began his reforms to eradicate evil from among them.

9. The character of Nehemiah is a wonderful and luminous character in the Bible and an example of what God's servants should be. During his captivity, we find him concerned about the condition of his people and the condition of Jerusalem. We find him crying and praying for God to lift His wrath from them, and we find him leaving his high position in the king's palace, exposing himself to danger, and going to Jerusalem to arouse the lukewarm spirits. He is zealous for the glory of God, and he is a leader. He built the wall in days, not caring about the resistance and conspiracies of external enemies, reforming the conditions of his people, not seeking his right as a governor, but rather spending on his people while he was in his striving: Striving with God in his prayers, striving with the king, striving with the people by reforming their conditions, uniting them, and encouraging them, and he struggled against the enemies. Therefore, God crowned his work with success.

10. During his absence, he appointed two deputies, Hanani and Hananiah, to rule Jerusalem, whose walls were built.

11. Nehemiah was a great person in his reliance on the Lord, his striving in his service, and his zeal and courage. The divine grace supported his striving, so his work became successful.

12. Nehemiah symbolizes Christ in many things:

a. He left the king's palace to go to his brothers. Christ humbled himself to visit His people.

b. Nehemiah was in the king's palace, but his heart was in ruined Jerusalem, and thus was Christ's love for his people on earth.

c. Nehemiah participated with the people in work and construction (Nehemiah 4: 23). He did not burden them with tribute but rather spent on them. Christ participates with us in our sufferings and in every good work.

d. He resembled Christ in His zeal for the temple and His purification of the temple to be a house of prayer and not a den of thieves.

e. He came to build the ruined walls to protect his people, and Christ came to build the church and protect her.

f. He came to rebuild ruined Jerusalem, and Christ came to rebuild the church of His people who were in the ruins of this world that was ruined by sin.

g. He remained silent for 3 days before he rose to work, similar to Christ, who remained silent for 3 days in the tomb before His resurrection to give life to His church.

h. He stood before the opponents and resisters, and Christ stood before the devil.

i. He reproached the great and the leaders, and Christ reproached the scribes and Pharisees.

j. Nehemiah's weeping over Jerusalem is similar to Christ's weeping over it.

k. He cleansed the temple of Tobiah and expelled him, just as Christ did.

Chapter 1

(Verses 1-4): **The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. It came to pass in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the citadel, 2 that Hanani one of my brethren came with men from Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped, who had survived the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. 3 And they said to me, "The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire." 4 So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.**

Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah: From the tribe of Levi because his brother Hanani is mentioned with the gatekeepers, singers, and Levites (Nehemiah 7: 1). **Chislev** = the ninth month. **the twentieth year** = of the reign of Artaxerxes. In (Nehemiah 2: 1), the month of Nisan is mentioned in the twentieth year, which is the first month of the new year. The solution to this problem is very simple: it is the twentieth year of the reign of Artaxerxes (this is according to the Persian calendar). It is possible that the reign of Artaxerxes began, for example, in the middle of the year. During this twentieth year of his reign, the ninth month would pass first, then the first month of the new year second (here the month of Chislev and the month of Nisan according to the Jewish calendar).

Beginning of the twentieth year	Persian Calendar	End of the twentieth year
The month of Chislev (9)	Jewish Calendar	The month of Nisan (1)
		↑
		Beginning of Jewish New Year

Shushan: The capital of Persia, about 300 km east of Babylon, and the kings spent the winter and summer in Ecbatana in the mountains. **Hanani** = Nehemiah's brother. **men from Judah** = men who had recently come from Judea. **who had survived the captivity** = descendants of the captives, and these were in great trouble, as the walls were ruined and they were met with resistance and contempt from the surrounding peoples. **I sat down and wept** = He is not weeping over what Nebuchadnezzar did and his destruction of the walls, but he is weeping over the state of Jerusalem, especially when he heard that Ezra's efforts to build the walls failed or that the enemies destroyed what Ezra had built. His saying I sat and wept indicates what each of us should do when we face a problem: isolate ourselves in solitude with God and pray and return to ourselves as the prodigal son returned to himself.

I was fasting and praying = Prayer is a call for God to intervene and solve the problem, and God will certainly intervene, but without prayer, this means that I want to solve the problem on my own without God's help.

(Verses 5-11): **And I said: "I pray, Lord God of heaven, O great and awesome God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments, 6 please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You. Both my father's house and I have sinned. 7 We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses. 8 Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations; 9 but if you return to Me, and keep My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens, yet I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for My name.' 10 Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand. 11 O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." For I was the king's cupbearer.**

O great and awesome God: Whose greatness was shown in the discipline of His people, but His greatness is shown more in His mercies to His repentant people. This is Nehemiah's hope, so He said, **You who keep Your covenant** = His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. **with those who love You and observe Your commandments** = If you love Me, keep My commandments. (John 14: 15). **Your eyes open** = To see how Your people are suffering, so that You may have mercy and **that You may hear the prayer of Your servant. the children of Israel Your servants** = They have sinned but are still servants of God.

Both my father's house and I have sinned = He is doing the same thing that Ezra did. This is the correct spiritual approach for every servant. What came in (verses 8, 9) did not happen literally, but we find its meaning. Their scatter among the nations is mentioned in (Deuteronomy 4: 27) and the promise of return is in (Leviticus 26: 40-42 + Deuteronomy 30: 4, 5). The words in (Deuteronomy 30:1-5) are the closest thing to what came here. **yet I will gather them from there** = as a shepherd searches for lost sheep (Ezekiel 34: 11-16). **and bring them to the place** = that is, to Jerusalem and the temple. And in (verse 8), **Remember, I pray, the word** = this is how the church always prays: "Remember, O Lord, such and such..." This does not mean that God forgets, and we remind Him. Rather, God rejoices in this, for it is a sign of faith, trust in God, and the truth of His promises. Because He wants us to be confident in His promises that He has previously said, as if we are saying, "You promised, O Lord, and we trust that You remember and we trust that You will fulfill Your promise." Nehemiah here says to the Lord, "Remember, for you promised to gather your people." **Your people, whom You have redeemed**, that is, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with power and a mighty arm. Now we are the descendants of these people, and as you did to them, do to us." He confidently asks God to fulfill his promises. Thus we pray with the same concept: "As it was and shall be from generation to generation..." Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever "(Hebrews 13: 8). God who saved at that time, what prevents Him from saving now? Rather, He will do.

the king's cupbearer = a high position in the king's house. God arranged for Nehemiah to have this position to help his people. God puts his men in the king's palace to carry out His plan. Thus, God used to put His men in the palaces of kings. Moses, the prophet, was in Pharaoh's palace, Obadiah was in Ahab's, and Daniel was in Nebuchadnezzar's. Note that Nehemiah, like Moses, could have been busy with the luxurious life in the palace, but his heart was there in Jerusalem, which was burned by fire and with the despised people. However, he did not despise their poverty and did not seek his comfort and safety (Acts 7: 23). Nehemiah, because of his love for his people, exposed himself to danger so the king could have given life and death.

Chapter 2

(Verses 1-8): **And it came to pass in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, that I took the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had never been sad in his presence before. 2 Therefore the king said to me, "Why is your face sad, since you are not sick? This is nothing but sorrow of heart." So I became dreadfully afraid, 3 and said to the king, "May the king live forever! Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire?" 4 Then the king said to me, "What do you request?" So I prayed to the God of heaven. 5 And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it." 6 Then the king said to me (the queen also sitting beside him), "How long will your journey be? And when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time. 7 Furthermore I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, let letters be given to me for the governors of the region beyond the River, that they must permit me to pass through till I come to Judah, 8 and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he must give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel which pertains to the temple, for the city wall, and for the house that I will occupy." And the king granted them to me according to the good hand of my God upon me.**

We saw in the previous chapter how Nehemiah strived with God and wrestled with Him in his prayers, and here we see how he struggled with the king, the enemies, and then with his people, making them work and build. He prevailed, and his prayer was answered, so he became like Jacob, who struggled with God and with people and prevailed (Genesis 32: 28), **Why is your face sad, since you are not sick? This is nothing but sorrow of heart." So I became dreadfully afraid** = One of the duties of the cupbearer is to drink a little wine before giving it to the king to assure him that it is without poison. Nehemiah was afraid when the king noticed his disturbance and sadness, as kings consider this to be evidence of dissatisfaction, rebellion, and disobedience, or that his disturbance was because he was plotting against the king and had put poison in the cup that he was offering to the king, so he was afraid to taste it now. In cases like this, the king orders the person to be killed immediately.

the city of my fathers' tombs = The tombs were sacred to the ancients, including the King of Persia. The meaning of Nehemiah's words is that my fathers' tombs are destroyed, and I want to go and honour the dead and restore the tombs. By this, Nehemiah stirs the king's feelings towards the Jewish people and towards Nehemiah. **So I prayed to the God of heaven** = He prayed a lot and sat before standing before the king, and he cried and humbled himself and prayed. However, before he answers the king, we find him praying again. Note that his standing now before the king comes about four months after he heard the news about Jerusalem. Note that he is praying to the God of heaven while standing before the King of Persia, as he feels that he is always standing before the King of heaven and earth, no matter where he is. There is another note that the pagan King of Persia was keen to ask Nehemiah why his face was downcast and tried to please him, so how much more would God be keen for His servants to be happy? **that I may rebuild it** = Here he has two requests:

1. That the walls be built.

2. That the king assist him in this work.

the queen also sitting beside him = This phrase or note means:

Either Nehemiah relied on the queen and her cooperation with him, and she would assist him and support his request as a friend of the Jews. Or it means the exact opposite of this, that the queen was against the Jews and against him, and despite this, the king agreed. In both cases we see God's strong influence on the king and God's plan.

I set him a time = He went to Jerusalem, and after completing his work he returned to the king to submit a report and then returned again as governor of Jerusalem. **the king's forest** = is a Persian word meaning a walled place with trees. **the citadel** = a fortress for the house, i.e., next to the temple. **and for the house that I will occupy** = i.e. Nehemiah's house, because he had become governor. And in this house, he generously hosted many. The king gave him more than he asked for, for he appointed him governor as well (Nehemiah 5: 14). **according to the good hand of my God upon me** = Note that he did not say the king gave him to me because of my faithfulness to him and because I served him faithfully, but rather God is the one who did it.

(Verses 9-10): **Then I went to the governors in the region beyond the River, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me. 10 When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard of it, they were deeply disturbed that a man had come to seek the well-being of the children of Israel.**

captains of the army and horsemen: Nehemiah did not ask, but the king sent them with him. Nehemiah is a governor with a guard force, and whoever the king sends, he sends with him a guard force, and whoever God sends, He sends with him an army of angels. We note that Ezra, due to his faith, did not ask for a guard force, and Nehemiah, due to his faith, did not ask, but the king gave it to him, so why would he refuse? God may provide us with ordinary human means to protect us.

Sanballat the Horonite = from Beth Horon, about 28 km northwest of Jerusalem, and it appears that he was one of the leaders of the Samaritans. It appeared from the Elephantine papers that he was governor of Samaria. He may have also been hoping to take over Judah. **Tobiah the Ammonite** = Sanballat's companion in resisting the Jews, and he may have been the governor of the Ammonites, and there was intense hatred between the Jews and the Ammonites.

a man had come: perhaps Sanballat and Tobiah said this, meaning to despise Nehemiah.

(Verses 11-18): **So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days. 12 Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me; I told no one what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem; nor was there any animal with me, except the one on which I rode. 13 And I went out by night through the Valley Gate to the Serpent Well and the Refuse Gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were burned with fire. 14 Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but there was no room for the animal under me to pass. 15 So I went up in the night by the valley, and viewed the wall; then I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned.**

16 And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, or the others who did the work. 17 Then I said to them, "You see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach." 18 And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king's words that he had spoken to me. So they said, "Let us rise up and build." Then they set their hands to this good work.

three days: Until the eyes of the observers turned away from him. It is certain that Nehemiah, the man of prayer, spent these three days in prayer.

I arose in the night = He made the matter a secret until he prepared everything so that they would not resist him and spoil the work, and he wanted to see everything himself to determine the extent of the work. **the Valley Gate** = The Valley of Ben Hinnom. Nehemiah went out of it and made a complete circuit around the city. He returned and entered through the Valley Gate from which he had come out.

the Serpent Well = It was called this because they made a statue of a dragon with water coming out of its mouth. **Then I said to them** = He gathered the nobles and the rest of the workers and encouraged them, so the work is a collective work.

Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach: The true wall that defends God's people is God Himself, who said of Himself, "will be a wall of fire all around her" (Zechariah 2: 5). In the same sense, the psalmist says, "Unless the Lord guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain." (Psalm 127: 1). So why did Nehemiah build the wall? This is what we call striving. Thus Noah built the ark, but God "shut him in" (Genesis 7: 16) so that the water would not enter the ark. This work of God we call grace. But striving is necessary for grace to work with and protect us. This is exactly what Nehemiah did. He strived and built the wall, but the grace of God was a wall of fire for Jerusalem. But when Nebuchadnezzar and the Romans later besieged it, these walls could not withstand them and fell, and Jerusalem fell with them because God was angry with them. What truly protects us is God's pleasure with us. Let us strive in our prayers and fasting, for these are our weapons against Satan (Mark 9: 29), and reject the temptations of sins, which are Satan's weapons. Whoever does this will not be touched by the hand of Satan, for God will protect him like walls of fire. Rather, he will have the authority to trample Satan (Luke 10: 19). As for whoever refrains from striving and accepts sins from the hand of Satan to satisfy his desires, Satan will humiliate him and trample him, and he will become a reproach, for Satan will expose him.

(Verses 19-20): **But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they laughed at us and despised us, and said, "What is this thing that you are doing? Will you rebel against the king?" 20 So I answered them, and said to them, "The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem."**

Geshem the Arab: One of the leaders of the Arabs. It is clear that there was a union between the Samaritans, Ammonites and Arabs against the Jews, and there were probably other peoples against the Jews. **despised us** = because the Jews were few in number and unable to work. **Will you rebel against**

the king? = Perhaps they did not know that there was an order from the king of Persia to build. But they tried to frighten the people from building. Nehemiah did not tell them that the king of Persia issued an order to build but rather said the God of heaven will give us success. There is always resistance to all of God's works, and the resistance here included:

1. Mocking the work,
2. Contempt for those who did it,
3. Frightening them by accusing them of rebelling against the king.

Nehemiah responded, "**The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build.**" Note that Nehemiah did not refer to the royal decree that he had, as he relied on God and not the king.

Chapter 3

Here, we find the names of those who worked enthusiastically to honour them and to encourage all who work in the vineyard of the Lord. When we now see the names of those who worked recorded in the Bible, we are strengthened in our struggle, for our names are written in the Book of Eternal Life.

We also find the system of work and its division. Our God is a God of order, not a God of confusion (the miracle of feeding the multitudes). We find that the work was distributed, so each worker with him or his family had a share of the work. This is the concept of integration in the One Body, that is, the church, so each has his role in building the church.

The chapter's content is about restoring the walls, which was difficult due to the presence of enemies who resisted the work. However, Nehemiah wisely divided the work into 42 groups of workers and arranged the work in a way that each one would restore opposite his house or his town. Everyone worked and prayed at the same time.

(Verse 1): **Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests and built the Sheep Gate; they consecrated it and hung its doors. They built as far as the Tower of the Hundred, and consecrated it, then as far as the Tower of Hananel.**

the Sheep Gate: This gate was near the temple and was named thus because there was a sheep market near it from which many sheep were requested for the temple sacrifices. The location of the gate was suitable for this trade because the sheep came from the east, and the gate was located on the northeastern side.

We notice that the first gate to be restored was the Sheep Gate. Christ is the gate of the sheep and their shepherd, and through him we enter Jerusalem, so we find that the one who restored this gate was the high priest and the priests. **they consecrated it** = that is; they held a dedication ceremony and thanksgiving to God after the priests restored the gate from **the Tower of the Hundred to the Tower of Hananel** = they were in the northeastern corner of the city. The wall has several towers. Let us note the spiritual meaning: the Tower of the Hundred refers to the flock of Christ (the number 100 refers to the flock of Christ), and they are in Christ as if they are in a tower, so they are under His protection: "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; The righteous run to it and are safe." The tower also refers to the heavenly height in which believers are located and their ability to discover the enemy. **the Tower of Hananel** = Hananel means God has mercy, so everything we have obtained is from God's mercy, so from God's mercies we entered through the door, the door of the sheep, and became part of the holy flock of Christ. **they consecrated it** = and let us note the role of the servants and priests. The priests have a job with the flock of Christ (and all Christians are priests in the general sense, and each has his role, but there is a priestly function to complete the sacraments), so we find that the priests are the ones who built the door of the sheep and sanctified it.

We see in these verses that Christ, our High Priest (**the high priest**), is the door (**the Sheep Gate**) through which the sheep enter the fold, i.e. the church. Christ began the work with His cross out of His

mercy (**the Tower of Hananel**). Each of us has his role to complete the work and complete the flock (the Tower of the Hundred). God gave each one a talent with which we serve one another and the work is completed (1 Peter 4: 10). This is what we will see in the coming verses: everyone works and everyone builds. Christ began the work and is still working in us and through us.

Eliashib = He is the son of Joakim, the son of Jeshua, the High Priest. He is the one who worked with Nehemiah in repairing the walls, but he was a relative of Tobiah the Ammonite (Nehemiah 13: 4). His grandson was a son-in-law of Sanballat (Nehemiah 13: 28). Certainly, these kinships were an obstacle to the work.

(Verse 2): **Next to Eliashib the men of Jericho built. And next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built.**

the men of Jericho: They restored what was opposite their city, which was in the east.

From here until the end of the chapter, we see that everyone has a role and participates in the construction that Christ began.

(Verse 3): **Also the sons of Hassenaah built the Fish Gate; they laid its beams and hung its doors with its bolts and bars.**

the Fish Gate: Perhaps there was a fish market next to it. But the fish also symbolizes the people of Christ who walk against the current with the fins of grace, and they live in the world (the sea) with all its sins and do not drown and die. The early Christians took the fish as their symbol, as the fish in Greek is "Ichthys" ἰχθύς, which is made up of 5 letters, each of which is the first letter of the phrase "Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our Savior."

(Verse 4): **And next to them Meremoth the son of Urijah, the son of Koz, made repairs. Next to them Meshullam the son of Berechiah, the son of Meshezabel, made repairs. Next to them Zadok the son of Baana made repairs.**

(Verse 5): **Next to them the Tekoites made repairs; but their nobles did not put their shoulders to the work of their Lord.**

but their nobles did not put their shoulders to the work of their Lord: Here, it may refer to God, for the work is God's work, or it may refer to Nehemiah, for he is the governor. Perhaps these noble men submitted to the resisters, but let us note that greatness leads to pride. And pride is an obstacle to entering the heavenly Jerusalem. Here, someone considered himself great for the work of the Lord, so he lost his name in the list of honour and in the heavenly Jerusalem. Note that the book neglected to mention their names.

(Verse 6): **Moreover Jehoiada the son of Paseah and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah repaired the Old Gate; they laid its beams and hung its doors, with its bolts and bars.**

the Old Gate: In the northern wall to the west. It is probably the entrance to the old city. It is said that it dates back to the days of Melchizedek and that he was the one who built it when the city was called

Salem. This gate indicates that entry into the heavenly Jerusalem is not limited to the people of the New Testament, but is open to the people of the Old Testament as well, who died in hope (Romans 3: 25, 26).

(Verse 7): **And next to them Melatiah the Gibeonite, Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon and Mizpah, repaired the residence of the governor of the region beyond the River.**

the men of Gibeon and Mizpah: It is to the northwest of Jerusalem, that is, towards the Old Gate.

the residence of the governor of the region beyond the River: Perhaps the governor of the region beyond the River, on one of his visits, placed his chair in a place near the northern gate of the city, and the name of the place remained "the residence of the governor" even after he left.

(Verse 8): **Next to him Uzziel the son of Harhaiah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs. Also next to him Hananiah, one of the perfumers, made repairs; and they fortified Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall.**

The **goldsmiths** and the **perfumers** restored a large part of the wall (verses 31,32). Whoever God gives money to must honor God with the talents that God has given him. **and they fortified Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall** = This means either that they left the restoration of a part of the wall of Jerusalem because it was intact and did not need restoration until they reached the broad wall and then returned to work. Or they left a part of the old city of Jerusalem because it was uninhabited at the time and built enough for present-day Jerusalem. The first opinion makes more sense than the second one. He said it was the broad wall because the wall was wider than the others in this area.

(Verses 9-12): **And next to them Rephaiah the son of Hur, leader of half the district of Jerusalem, made repairs. 10 Next to them Jedaiah the son of Harumaph made repairs in front of his house. And next to him Hattush the son of Hashabniah made repairs. 11 Malchijah the son of Harim and Hashub the son of Pahath-Moab repaired another section, as well as the Tower of the Ovens. 12 And next to him was Shallum the son of Hallohesh, leader of half the district of Jerusalem; he and his daughters made repairs.**

Here we find in (verses 9, 12) two leaders of Jerusalem, each one of them is a leader of one half of Jerusalem. Perhaps this was a Persian policy to monitor each other, verses (16), (17).

Pahath-Moab = Pahath is an Assyrian word meaning leader, and perhaps Pahath was from the tribe of Judah and had authority in Moab (1 Chronicles 4: 22). **and his daughters** = the word may mean the villages under his control or the estates that follow him, as the word refers to a young man who depends on an elder, or it actually means his daughters, and in this way, they deserve honour, as the work of construction is difficult for the daughters.

(Verse 13): **Hanun and the inhabitants of Zanoah repaired the Valley Gate. They built it, hung its doors with its bolts and bars, and repaired a thousand cubits of the wall as far as the Refuse Gate.**

the Valley Gate: The valley is the son of Hinnom, a symbol of hell. Whoever leaves Jerusalem, that is, leaves Christ by his own will, has no place other than this. "for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world."

as far as the Refuse Gate = the refuse gate is from where animal waste, filth and garbage come out. Note the coupling of the valley gate and the refuse gate. If we do not purify ourselves from our sins and throw them out, it will be natural that our fate will be the valley gate. But on the other hand, the gates of Jerusalem are open all day long (Nehemiah 7: 3) to anyone who wants to, regardless of his condition, as the father accepted his prodigal son when he returned to him. But there is an evening time when the gates are closed, as they were closed to the foolish virgins. This indicates that God wants His house to be pure (Christ's purification of the temple). Thus, the Apostle Paul commanded, "put away from yourselves the evil person." (1 Corinthians 5: 13).

(Verse 14): **Malchijah the son of Rechab, leader of the district of Beth Haccerem, repaired the Refuse Gate; he built it and hung its doors with its bolts and bars.**

(Verse 15): **Shallun the son of Col-Hozeh, leader of the district of Mizpah, repaired the Fountain Gate; he built it, covered it, hung its doors with its bolts and bars, and repaired the wall of the Pool of Shelah by the King's Garden, as far as the stairs that go down from the City of David.**

the Fountain Gate: Mostly probably, it is the Water Gate (Nehemiah 8: 1), and compare with (Nehemiah 2: 14), then the passage to the King's Pool is through the Fountain Gate. Water refers to baptism, there is no entrance except through baptism. The entrance to the mysteries is the King's Pool, and mostly it is the same as the Pool of Siloam (compare with John 9: 6) (verse 26).

the stairs that go down = the city contains several hills inside it, and it is not flat, so there were stairs to ascend from one place to another. **the City of David** = the reference here is to a section of the city near the temple. As for the name City of David, it was given to the entire city in ancient times. The temple's location was outside the walls until the temple was built and joined to it.

(Verse 16): **After him Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, leader of half the district of Beth Zur, made repairs as far as the place in front of the tombs of David, to the man-made pool, and as far as the House of the Mighty.**

the man-made pool: Hezekiah closed the springs around Jerusalem so that the Assyrians would not benefit from them during their siege of Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 32: 4), and he may have established this pool as a reservoir for the city.

(Verses 17-24): **After him the Levites, under Rehum the son of Bani, made repairs. Next to him Hashabiah, leader of half the district of Keilah, made repairs for his district. 18 After him their brethren, under Bavai the son of Henadad, leader of the other half of the district of Keilah, made repairs. 19 And next to him Ezer the son of Jeshua, the leader of Mizpah, repaired another section in front of the Ascent to the Armory at the buttress. 20 After him Baruch the son of Zabbai carefully repaired the other section, from the buttress to the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest. 21**

After him Meremoth the son of Urijah, the son of Koz, repaired another section, from the door of the house of Eliashib to the end of the house of Eliashib. 22 And after him the priests, the men of the plain, made repairs. 23 After him Benjamin and Hasshub made repairs opposite their house. After them Azariah the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ananiah, made repairs by his house. 24 After him Binnui the son of Henadad repaired another section, from the house of Azariah to the buttress, even as far as the corner.

(Verse 25): **Palal the son of Uzai made repairs opposite the buttress, and on the tower which projects from the king's upper house that was by the court of the prison. After him Pedaiah the son of Parosh made repairs.**

on the tower which projects from the king's upper house: Or the highest tower, and the tower was outside the king's house, i.e. protruding from it in order to defend the place. (The foundation of this tower was actually found in archeology.) If we understand that the highest king is Christ, who is from heaven, and that the highest king's house is the church, the meaning would be that everyone who is from outside is invited to the church. Christ is the cornerstone that connects everyone and is the tower in which everyone takes refuge.

(Verse 26): **Moreover the Nethinim who dwelt in Ophel made repairs as far as the place in front of the Water Gate toward the east, and on the projecting tower.**

The mentioned **Ophel** is to the south of the temple and was fortified and impregnable. The Water Gate had a wide square in front of it (Nehemiah 8: 1,3). Verse (26) is an interjectional sentence.

(Verse 27): **After them the Tekoites repaired another section, next to the great projecting tower, and as far as the wall of Ophel.**

(Verse 28): **Beyond the Horse Gate the priests made repairs, each in front of his own house.**

the Horse Gate: It is to the east and overlooks the Kidron Valley. It may be the place of the horses mentioned in (2 Kings 23: 11) dedicated to sun worship, or the gate through which the king's horses enter their stables. Horses are a description given to believers: "I have compared you, my love, To my filly among Pharaoh's chariots." (Song of Solomon 1: 9). Believers are the white horse: "a white horse" in (Revelation 6: 2). The one who leads the white horse is Christ. The work of the priests is to prepare the people through their service to accept being horses that Christ justifies with His blood and leads them in the battle against the Satan.

(Verse 29): **After them Zadok the son of Immer made repairs in front of his own house. After him Shemaiah the son of Shechaniah, the keeper of the East Gate, made repairs.**

(Verse 30): **After him Hananiah the son of Shelemiah, and Hanun, the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired another section. After him Meshullam the son of Berechiah made repairs in front of his dwelling.**

in front of his dwelling: Meshullam was probably a high-ranking priest who had a chamber in the house of the Lord.

(Verse 31): **After him Malchijah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs as far as the house of the Nethinim and of the merchants, in front of the Miphkad Gate, and as far as the upper room at the corner.**

the house of the Nethinim: The Nethinim were residents of the hill, and the house mentioned here may have been an administrative house for those who served at the temple.

(Verse 32): **And between the upper room at the corner, as far as the Sheep Gate, the goldsmiths and the merchants made repairs.**

The Gates

The earthly gates of Jerusalem have clear references to the Church:

1. The Sheep Gate:

Through it, the sacrifices enter, which refers to the believers, the living sacrifices who enter through their faith in Christ, the Sheep Gate.

2. The Fish Gate:

If the Gate of the Sheep refers to the sheep actually present inside the pen (a reference to the Jews for their previous faith in God), then the fish refers to the souls lost in the world likened to the sea, and Christ came for all. The disciples of Christ were fishermen, so they brought the entire pagan world to faith (i.e. the nations).

3. The Old Gate:

Whether it is the Sheep Gate or the Fish Gate, they are a reference to Christ, for He is the Gate, and here it is called the Old Gate, for He is the Eternal Word of God.

4. The Valley Gate:

A reference to the fact that humility is the only way to enter Jerusalem and to be fruitful. The valley is filled with rivers, which makes it fruitful.

5. The Refuse Gate:

Meaning waste. This is another condition for fruitfulness. To consider the world as rubbish (Philippians 3: 8). On the other hand, whoever comes to God repentant, God accepts him. And whoever persists in his sins is rejected.

6. The Fountain Gate:

The fountain is different from the well. The well is dug by a human. But the fountain overflows by itself. It is a sign of the Holy Spirit (John 7: 37-39).

7. The Water Gate:

From it, they bring the water they use for washing. This symbolizes baptism.

8. The Horse Gate:

It symbolizes striving, as horses are used in wars, and we are in a continuous war until this life ends. The Song of Solomon compares the bride to a horse. The Book of Revelation says about Christ the Bridegroom that he is riding on a white horse (the bride whom He leads in her war against Satan), and he came out conquering (on the day of the cross) and to conquer (in us).

9. The East Gate:

Our struggle continues until our Christ rises in His second coming, and He is the Sun of Righteousness.

10. The Miphkad Gate:

At this gate, they harvested the soldiers when they went to war and returned. All the faithful children of God are known to Him by their names and numbers [symbolically 153 = the number of fish in the disciples' nets (John 21)].

Chapter 4

(Verses 1-6): **But it so happened, when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, that he was furious and very indignant, and mocked the Jews. 2 And he spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they complete it in a day? Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish—stones that are burned?" 3 Now Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, "Whatever they build, if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall." 4 Hear, O our God, for we are despised; turn their reproach on their own heads, and give them as plunder to a land of captivity! 5 Do not cover their iniquity, and do not let their sin be blotted out from before You; for they have provoked You to anger before the builders. 6 So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.**

Here, we find the enemies' resistance to God's work; there must be internal and external resistance for successful work. In (verse 2) **his brethren** = the leaders of the Samaritans. **the army of Samaria** = that is the Samaritans who are capable of war. They were probably a disorganized group who gathered for fear that the Jews would build their city, Jerusalem and their kingdom would return to what it was. Or the army of Samaria is the garrison subject to Sanballat as governor, and most probably, they are both groups together. **Will they fortify themselves?**= will the king of Persia and his men leave them to do this work? **the heaps of rubbish** = those who recently excavated the foundations of the temple found that dirt and stones were piled above the foundations in some places 125 feet. **that are burned** = the Babylonians demolished everything made of stone and burned everything made of wood. In (verse 3) **if even a fox goes up on it** = that is, a light animal destroys the wall if it climbs on it. Note that they were mocking the Jews while they were afraid of them. In (verse 4) **Hear, O our God** = Nehemiah prayed according to his custom. So, Nehemiah did not respond to the mockery but prayed. And we notice in his prayer that he asks for their punishment. And this is considered in the spirit of prophecy and not in the spirit of revenge. And he does not ask for this for personal glory or because he had been personally insulted but because he was jealous for the glory of God. **for they have provoked You to anger before the builders** (verse 5) = the enemies intended for the words of mockery to reach the people who were building the wall to cause confusion, despair and frustration among them and distance them from their leader and stop the work, as Rabshakeh did (2 Kings 18: 26-28). In (verse 6) **up to half** = to half the intended height. Because we see in verse (7) that they had completed the circle of the wall, and it was all connected to each other and that was completed in 52 days.

(Verses 7-14): **Now it happened, when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the walls of Jerusalem were being restored and the gaps were beginning to be closed, that they became very angry, 8 and all of them conspired together to come and attack Jerusalem and create confusion. 9 Nevertheless we made our prayer to our God, and because of them we set a watch against them day and night. 10 Then Judah said, "The strength of the laborers is failing, and there is so much rubbish that we are not able to build the wall." 11 And our adversaries said, "They will neither know nor see anything, till we come into their midst and kill them and cause the work to cease." 12 So it was, when the Jews who dwelt near them came, that they told us ten**

times, "From whatever place you turn, they will be upon us." 13 Therefore I positioned men behind the lower parts of the wall, at the openings; and I set the people according to their families, with their swords, their spears, and their bows. 14 And I looked, and arose and said to the nobles, to the leaders, and to the rest of the people, "Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses."

the Ashdodites: One of the five cities of Palestine. Note the large number of enemies of the people of God.

Nevertheless we made our prayer to our God, and because of them we set a watch against them day and night: Prayer first, then work and striving, as both complement each other. Prayer alone is not enough without work. Work alone is not enough without prayer. Grace and striving complement each other. **Then Judah said** = They had grown weary because the amount of work was great, and the resistance was great, as there were resistances from the outside and fears from the inside. **there is so much rubbish** = They had to dig a lot to uncover the foundation or lay a new foundation. Here is another problem, as the Jews themselves are now slacking off on the pretext that there is much rubbish. The meaning of (verse 11) is that the enemies spread rumours to frighten them, that the enemies would enter upon them and kill them suddenly. The meaning of (verse 12) is that the Jews who lived outside Jerusalem and were adjacent to the Samaritans, Ammonites and Arabs would come to work on the wall. When they came, they would bring with them what they heard of rumours and the enemies' plots against the people, that the enemies would come suddenly and enter and kill and stop the work. **ten times** = that is, many times, because every day they came to work, they brought scary news.

Therefore I positioned men: He took a portion of the people and made them guards. Some were under the wall to defend, and some were on top of the wall to watch. **And I looked** = I looked up to God, the source of help.

Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord = No matter how mighty, violent and strong the enemy is, God is stronger, and the mighty enemy is nothing before Him.

(Verses 15-23): **And it happened, when our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had brought their plot to nothing, that all of us returned to the wall, everyone to his work. 16 So it was, from that time on, that half of my servants worked at construction, while the other half held the spears, the shields, the bows, and wore armor; and the leaders were behind all the house of Judah. 17 Those who built on the wall, and those who carried burdens, loaded themselves so that with one hand they worked at construction, and with the other held a weapon. 18 Every one of the builders had his sword girded at his side as he built. And the one who sounded the trumpet was beside me. 19 Then I said to the nobles, the rulers, and the rest of the people, "The work is great and extensive, and we are separated far from one another on the wall. 20 Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us." 21 So we labored in the work, and half of the men held the spears from daybreak until the stars appeared. 22 At the same time I also said to the people, "Let each man and his servant stay at night in Jerusalem, that they may be our guard by night and a working**

party by day." 23 So neither I, my brethren, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me took off our clothes, except that everyone took them off for washing.

What happened was that Nehemiah divided the workers into two parts, one for building and one for war, hindering the building. When Nehemiah heard that the enemies understood they were ready, he sent the men back to build.

In (verse 15) **God had brought their plot to nothing** = he had asked God for help, and here he admits that it was God who nullified their advice.

In (verse 16) **half of my servants** = his servants assigned to him as a governor. **and the leaders were behind** = they teach, lead, and strengthen the hands of the people. In (verse 17) **with one hand they worked at construction, and with the other held a weapon**, this is not understood literally, and its interpretation in (verse 18) is that the sword is hanging on the side of each one, and the building is done with both hands. Spiritually, our weapon is the word of God, and we must not leave it while we work all day long; the word of God is a two-edged sword (Hebrews 4: 12) and Lord Christ fought the devil with it. With the same concept we understand **And the one who sounded the trumpet was beside me** = spiritual warfare needs a trumpeter who warns that there is an attack and the attack may come from any side. The trumpet is also the word of God (Isaiah 58: 1), and it gathers everyone to fight, which is the meaning of verse (20). Therefore, if the church hears about a weak party or person, they must support him with their prayers, love, and care for him so he does not fail. In (verse 21) **and half of the men** = that is, half of Nehemiah's servants mentioned in verse (16), and those wore heavy weapons (spears/shields/bow/shields) as for our weapons (Ephesians 6). And the ordinary people who built were content to carry swords. In (verse 22) **stay at night** = it was dangerous for them if they left Jerusalem and went to their places, and it was also dangerous for those who remained in Jerusalem because they had become few. In (verse 23) **took off our clothes** = that is, they were ready to fight at all times, even during their little sleep time. And this saying is about Nehemiah and his young servants. **except that everyone took them off for washing** = they were always ready, so they would bathe and drink while they were armed so that the enemy would not surprise them.

This is exactly what Jesus meant when he said, "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming." (Matthew 24: 42) + "Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is." (Mark 13: 33). The meaning is that we should live our lives and go about our business in a normal way, but with the heart anticipating that hour at any moment, through a life of repentance and a constant connection of mind and heart with God, and the connection with God is in prayer.

Chapter 5

The events of this chapter may have taken place during Nehemiah's reign after the wall was built. But they began to appear, and complaints began to appear during the construction of the wall. This chapter was placed here so we know that God's work has opponents from outside and inside. Nehemiah suffered from external wars and internal wars. While there were many people busy with building and war, there were those inside who were busy obtaining interest from their poor brothers. The events of this chapter could hardly have taken place in 52 days, but they began during them. The people who were busy with building neglected their work, so they were forced to borrow money to eat, and others exploited them with interest.

(Verses 1-5): **And there was a great outcry of the people and their wives against their Jewish brethren. 2 For there were those who said, "We, our sons, and our daughters are many; therefore let us get grain, that we may eat and live." 3 There were also some who said, "We have mortgaged our lands and vineyards and houses, that we might buy grain because of the famine." 4 There were also those who said, "We have borrowed money for the king's tax on our lands and vineyards. 5 Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children; and indeed we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters have been brought into slavery. It is not in our power to redeem them, for other men have our lands and vineyards."**

And there was a great outcry: Because of the lack of security outside and the large amount of work in repairing the walls, they neglected their normal work, such as working the land and trading, so they became poor and were forced to borrow from their Jewish brothers who took advantage of the situation and lent them with interest. In (verse 2) **let us get grain** = they did not find food for themselves and their homes. Here, we see them asking for food to live. This is while their brothers became rich at their expense. In (verse 4) **the king's tax** = meaning that the taxes were heavy on them in addition to the debts and interest. In (verse 5) **our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren** = here, the people complain that because of the debts, they were forced to sell their fields, homes and even their children. The meaning of their complaint is: Is it appropriate for our Jewish brothers to buy our children and our flesh like their flesh? Meaning: We are all one people. And we all need food and drink.

(Verses 6-13): **And I became very angry when I heard their outcry and these words. 7 After serious thought, I rebuked the nobles and rulers, and said to them, "Each of you is exacting usury from his brother." So I called a great assembly against them. 8 And I said to them, "According to our ability we have redeemed our Jewish brethren who were sold to the nations. Now indeed, will you even sell your brethren? Or should they be sold to us?" Then they were silenced and found nothing to say. 9 Then I said, "What you are doing is not good. Should you not walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the nations, our enemies? 10 I also, with my brethren and my servants, am lending them money and grain. Please, let us stop this usury! 11 Restore now to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their olive groves, and their houses, also a hundredth of the money and the grain, the new wine and the oil, that you have charged them." 12 So they said, "We will restore it, and will require nothing from them; we will do as you say." Then I called the priests, and required an oath**

from them that they would do according to this promise. 13 Then I shook out the fold of my garment and said, "So may God shake out each man from his house, and from his property, who does not perform this promise. Even thus may he be shaken out and emptied." And all the assembly said, "Amen!" and praised the Lord. Then the people did according to this promise.

This problem does not wait until the wall is finished, so what did Nehemiah do? "Justice cannot be postponed."

1. **I became very angry** Verse 6 Showing anger to frighten the wrongdoer.
2. **After serious thought** Verse 7 Meaning thinking wisely and not emotionally.
3. **I rebuked the nobles and rulers** ... Verse 7 He rebuked the rich, the cause of the problem, and the rich should have mercy on his poor brother.
4. **So I called a great assembly against them**, verse 7. Here, a great assembly witnesses against them to testify to his statement.
5. **I also, with my brethren and my servants, am lending them**, verse 10. Here, Nehemiah admits that his servants did the same thing, and he considers himself as wrong as them since they are his servants. Or that the servants did this without Nehemiah's knowledge for the benefit of Nehemiah, without telling Nehemiah. From all that we have seen of Nehemiah's generosity, it is inconceivable that he would allow lending to the poor at interest. Review the verses (Nehemiah 5:14-19) to see how Nehemiah acted as a governor and how he left his personal rights.
6. **Restore now to them** ... verse 11. This is a positive action.
7. **Then I called the priests, and required an oath from them**, verse 12. Here, the priests testify against them.

In (verse 7) **a great assembly** = a large number of people. In (verse 8) **we have redeemed our Jewish brethren** = perhaps it refers to what they had done in the place of captivity, that is, they redeemed their brothers from slavery. This is to rebuke them because they enslaved their poor brothers. In (verse 10), we find Nehemiah admitting that his servants did the same thing: they lent money to the people with interest. And here, as an example, he orders his servants to return the usurious money.

In (verse 8) **we have redeemed our Jewish brethren** = perhaps referring to what they had done in the place of captivity; that is, they redeemed their brothers from slavery. This is to rebuke them because they enslaved their poor brothers. In (verse 10) we find Nehemiah here admitting that his servants did the same thing: they lent money to the people at interest. Here, as an example, he orders his servants to return the usurious money.

also a hundredth of the money in verse 11 means 1% interest per month, that is, 12% annually. This percentage is the profit that the rich usurer who lent money to the poor received, which they received

monthly from these poor people. Nehemiah asked these rich usurers, his brothers, and his servants to return all the profits they received from the poor.

And they all agreed so the priests witnessed against them (verse 12). And in (verse 13) **Then I shook out the fold of my garment** = a symbolic act indicating that God rejects and shakes away from him whoever does not act according to these words that were agreed upon, and he will be excommunicated in Israel. **and praised the Lord** = because He saved them from their distress and saved them from division.

(Verses 14-19): **Moreover, from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year until the thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes, twelve years, neither I nor my brothers ate the governor's provisions. 15 But the former governors who were before me laid burdens on the people, and took from them bread and wine, besides forty shekels of silver. Yes, even their servants bore rule over the people, but I did not do so, because of the fear of God. 16 Indeed, I also continued the work on this wall, and we did not buy any land. All my servants were gathered there for the work. 17 And at my table were one hundred and fifty Jews and rulers, besides those who came to us from the nations around us. 18 Now that which was prepared daily was one ox and six choice sheep. Also fowl were prepared for me, and once every ten days an abundance of all kinds of wine. Yet in spite of this I did not demand the governor's provisions, because the bondage was heavy on this people. 19 Remember me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people.**

the governor's provisions: A metaphor for everything the people had to offer the governor. He says this about himself to be an example for every governor. In (verse 15), **forty shekels** = this was required of the people every day in cash. **even their servants bore rule over the people** = without mercy, and this was with the knowledge of their masters. As for Nehemiah, he paid his expenses, did not burden the people, was generous and hosted many; rather, he and his servants stuck to the work of the wall. **we did not buy any land** = he had the opportunity to own fields, but he spent his money on those in need. In (verse 17) **Jews and rulers** = the Jews who came from Babylon to live in Jerusalem. The rulers were Jews and foreigners, and Nehemiah spent money on these banquets, from his salary as governor and cupbearer to the king, and from what he saved from his presence in the palace. In (verse 19), **Remember me, my God** = he does not ask for a reward from man but from God.

Chapter 6

(Verses 1-9): **Now it happened when Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and the rest of our enemies heard that I had rebuilt the wall, and that there were no breaks left in it (though at that time I had not hung the doors in the gates), 2 that Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, "Come, let us meet together among the villages in the plain of Ono." But they thought to do me harm. 3 So I sent messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?" 4 But they sent me this message four times, and I answered them in the same manner. 5 Then Sanballat sent his servant to me as before, the fifth time, with an open letter in his hand. 6 In it was written: It is reported among the nations, and Geshem says, that you and the Jews plan to rebel; therefore, according to these rumors, you are rebuilding the wall, that you may be their king. 7 And you have also appointed prophets to proclaim concerning you at Jerusalem, saying, "There is a king in Judah!" Now these matters will be reported to the king. So come, therefore, and let us consult together. 8 Then I sent to him, saying, "No such things as you say are being done, but you invent them in your own heart." 9 For they all were trying to make us afraid, saying, "Their hands will be weakened in the work, and it will not be done." Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands.**

Before this, we saw Satan as a roaring lion, they attack violently, and here we find them trying to deceive. Here, we find a new plan against Nehemiah. Now, the wall has been built, but the gates have not been put up. This is the last chance for the enemies; if the gates were put up, the matter would be over. The new plan is for the enemies to invite Nehemiah to the plain of Ono, which is 32 km from Jerusalem, a long distance away. Ono has no walls, so Nehemiah would not suspect that they would imprison him inside, but they planned to kill him on the way. This is probably the serpent's deception, as they invite him under the pretext of consulting in love, where their purpose is to capture and kill him on the way. Perhaps others were preparing to attack Jerusalem if they succeeded in killing Nehemiah. However, Nehemiah understood their plan and goal, and we see that Nehemiah does not enter into a dialogue with them, for dialogue with the devil and his men is forbidden, as its result is death. This is what happened with Adam and Eve. Nehemiah's response was wonderful: **I am doing a great work** = this is what each of us should say since our work is the salvation of our souls and the salvation of the souls of all those we serve. There is no time for discussion because we have great work ahead of us, and time is short from now on (1 Corinthians 7: 29). **Why should the work cease** = this is a wise response because he did not tell them that he understood their plots so as not to provoke them. If Nehemiah had accepted to go, he would have been absent from Jerusalem for three days, and the work would have been halted. **with an open letter** = that is, written on paper to be spread among the people, and when the news spreads among the people they will be afraid and disturbed and leave the work, so Nehemiah is obliged to go to his enemies. The letter's content is that they accused Nehemiah of conspiring against the king and that his plot was to be king over the Jews. This news has now spread among the surrounding nations and there is an important witness to that: Geshem = **and Geshem says**. Therefore, the news is confirmed by the testimony of one of the respected. They thought Nehemiah would be afraid of this and that the people would be disturbed, and Nehemiah would be forced to go to them to help him refute these slanders before the king.

(Verses 10-14): **Afterward I came to the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah, the son of Mehetabel, who was a secret informer; and he said, "Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you; indeed, at night they will come to kill you." 11 And I said, "Should such a man as I flee? And who is there such as I who would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in!" 12 Then I perceived that God had not sent him at all, but that he pronounced this prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. 13 For this reason he was hired, that I should be afraid and act that way and sin, so that they might have cause for an evil report, that they might reproach me. 14 My God, remember Tobiah and Sanballat, according to these their works, and the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who would have made me afraid.**

The enemy is restless, and his tricks against God's children vary. Here, we find a new trick. They frighten him to hide, so he appears to the people as a coward, and he fails as a leader, and then the work fails. If Nehemiah hides, the people lose their leader, and if the leader is afraid, the people panic and are afraid, so they leave the building, and Sanballat comes and strikes Jerusalem and destroys the wall. **Shemaiah** = He claims to be a prophet, but he is a false prophet hired by Tobiah and Sanballat to repeat their evil words before Nehemiah. **was a secret informer** = this sentence came in KJV "**who was shut up**" which makes more sense. The meaning of this is that he closed the door on him and Nehemiah so that the meeting would be secret, or he claims to be alone with God and does not meet with man but only God, or he closed himself in as a sign to give Nehemiah an example to do the same thing, i.e. to close himself and hide in the temple. Zedekiah did this with his iron horns with the king of Judah (a false prophet), and this is what Agabus did with Paul's belt. Shemaiah's invitation to Nehemiah to enter the temple and close himself in had two problems:

1. To show people his fear.
2. He would enter the temple while not being a priest, thus violating the law and causing a rift between him and the priests.

Therefore, Nehemiah's response to these two points was:

1. **Should such a man as I flee?**
2. **And who is there such as I who would go into the temple to save his life?** = The temple is forbidden to enter for non-priests, and I am not a priest, so I will not live if I enter. Rather, if every person who fears, does he have a chance to enter the temple against the law? Rather, he will be killed.

Noadiah = She is also a false prophetess. The enemies hired a number of prophets against Nehemiah.

(Verses 15-19): **So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of Elul, in fifty-two days. 16 And it happened, when all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations around us saw these things, that they were very disheartened in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was done by our God. 17 Also in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters to Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came to them. 18 For many in Judah were pledged to him, because he was the son-in-law of Shechaniah the**

son of Arah, and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah. 19 Also they reported his good deeds before me, and reported my words to him. Tobiah sent letters to frighten me.

The wall was completed in 52 days because, in many places, it was not destroyed to the ground and over the past years, there were attempts to build, but they were always resisted, and the work stopped, but now, with Nehemiah's organization and wisdom and encouragement the work was completed. In (verse 16), **they were very disheartened in their own eyes** = they now knew that all the pains and hardships that God's people suffered were because God was disciplining His people for a period. Still, He loved and did not reject them and now supports them. They discovered this from the fact that they did not succeed in all their conspiracies, so **they were very disheartened in their own eyes** as a result of the failure of all their plans against God's people. In (verse 17) we find new problems for Nehemiah. There were some Jewish leaders who had a physical kinship with Tobiah [the Ammonite slave (Nehemiah 2: 10)] or were in alliance with him = **pledged to him**. Tobiah is the one who resisted Nehemiah so that the wall would not be built. Tobiah married a Jewess and was physically related to the high priest Eliashib (Nehemiah 13: 4). In (verse 19) **his good deeds** = he distributed money to the Jews, perhaps as a bribe. But here we find that those who pledged to him mention that these bribes are the good deeds of a good man who gives them to the poor and needy, and this is undoubtedly a reversal and opposite of the facts. It seems that the Jewish leaders preferred to be lenient and ally with their neighbours. If it had not been for Nehemiah, they would have agreed with the nations and become like them in their lives and worship. Here is a new war from within from the weak-willed people of mixed marriages. Tobiah sent letters to frighten Nehemiah. At first, he wanted to appear as a friend, and when he failed, his hostility appeared in sending threats.

The trials that faced the work and Nehemiah's attitude toward them

The son of Sirach says, " My son, if you come forward to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for temptation." (Sirach 2: 1). Here we find Nehemiah coming to serve the Lord and build a wall to protect the people of the Lord and the city of the Lord, Jerusalem. Let us see the trials that faced him and Zerubbabel before him, and these and many others like them face everyone who works in the service in the vineyard of the Lord:

Attempting to participate in the work to spoil it from within. This is what happened with Zerubbabel, as involving sinners in the work spoils it (see the story of Jehoshaphat).

Attempts to hinder the work in any way through lies, deception and false rumors.

Letters with false claims to the king, as happened with Zerubbabel, so the work stops for a while. They threatened Nehemiah, saying that they would send to the king that Nehemiah was planning to be king (verse 7).

Mocking and belittling the work being done and belittling it to spread despair and frustration so the workers would abandon the work. They said that if a fox climbed on the wall, the wall would fall.

Preparing to wage war, as the enemy, in his anger and hatred against any work that glorifies God, uses all means, from deception and fraud, even bloody wars (Nehemiah 4: 8).

Conspiracies to kill Nehemiah by calling him to leave Jerusalem, so they kill him.

Intimidating him to hide in the temple and accusing him of cowardice.

False rumors weakened the people and caused them to become lazy, fearful and weak.

Internal problems such as usury, which caused the workers to complain.

People with material interests were planted from within Jerusalem (the church), so they tried to spoil the work for their own personal interests (verses 17-19). We find some of the priests who had family relations with Tobiah, the Ammonite servant who resisted the work, here an attempt to spoil God's work by infiltrating the leadership [see also (Nehemiah 13)].

What was the position of Nehemiah and Zerubbabel in the face of all this?

Constant prayer, constant preparation, and constant work "**Why should the work cease**" (verse 3).

Bearing the armour "A hand to build and a hand to bear arms." As for us, our armour is in (Ephesians 6).

Refused to join with the wicked (Zerubbabel refused to include the Samaritans in the building).

Prepared some with armour and watched over the protection of those who build.

Resolved the internal problems of the people with justice.

Refused any dialogue with the serpent who works in these enemies.

Nehemiah did not waste his time responding to all their mockery, claims and lies, but continued to work and build. Responding and talking with these people is a discussion, and "But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes" (2 Timothy 2: 23).

And what does God do?

God nullifies their evil counsel (Nehemiah 4: 15).

He sends to those who work those who strengthen them (Haggai and Zechariah).

God participates in the work, so it must succeed, for God does not leave His servants to work alone.

"The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build" (Nehemiah 2: 20).

Paul the Apostle ends his second epistle to the Corinthians with this apostolic blessing:

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen. (2 Corinthians 13: 14).

And with whom does God work?

When God finds someone who has a zeal and a desire to do what Nehemiah did, God works with him, and the work succeeds.

Chapter 7

(Verses 1-4): **Then it was, when the wall was built and I had hung the doors, when the gatekeepers, the singers, and the Levites had been appointed, 2 that I gave the charge of Jerusalem to my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the leader of the citadel, for he was a faithful man and feared God more than many. 3 And I said to them, "Do not let the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot; and while they stand guard, let them shut and bar the doors; and appoint guards from among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, one at his watch station and another in front of his own house." 4 Now the city was large and spacious, but the people in it were few, and the houses were not rebuilt.**

After Nehemiah built the walls, he was concerned with the following:

1. Protecting and preserving the city (opening and closing the gates) [verses 1-4].
2. Building the city and filling it with people [verses 5-73].

the gatekeepers = without gatekeepers, the walls are worthless and easy to attack (Isaiah 62: 6). Rather, because the time was dangerous, the singers and Levites stood with the gatekeepers on the walls to help them. Perhaps the singers and Levites helped the gatekeepers if they had no work in the temple. We note that the worship of God is the protection of any place, and the faithful servants of God are the guards on the walls **I gave the charge of Jerusalem to my brother Hanani** = he is the one who told him about the condition of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1: 2). **Hananiah the leader of the citadel** = since his honesty was proven in his work in the palace, he deserved a greater job. "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much." Nehemiah probably appointed both Hanani and Hananiah in his place for his journey to Persia. **until the sun is hot** = so that the enemies would not enter the city. It was customary to open the gates at the sun's first light. The reason for this delay was the large number of enemies.

and while they stand guard = when the gates were opened, the guards had to be alert and standing. **the inhabitants of Jerusalem** = the guards were organized. Each person was responsible for guarding his house and what was around it. This is what we should be spiritually. The problem with Jerusalem and Nehemiah was that the number of people inside Jerusalem was small.

(Verses 5-73): **Then my God put it into my heart to gather the nobles, the rulers, and the people, that they might be registered by genealogy. And I found a register of the genealogy of those who had come up in the first return, and found written in it: 6 These are the people of the province who came back from the captivity, of those who had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away, and who returned to Jerusalem and Judah, everyone to his city. 7 Those who came with Zerubbabel were Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, and Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel: 8 the sons of Parosh, two thousand one hundred and seventy-two; 9 the sons of Shephatiah, three hundred and seventy-two; 10 the sons of Arah, six hundred and fifty-two; 11 the sons of Pahath-Moab, of the sons of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred and eighteen; 12 the sons of Elam, one thousand two hundred and**

fifty-four; 13 the sons of Zattu, eight hundred and forty-five; 14 the sons of Zaccai, seven hundred and sixty; 15 the sons of Binnui, six hundred and forty-eight; 16 the sons of Bebai, six hundred and twenty-eight; 17 the sons of Azgad, two thousand three hundred and twenty-two; 18 the sons of Adonikam, six hundred and sixty-seven; 19 the sons of Bigvai, two thousand and sixty-seven; 20 the sons of Adin, six hundred and fifty-five; 21 the sons of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety-eight; 22 the sons of Hashum, three hundred and twenty-eight; 23 the sons of Bezai, three hundred and twenty-four; 24 the sons of Hariph, one hundred and twelve; 25 the sons of Gibeon, ninety-five; 26 the men of Bethlehem and Netophah, one hundred and eighty-eight; 27 the men of Anathoth, one hundred and twenty-eight; 28 the men of Beth Azmaveth, forty-two; 29 the men of Kirjath Jearim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty-three; 30 the men of Ramah and Geba, six hundred and twenty-one; 31 the men of Michmas, one hundred and twenty-two; 32 the men of Bethel and Ai, one hundred and twenty-three; 33 the men of the other Nebo, fifty-two; 34 the sons of the other Elam, one thousand two hundred and fifty-four; 35 the sons of Harim, three hundred and twenty; 36 the sons of Jericho, three hundred and forty-five; 37 the sons of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred and twenty-one; 38 the sons of Senaah, three thousand nine hundred and thirty. 39 The priests: the sons of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred and seventy-three; 40 the sons of Immer, one thousand and fifty-two; 41 the sons of Pashhur, one thousand two hundred and forty-seven; 42 the sons of Harim, one thousand and seventeen. 43 The Levites: the sons of Jeshua, of Kadmiel, and of the sons of Hodevah, seventy-four. 44 The singers: the sons of Asaph, one hundred and forty-eight. 45 The gatekeepers: the sons of Shallum, the sons of Ater, the sons of Talmon, the sons of Akkub, the sons of Hatita, the sons of Shobai, one hundred and thirty-eight. 46 The Nethinim: the sons of Ziha, the sons of Hasupha, the sons of Tabbaoth, 47 the sons of Keros, the sons of Sia, the sons of Padon, 48 the sons of Lebana, the sons of Hagaba, the sons of Salmi, 49 the sons of Hanan, the sons of Giddel, the sons of Gahar, 50 the sons of Reaiah, the sons of Rezin, the sons of Nekoda, 51 the sons of Gazzam, the sons of Uzza, the sons of Paseah, 52 the sons of Besai, the sons of Meunim, the sons of Nephishesim, 53 the sons of Bakbuk, the sons of Hakupha, the sons of Harhur, 54 the sons of Bazlith, the sons of Mehida, the sons of Harsha, 55 the sons of Barkos, the sons of Sisera, the sons of Tamah, 56 the sons of Nezhiah, and the sons of Hatipha. 57 The sons of Solomon's servants: the sons of Sotai, the sons of Sophereth, the sons of Perida, 58 the sons of Jaala, the sons of Darkon, the sons of Giddel, 59 the sons of Shephatiah, the sons of Hattil, the sons of Pochereth of Zebaim, and the sons of Amon. 60 All the Nethinim, and the sons of Solomon's servants, were three hundred and ninety-two. 61 And these were the ones who came up from Tel Melah, Tel Harsha, Cherub, Addon, and Immer, but they could not identify their father's house nor their lineage, whether they were of Israel: 62 the sons of Delaiah, the sons of Tobiah, the sons of Nekoda, six hundred and forty-two; 63 and of the priests: the sons of Habaiah, the sons of Koz, the sons of Barzillai, who took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called by their name. 64 These sought their listing among those who were registered by genealogy, but it was not found; therefore they were excluded from the priesthood as defiled. 65 And the governor said to them that they should not eat of the most holy things till a priest could consult with the Urim and Thummim. 66 Altogether the whole assembly was forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty, 67 besides their male and female servants, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred and thirty-seven; and they had two hundred and forty-five men and women singers. 68 Their horses were seven hundred and thirty-six, their mules two hundred and forty-five, 69 their camels

four hundred and thirty-five, and donkeys six thousand seven hundred and twenty. 70 And some of the heads of the fathers' houses gave to the work. The governor gave to the treasury one thousand gold drachmas, fifty basins, and five hundred and thirty priestly garments. 71 Some of the heads of the fathers' houses gave to the treasury of the work twenty thousand gold drachmas, and two thousand two hundred silver minas. 72 And that which the rest of the people gave was twenty thousand gold drachmas, two thousand silver minas, and sixty-seven priestly garments. 73 So the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, some of the people, the Nethinim, and all Israel dwelt in their cities. When the seventh month came, the children of Israel were in their cities.

Then my God put it into my heart: Nehemiah considers all good things to be from God, so he prays to God. God manages all things, guides him in all things, and leads him in all things (James 1: 17). Here, we find a repetition of the names mentioned in (Ezra 2). The repetition of names and gifts indicates that God has His eye on His children. He knows them by name, those who have names written in the book of life. God rejoices in their gifts. We find that Nehemiah wanted only pure-blooded Jews (of known Jewish origin) to live in Jerusalem, so he returned to the records of Zerubbabel and Joshua in the year 536, and they were the basis for his plan. He settled some of them in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 11: 1). This was done by lot. The importance of these lists is that when they return to them, they will find that their number has greatly increased, so they will glorify God. The utmost importance of these lists is knowing the lineage of Christ.

Chapter 8

This chapter shows the concern for keeping and studying the Law. Without that, they will return to captivity again.

(Verses 1-8): **Now all the people gathered together as one man in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate; and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded Israel. 2 So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly of men and women and all who could hear with understanding on the first day of the seventh month. 3 Then he read from it in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate from morning until midday, before the men and women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. 4 So Ezra the scribe stood on a platform of wood which they had made for the purpose; and beside him, at his right hand, stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Urijah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah; and at his left hand Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam. 5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. 6 And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. Then all the people answered, "Amen, Amen!" while lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. 7 Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law; and the people stood in their place. 8 So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading.**

the seventh month: The wall was completed on the 25th of Elul, the sixth month (Nehemiah 6: 15) **as one man in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate** = the Water Gate refers to baptism, the entrance to the sacraments by which we are filled with the Holy Spirit and become one body and one spirit. This is the work of the Holy Spirit to make the church one bride of Christ. "For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." One virgin, not virgins. The meeting was in the open square of the House of God, which was spacious and could accommodate a large number of people. **and all who could hear with understanding** = that is, everyone who had the ability to understand what he heard. This meeting and the one before it when they were in Babylon, when they gathered to study the Law, was the beginning of the synagogues. The synagogue is a place where the Law is read, and then the teachers interpret it, as happened here. **and they told Ezra** = Here is the first mention of Ezra in the book because Ezra was busy collecting and arranging the books, as this was his service after the arrival of Nehemiah. After the people completed the walls, triumphing over the resistance of their enemies, they felt that they were God's special people and that they were separate from the nations, and what separated them was the presence of the Lord's Law among them, so they asked to hear this Law. Ezra had most likely completed his work, so they asked him to bring a book. The church is built on teaching, "Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine." (1 Timothy 4: 16). **on the first day of the seventh month** = it is the holiday of blowing trumpets. We notice that on the Feast of Trumpets, they read the Law, and the words of the book are a warning trumpet for everyone. In (verse 4) **a platform of wood** = is for everyone to see, and this is similar to where the church reading

take place now, but the platform is high. In (verse 5) we notice the people standing when the book is opened out of respect for the word of God, and thus, we stand in the church when hearing the reading of the Gospel. Ezra was reading and with him assistants and interpreters (their names are in verse 7), and perhaps they were translating from Hebrew to Aramaic as many of the people now speak Aramaic. In (verse 6) **And Ezra blessed the Lord** = and thus in the church and after reading the Gospel, we bless the Lord by saying "Glory be to God forever".

above all the people = we must humble ourselves before the word of God to understand it. In (verse 7) **and the Levites** = those mentioned here are Levites, so the conjunction does not add anything, but rather, it is an attribute of those mentioned; it is an explanatory conjunction, meaning "and these Levites."

(Verses 9-12): **And Nehemiah, who was the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn nor weep." For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the Law. 10 Then he said to them, "Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." 11 So the Levites quieted all the people, saying, "Be still, for the day is holy; do not be grieved." 12 And all the people went their way to eat and drink, to send portions and rejoice greatly, because they understood the words that were declared to them.**

for this day is holy: Because it is the first day of the seventh month and because they listened to the word of God in it.

do not mourn = They mourned because they understood that all their misfortunes were due to their sins. And sorrow for sin is the work of the Spirit of God in their hearts (John 16: 8). But sorrow for sin turns into spiritual joy (John 16: 20-22). There is a time for sorrow and joy, so he told them not to mourn. Thus, we learn the delicate balance between sorrow and tears for our sins and joy in God's forgiveness, love and mercy. **Then he said to them** = Most likely Ezra, **Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions** = In the Divine Liturgy, after we hear the holy word of God and the Gospel and pray, weeping over our sins and rejoicing in salvation, we eat and drink the body and blood of Christ and the whole church participates in this feast in which we rejoice. **for the joy of the Lord is your strength** = Spiritual joy is a permanent cure for the soul and body, not joy in the world's pleasures but in God's gifts, grace, forgiveness and love. We notice that joy comes after tears, for he who sows with tears reaps with joy. We notice Ezra's commandment, **"send portions"** During the feasts, they had to eat the finest food, and they also had to share with those who were unable to do so from the poor. **for the joy of the Lord is your strength:** If they had looked at their weapons and numbers, they would have feared and been sad, but if they had looked at the Lord, His protection, His promises, His love, and His power, they would have been strengthened and rejoiced.

(Verses 13-18): **Now on the second day the heads of the fathers' houses of all the people, with the priests and Levites, were gathered to Ezra the scribe, in order to understand the words of the Law. 14 And they found written in the Law, which the Lord had commanded by Moses, that the children of**

Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month, 15 and that they should announce and proclaim in all their cities and in Jerusalem, saying, "Go out to the mountain, and bring olive branches, branches of oil trees, myrtle branches, palm branches, and branches of leafy trees, to make booths, as it is written." 16 Then the people went out and brought them and made themselves booths, each one on the roof of his house, or in their courtyards or the courts of the house of God, and in the open square of the Water Gate and in the open square of the Gate of Ephraim. 17 So the whole assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and sat under the booths; for since the days of Joshua the son of Nun until that day the children of Israel had not done so. And there was very great gladness. 18 Also day by day, from the first day until the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day there was a sacred assembly, according to the prescribed manner.

Now on the second day: They came on the second day because they had tasted the sweetness of the Word of God and its study from yesterday. Priests and servants are to study the Word of God to teach it to others. That is why we find here the heads, priests, and Levites (**the heads of the fathers' houses of all the people, with the priests and Levites**) coming to Ezra to learn and understand. And what did they hear? To commit themselves to celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles. What the church must do after studying the Word of God is to live in the spirit of alienation in this world. The people celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles with joy, piety, repentance, and return to God in a way that had not been seen since the days of Joshua the son of Nun. Discipline and teaching moved their hearts to weep, and weeping led them to joy and piety. This is a new experience that was not known to those who came before them, who rejoiced and celebrated in a superficial way. **a sacred assembly** = restraining oneself from normal behaviour on a day set aside for religious worship only.

Chapter 9

Here, we find another example of the balance between joy and weeping. In the previous chapter, they rejoiced in the Lord and His benevolence. Here, we see them weeping in fasting and voluntary humbling themselves on a day they themselves chose, not the Day of Atonement. Their fast was accompanied by prayer and humbling themselves. Such a fast is accepted by God (Isaiah 58: 5). An example of this balance in the rituals of our church is that we pray the prayer of thanksgiving and always follow it with the fiftieth psalm. Joy when we look to God and sorrow when we look at our sins.

Here we find the people confessing their sins and the sins of their fathers and that they themselves repeated the same sins. What doubled their sins was that God's benevolence or His discipline did not discipline them.

(Verse 1-3): **Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, in sackcloth, and with dust on their heads. 2 Then those of Israelite lineage separated themselves from all foreigners; and they stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. 3 And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the Lord their God for one-fourth of the day; and for another fourth they confessed and worshiped the Lord their God.**

on the twenty-fourth day: The first Feast of Tabernacles was the 15th of the month, and the eighth day of the month was the 23rd of the month. This was the day of the assembly (Leviticus 23: 39). Their meeting here on the 24th of the month was a voluntary meeting to confess sins. They had rejoiced before on the Feast of Tabernacles, and then they were sad and wept over their sins. They were happy when they looked upon the Lord and His goodness and sad when they looked upon themselves. **Then those of Israelite lineage separated themselves from all foreigners** = in their piety and confession of their sins, their covenants to the Lord to walk in His fear, and their humility and separation from evil, then in their separation from pagan marriages. **one-fourth of the day** = three hours.

(Verses 4-38): **Then Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Chenani stood on the stairs of the Levites and cried out with a loud voice to the Lord their God. 5 And the Levites, Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabniah, Sherebiah, Hodijah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah, said: "Stand up and bless the Lord your God Forever and ever! "Blessed be Your glorious name, Which is exalted above all blessing and praise! 6 You alone are the Lord; You have made heaven, The heaven of heavens, with all their host, The earth and everything on it, The seas and all that is in them, And You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You. 7 "You are the Lord God, Who chose Abram, And brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans, And gave him the name Abraham; 8 You found his heart faithful before You, And made a covenant with him To give the land of the Canaanites, The Hittites, the Amorites, The Perizzites, the Jebusites, And the Girgashites— To give it to his descendants. You have performed Your words, For You are righteous. 9 "You saw the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, And heard their cry by the Red Sea. 10 You showed signs and wonders against Pharaoh, Against all his servants, And against all the people of his land. For You knew that they acted proudly against them. So You made a name for Yourself, as it is this day. 11 And You divided the sea before them, So that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land; And their persecutors You threw into the**

deep, As a stone into the mighty waters. 12 Moreover You led them by day with a cloudy pillar, And by night with a pillar of fire, To give them light on the road Which they should travel. 13 "You came down also on Mount Sinai, And spoke with them from heaven, And gave them just ordinances and true laws, Good statutes and commandments. 14 You made known to them Your holy Sabbath, And commanded them precepts, statutes and laws, By the hand of Moses Your servant. 15 You gave them bread from heaven for their hunger, And brought them water out of the rock for their thirst, And told them to go in to possess the land Which You had sworn to give them. 16 "But they and our fathers acted proudly, Hardened their necks, And did not heed Your commandments. 17 They refused to obey, And they were not mindful of Your wonders That You did among them. But they hardened their necks, And in their rebellion They appointed a leader To return to their bondage. But You are God, Ready to pardon, Gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, Abundant in kindness, And did not forsake them. 18 "Even when they made a molded calf for themselves, And said, 'This is your god That brought you up out of Egypt,' And worked great provocations, 19 Yet in Your manifold mercies You did not forsake them in the wilderness. The pillar of the cloud did not depart from them by day, To lead them on the road; Nor the pillar of fire by night, To show them light, And the way they should go. 20 You also gave Your good Spirit to instruct them, And did not withhold Your manna from their mouth, And gave them water for their thirst. 21 Forty years You sustained them in the wilderness; They lacked nothing; Their clothes did not wear out And their feet did not swell. 22 "Moreover You gave them kingdoms and nations, And divided them into districts. So they took possession of the land of Sihon, The land of the king of Heshbon, And the land of Og king of Bashan. 23 You also multiplied their children as the stars of heaven, And brought them into the land Which You had told their fathers To go in and possess. 24 So the people went in And possessed the land; You subdued before them the inhabitants of the land, The Canaanites, And gave them into their hands, With their kings And the people of the land, That they might do with them as they wished. 25 And they took strong cities and a rich land, And possessed houses full of all goods, Cisterns already dug, vineyards, olive groves, And fruit trees in abundance. So they ate and were filled and grew fat, And delighted themselves in Your great goodness. 26 "Nevertheless they were disobedient And rebelled against You, Cast Your law behind their backs And killed Your prophets, who testified against them To turn them to Yourself; And they worked great provocations. 27 Therefore You delivered them into the hand of their enemies, Who oppressed them; And in the time of their trouble, When they cried to You, You heard from heaven; And according to Your abundant mercies You gave them deliverers who saved them From the hand of their enemies. 28 "But after they had rest, They again did evil before You. Therefore You left them in the hand of their enemies, So that they had dominion over them; Yet when they returned and cried out to You, You heard from heaven; And many times You delivered them according to Your mercies, 29 And testified against them, That You might bring them back to Your law. Yet they acted proudly, And did not heed Your commandments, But sinned against Your judgments, 'Which if a man does, he shall live by them.' And they shrugged their shoulders, Stiffened their necks, And would not hear. 30 Yet for many years You had patience with them, And testified against them by Your Spirit in Your prophets. Yet they would not listen; Therefore You gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands. 31 Nevertheless in Your great mercy You did not utterly consume them nor forsake them; For You are God, gracious and merciful. 32 "Now therefore, our God, The great, the mighty, and awesome God, Who keeps covenant and mercy: Do not let all the trouble seem small before You That

has come upon us, Our kings and our princes, Our priests and our prophets, Our fathers and on all Your people, From the days of the kings of Assyria until this day. 33 However You are just in all that has befallen us; For You have dealt faithfully, But we have done wickedly. 34 Neither our kings nor our princes, Our priests nor our fathers, Have kept Your law, Nor heeded Your commandments and Your testimonies, With which You testified against them. 35 For they have not served You in their kingdom, Or in the many good things that You gave them, Or in the large and rich land which You set before them; Nor did they turn from their wicked works. 36 "Here we are, servants today! And the land that You gave to our fathers, To eat its fruit and its bounty, Here we are, servants in it! 37 And it yields much increase to the kings You have set over us, Because of our sins; Also they have dominion over our bodies and our cattle At their pleasure; And we are in great distress. 38 "And because of all this, We make a sure covenant and write it; Our leaders, our Levites, and our priests seal it."

The Septuagint attributes the words of this prayer to Ezra. It is divided into important turning points in history, the history of God's dealings with His people. It is a song of blessing God for all His gifts to His people and that God is faithful to His people, for when He promises, He fulfills what He promises. And God disciplines His people out of His love for them if they sin.

1. The creation of the world.
2. The call of Abraham.
3. The exodus and the giving of the law.
4. God's care for His people in the wilderness.
5. The people's constant rebellion + God's ongoing mercy and forgiveness.
6. The entry into Canaan.
7. The people's rebellion and God's discipline of them + God sends judges.
8. The people's rebellion against the prophets.
9. God disciplines but is merciful and does not destroy them.
10. But now they are in slavery to the Persians.

After remembering their condition and their slavery to the Persians, they found that there was a great difference between their condition now and God's promises to them. Therefore, they wanted to renew the Sinai covenant. Let us note that contemplating God's goodness to us and to our fathers increases our shame for our sins, our love for God, and our faith that He will do it again and bless us.

Verse 4: **the stairs of the Levites** = meaning the platform on which they stood while reading (Nehemiah 8: 4). The names of the Levites here are 8 names. It seems that they divided the people into 8 groups, and one led each group in prayer.

Verse 7: **And gave him the name Abraham** = The name change was a sign of his new relationship with God.

Verse 14: **You made known to them Your holy Sabbath** = The commandment of the Sabbath was one of the things that distinguished the people of God, and it is not a yoke upon them but a good gift that raises their minds to the heavenly rest prepared for the people of God.

Verse 20: **You also gave Your good Spirit** = To open their ears, reveal their eyes, renew their hearts, convict them of their sins, comfort them in their troubles, and incline them to the love of God... Let us pray, "Do not take your Holy Spirit away from me."

Verse 38: **And because of all this** = when they remembered God's previous acts of love. They wanted to renew their covenant with God, confident in the hope that God would restore His blessings, graces, and favour upon them.

Chapter 10

(Verses 1-27): **Now those who placed their seal on the document were: Nehemiah the governor, the son of Hacaliah, and Zedekiah, 2 Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah, 3 Pashhur, Amariah, Malchijah, 4 Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch, 5 Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah, 6 Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch, 7 Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin, 8 Maaziah, Bilgai, and Shemaiah. These were the priests. 9 The Levites: Jeshua the son of Azaniah, Binnui of the sons of Henadad, and Kadmiel. 10 Their brethren: Shebaniah, Hodijah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan, 11 Micha, Rehob, Hashabiah, 12 Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah, 13 Hodijah, Bani, and Beninu. 14 The leaders of the people: Parosh, Pahath-Moab, Elam, Zattu, Bani, 15 Bunni, Azgad, Bebai, 16 Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin, 17 Ater, Hezekiah, Azzur, 18 Hodijah, Hashum, Bezai, 19 Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai, 20 Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir, 21 Meshezabel, Zadok, Jaddua, 22 Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah, 23 Hoshea, Hananiah, Hasshub, 24 Hallohesh, Pilha, Shobek, 25 Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah, 26 Ahijah, Hanan, Anan, 27 Malluch, Harim, and Baanah.**

We find the name of Ezra disappearing here, as it disappeared during the wall building. Ezra's role after Nehemiah's arrival was limited to preparing the books of the Old Testament. **Zedekiah** = because his name immediately after the governor may have been his scribe or a person of high status and perhaps from the royal family. The number of priests mentioned here is 21. While the chief priests were supposed to be 24, some of them may have refused to sign. **The leaders of the people** = the names are the names of the families.

(Verses 28-31): **Now the rest of the people—the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the Nethinim, and all those who had separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the Law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, everyone who had knowledge and understanding— 29 these joined with their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse and 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 ordinances and His statutes: 30 We would not give our daughters as wives to the peoples of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons; 31 if the peoples of the land brought wares or any grain to sell on the Sabbath day, we would not buy it from them on the Sabbath, or on a holy day; and we would forego the seventh year's produce and the exacting of every debt.**

the rest of the people: Not previously mentioned, i.e. the priests, Levites, gatekeepers, etc., who had sided with the nations of the earth and then separated from them and returned to the law of God (Ezra 6: 21). **everyone who had knowledge and understanding** = all those who were of age. **these joined with their brethren** = i.e. those who sealed the covenant on their behalf. The meaning is that the people agreed with the leaders who signed what they had done, so it was not possible for all the people to sign, so they delegated representatives on their behalf. **we would not buy it from them on the Sabbath** = i.e. we will not encourage the nations to break the Sabbath, and we will buy what we need the rest of the days of the week. We note that all of the above is called negative repentance, i.e. refraining from sin.

(Verses 32-39): **Also we made ordinances for ourselves, to exact from ourselves yearly one-third of a shekel for the service of the house of our God: 33 for the showbread, for the regular grain offering, for the regular burnt offering of the Sabbaths, the New Moons, and the set feasts; for the holy things, for the sin offerings to make atonement for Israel, and all the work of the house of our God. 34 We cast lots among the priests, the Levites, and the people, for bringing the wood offering into the house of our God, according to our fathers' houses, at the appointed times year by year, to burn on the altar of the Lord our God as it is written in the Law. 35 And we made ordinances to bring the firstfruits of our ground and the firstfruits of all fruit of all trees, year by year, to the house of the Lord; 36 to bring the firstborn of our sons and our cattle, as it is written in the Law, and the firstborn of our herds and our flocks, to the house of our God, to the priests who minister in the house of our God; 37 to bring the firstfruits of our dough, our offerings, the fruit from all kinds of trees, the new wine and oil, to the priests, to the storerooms of the house of our God; and to bring the tithes of our land to the Levites, for the Levites should receive the tithes in all our farming communities. 38 And the priest, the descendant of Aaron, shall be with the Levites when the Levites receive tithes; and the Levites shall bring up a tenth of the tithes to the house of our God, to the rooms of the storehouse. 39 For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the offering of the grain, of the new wine and the oil, to the storerooms where the articles of the sanctuary are, where the priests who minister and the gatekeepers and the singers are; and we will not neglect the house of our God.**

What comes here is what we call positive repentance: to do righteousness and not just refrain from doing evil. **to exact from ourselves yearly one-third of a shekel for the service of the house of our God:** according to the ordinance, ½ shekel should be paid, the rich like the poor. However, due to the current circumstances and the prevailing poverty, the leaders agreed to reduce what was paid to 1/3 shekel, and also the rich like the poor. But after the crisis subsided, it returned to ½ shekel, which is how it was in the days of Christ. **the regular** = (Exodus 29: 38-42) is permanent at its appointed times. And the rest of the seasonal offerings they committed to present. **We cast lots among the priests, the Levites, and the people, for bringing the wood offering into the house of our God** = wood was scarce in Jerusalem and its surroundings. A lot of wood was required for the altar, so they imposed on each house of the priests, Levites, and the people a certain amount of wood and arranged it by casting lots so that each house would know at what time it was required so that the wood would always be available.

In (verse 37) **the tithes of our land** = a tenth of everything the land produces (wheat / fruit of trees / wine / oil....)

the firstfruits of our dough = the first thing they kneaded from the new grain. In (verse 38) the Levites receive a tenth of everything from the people and give 1/10 of what they receive to the priests = **a tenth of the tithes**. In (verse 39) **we will not neglect the house of our God** = as long as the people are committed to providing for the priest's needs, the priest must not leave his service or the house of God. The church is the house of our God; God dwells in her, and the believers are His family and body, and He is the head of the body. The servants are the overseers of the house, and the family's work is to worship according to the church's rites. **we will not neglect the house of our God**, which may also mean that we will not return to idol worship.

Chapter 11

The talk here goes back to Nehemiah's problem: the city was large, and its people were few. Some leaders and a few people lived in it. The wall was completed, but the wall without men was worthless. Since Jerusalem was the capital and the center of worship, the safety of the entire Jewish people from the wars of the enemies and from the people's mixing with the nations was based on its safety. As for the people, they preferred to live in the villages and work their land because of fear of the fatigue of guard service. The city did not have any kind of entertainment but rather required great effort to build it. It was ruined and deserted, and it was the focus of the enemies who hated it and plotted against it. But let us note that where the plots against the church increased, God's grace and protection increased. This has a spiritual meaning: whoever wants to live in his impurity flees from the church, the holy Jerusalem, preferring to live in the world, as this is easier and better in his view than the struggle against sin and serving and building the church.

We find Nehemiah forcing some to live in Jerusalem, which was done by lot, according to the tenth percentage. Let us note that the tenths belong to God, and Jerusalem is the city of God.

(Verse 1): **Now the leaders of the people dwelt at Jerusalem; the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to dwell in Jerusalem, the holy city, and nine-tenths were to dwell in other cities.**

(Verse 2): **And the people blessed all the men who willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem.**

the people blessed: The people blessed those who had been chosen by lot to live in Jerusalem, for they were virtuous in accepting this voluntary service. The priests, Levites, and Nethinim lived with them in Jerusalem.

(Verses 3-8): **These are the heads of the province who dwelt in Jerusalem. (But in the cities of Judah everyone dwelt in his own possession in their cities—Israelites, priests, Levites, Nethinim, and descendants of Solomon's servants.) 4 Also in Jerusalem dwelt some of the children of Judah and of the children of Benjamin. The children of Judah: Athaiah the son of Uziah, the son of Zechariah, the son of Amariah, the son of Shephatiah, the son of Mahalalel, of the children of Perez; 5 and Maaseiah the son of Baruch, the son of Col-Hozeh, the son of Hazaiah, the son of Adaiiah, the son of Joiarib, the son of Zechariah, the son of Shiloni. 6 All the sons of Perez who dwelt at Jerusalem were four hundred and sixty-eight valiant men. 7 And these are the sons of Benjamin: Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Joed, the son of Pedaiah, the son of Kolaiah, the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ithiel, the son of Jeshaiiah; 8 and after him Gabbai and Sallai, nine hundred and twenty-eight.**

(Verse 9): **Joel the son of Zichri was their overseer, and Judah the son of Senuah was second over the city.**

Joel the son of Zichri was their overseer of the Benjamites in the city, **and Judah the son of Senuah** was the second.

(Verses 10-11): **Of the priests: Jedaiah the son of Joiarib, and Jachin; 11 Seraiah the son of Hilkiyah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, was the leader of the house of God.**

the leader of the house of God: It is probably an administrative position and is not a high priest.

(Verses 12-15): **Their brethren who did the work of the house were eight hundred and twenty-two; and Adaiah the son of Jeroham, the son of Pelaliah, the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah, the son of Pashhur, the son of Malchijah, 13 and his brethren, heads of the fathers' houses, were two hundred and forty-two; and Amashai the son of Azarel, the son of Ahzai, the son of Meshillemoth, the son of Immer, 14 and their brethren, mighty men of valor, were one hundred and twenty-eight. Their overseer was Zabdiel the son of one of the great men. 15 Also of the Levites: Shemaiah the son of Hasshub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni;**

(Verse 16): **Shabbethai and Jozabad, of the heads of the Levites, had the oversight of the business outside of the house of God;**

had the oversight of the business outside: The Levites who served as officers and judges for the people outside Jerusalem.

(Verses 17-21): **Mattaniah the son of Micha, the son of Zabdi, the son of Asaph, the leader who began the thanksgiving with prayer; Bakbukiah, the second among his brethren; and Abda the son of Shammua, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun. 18 All the Levites in the holy city were two hundred and eighty-four. 19 Moreover the gatekeepers, Akkub, Talmon, and their brethren who kept the gates, were one hundred and seventy-two. 20 And the rest of Israel, of the priests and Levites, were in all the cities of Judah, everyone in his inheritance. 21 But the Nethinim dwelt in Ophel. And Ziha and Gishpa were over the Nethinim.**

(Verse 22): **Also the overseer 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 in charge of the service of the house of God.**

the overseer: A supervisor or episcopate (bishop) is responsible for their care.

(Verse 23): **For it was the king's command concerning them that a certain portion should be for the singers, a quota day by day.**

the king's command: Some understand it as Cyrus's commandment. Some understand it as David's commandment. The important thing is that even if it was Cyrus's commandment, he would have agreed to David's commandment. And because the commandment is David's commandment, the interpretation that David is the intended king is the most appropriate interpretation. **concerning them** = that is, concerning the Levites, especially the singers. **a quota day by day** = that is, paying their daily expenses.

(Verse 24): **Pethahiah the son of Meshezabel, of the children of Zerah the son of Judah, was the king's deputy in all matters concerning the people.**

Pethahiah: He is probably the one who collects taxes from the Jews, pays what he collects to the temple from what the king allocated for the temple, and pays the rest to the king's treasury. He was in Shushan, the palace. It is a blessing from God that this person is Jewish:

1. The king trusts him.
2. He is honest with his people and does not steal from them.

(Verses 25-35): **And as for the villages with their fields, some of the children of Judah dwelt in Kirjath Arba and its villages, Dibon and its villages, Jekabzeel and its villages; 26 in Jeshua, Moladah, Beth Pelet, 27 Hazar Shual, and Beersheba and its villages; 28 in Ziklag and Meconah and its villages; 29 in En Rimmon, Zorah, Jarmuth, 30 Zanoah, Adullam, and their villages; in Lachish and its fields; in Azekah and its villages. They dwelt from Beersheba to the Valley of Hinnom. 31 Also the children of Benjamin from Geba dwelt in Michmash, Aija, and Bethel, and their villages; 32 in Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah; 33 in Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim; 34 in Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat; 35 in Lod, Ono, and the Valley of Craftsmen.**

(Verse 36): **Some of the Judean divisions of Levites were in Benjamin.**

The Levites lived in the midst of Judah and Benjamin. Note that the Kingdom of Judah was called Israel, so there were no longer two kingdoms after the captivity.

Chapter 12

"The righteous will be in everlasting remembrance." (Psalm 112: 6). The names of the righteous are written in the Book of Life, so the Bible mentions names frequently. The priests here in this list have different names than the priests in (Ezra 2). Most likely, those mentioned here are descendants of those who went up with Zerubbabel and Joshua. Or those mentioned here are the heads of the houses of the priests mentioned in (Ezra 2).

(Verse 1): **Now these are the priests and the Levites who came up with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra,**

Ezra: He is not the same Ezra the scribe.

(Verses 2-7): **Amariah, Malluch, Hattush, 3 Shechaniah, Rehum, Meremoth, 4 Iddo, Ginnethoi, Abijah, 5 Mijamin, Maadiah, Bilgah, 6 Shemaiah, Joiarib, Jedaiah, 7 Sallu, Amok, Hilkiyah, and Jedaiah. These were the heads of the priests and their brethren in the days of Jeshua.**

The Priests' names.

(Verses 8-9): **Moreover the Levites were Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah who led the thanksgiving psalms, he and his brethren. 9 Also Bakbukiah and Unni, their brethren, stood across from them in their duties.**

Names of the heads of the Levites... **led the thanksgiving psalms** = responsible for praising in the temple.

(Verse 10): **Jeshua begot Joiakim, Joiakim begot Eliashib, Eliashib begot Joiada,**

This is a series of the chief priests, beginning with **Jeshua**, who went up with Zerubbabel and ending with **Joiada**. The names are few, which is evidence that some names were left out of the list of chief priests. The chief priests were important, because after the return from captivity, there were no longer kings for Israel, so history began to be attributed to the chief priests.

(Verse 11): **Joiada begot Jonathan, and Jonathan begot Jaddua.**

Joiada:

There are two interpretations about him:

1. He is the priest Joiada, who was present in 333 AD during the time of Alexander the Great. The Jewish historian Josephus mentions that the high priest Joiada went out to receive Alexander. Alexander bowed down to him, and Joiada showed him Daniel's prophecy about him. The question is, how did Nehemiah mention his name in 450 AD? The answer is that the high priests added his name later because of his fame, and this is a far possibility.

2. There are more than one Joiada, and the Joiada mentioned here is the grandfather of the Joiada who existed in the days of Alexander.

(Verse 12): **Now in the days of Joiakim, the priests, the heads of the fathers' houses were: of Seraiah, Meraiah; of Jeremiah, Hananiah;**

Seraiah, Meraiah: Meraiah was the head of Seraiah's House... and so on.

(Verses 13-16): **of Ezra, Meshullam; of Amariah, Jehohanan; 14 of Melichu, Jonathan; of Shebaniah, Joseph; 15 of Harim, Adna; of Meraioth, Helkai; 16 of Iddo, Zechariah; of Ginnethon, Meshullam;**

(Verse 17): **of Abijah, Zichri; the son of Minjamin; of Moadiah, Piltai;**

Minjamin: There are two possibilities:

1. The name of the head of the house of Minjamin was dropped.
2. **of Minjamin; of Moadiah, Piltai** = that from the descendants of Minjamin, Moadiah. And from the descendants of Moadiah, Piltai.

(Verses 18-21): **of Bilgah, Shammua; of Shemaiah, Jehonathan; 19 of Joiarib, Mattenai; of Jedaiah, Uzzi; 20 of Sallai, Kallai; of Amok, Eber; 21 of Hilkiah, Hashabiah; and of Jedaiah, Nethanel.**

(Verse 22): **During the reign of Darius the Persian, a record was also kept of the Levites and priests who had been heads of their fathers' houses in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan, and Jaddua.**

Darius the Persian: Here we return to verse (10), and there are two possibilities for this Darius:

- 1- If Joiada was the high priest during the days of Alexander. Darius would be Darius Codomannus, the last king of Persia.
- 2- If Joiada is another Joiada, Darius would be Darius Nothus in the year 424 BC.

(Verse 23): **The sons of Levi, the heads of the fathers' houses until the days of Johanan the son of Eliashib, were written in the book of the chronicles.**

(Verse 24): **And the heads of the Levites were Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brothers across from them, to praise and give thanks, group alternating with group, according to the command of David the man of God.**

across from them, to praise: One group was praising, and the other group was responding to them.

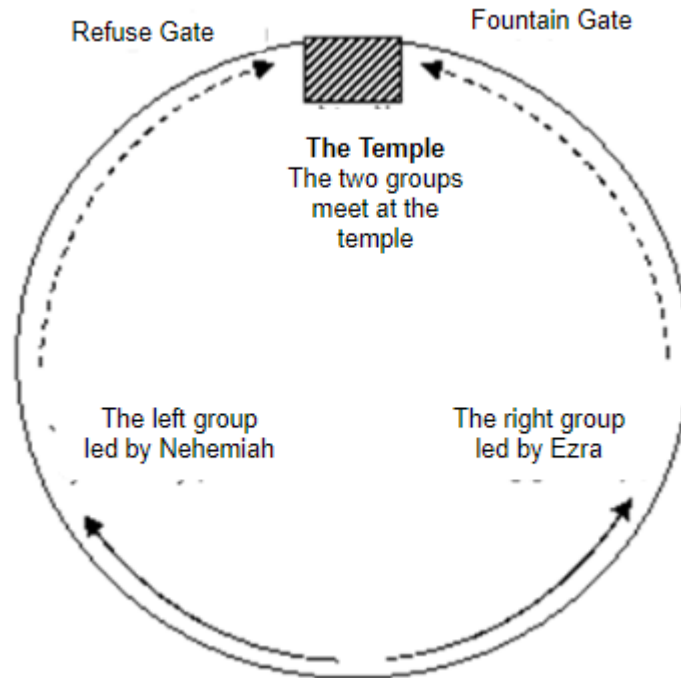
(Verses 25-26): **Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, and Akkub were gatekeepers keeping the watch at the storerooms of the gates. 26 These lived in the days of Joiakim the son of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor, and of Ezra the priest, the scribe.**

(Verses 27-30): **Now at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought out the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings and singing, with cymbals and stringed instruments and harps. 28 And the sons of the singers gathered together from the countryside around Jerusalem, from the villages of the Netophathites, 29 from the house of Gilgal, and from the fields of Geba and Azmaveth; for the singers had built themselves villages all around Jerusalem. 30 Then the priests and Levites purified themselves, and purified the people, the gates, and the wall.**

the dedication of the wall is a dedication of the whole city that is inside this wall. The whole city is dedicated to God, and God is the one who protects it. The wall was built with great pain and terror, and now they are celebrating with joy. Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. For the dedication or consecration to be correct, we find them purifying the people, the gates, and the wall, by pure water (Numbers 19: 9), symbolizing the blood of Christ. For God to protect the city, they must first purify their hearts. And for us to be dedicated to Christ, we must purify ourselves: 1. Purification by the blood of Christ; 2. By offering heartfelt repentance. We find the priests purifying themselves. He who purifies others must purify himself first. Their joy was because God helped them, and they were fulfilled. We notice that spiritual joy is accompanied by praise to God, so the dedication or consecration is: 1. By the blood of Christ; 2. Repentance; 3. A grateful heart praising God.

Netophathites = Netophath south of Jerusalem on the road to Bethlehem.

(Verses 31-43): **So I brought the leaders of Judah up on the wall, and appointed two large thanksgiving choirs. One went to the right hand on the wall toward the Refuse Gate. 32 After them went Hoshai and half of the leaders of Judah, 33 and Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, 34 Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, Jeremiah, 35 and some of the priests' sons with trumpets—Zechariah the son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Michaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of Asaph, 36 and his brethren, Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, and Hanani, with the musical instruments of David the man of God. And Ezra the scribe went before them. 37 By the Fountain Gate, in front of them, they went up the stairs of the City of David, on the stairway of the wall, beyond the house of David, as far as the Water Gate eastward. 38 The other thanksgiving choir went the opposite way, and I was behind them with half of the people on the wall, going past the Tower of the Ovens as far as the Broad Wall, 39 and above the Gate of Ephraim, above the Old Gate, above the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel, the Tower of the Hundred, as far as the Sheep Gate; and they stopped by the Gate of the Prison. 40 So the two thanksgiving choirs stood in the house of God, likewise I and the half of the rulers with me; 41 and the priests, Eliakim, Maaseiah, Minjamin, Michaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah, with trumpets; 42 also Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malchijah, Elam, and Ezer. The singers sang loudly with Jezrahiah the director. 43 Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and the children also rejoiced, so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard afar off.**



Nehemiah divided the groups of **thanksgiving choirs** = singers in praise into two groups, and they went around the city praising and singing, indicating that the whole city had become holy to the Lord.

Ezra led the first group, and the second group was led by Nehemiah. (This is similar to the resurrection procession or the procession of glorifying the saints in the church, as the deacons and priests go around the church hall and then enter the temple.) After the two groups had gone around Jerusalem, they met in the temple where they sang together. The people were watching them, the leaders were on the walls, and everyone rejoiced. In verse 31: **went** = that is, they walked in a procession. And the two groups met, one at the **Fountain Gate** and the other at the **Refuse Gate**. And the Fountain Gate and the Refuse Gate were both at the temple, that is, the two groups met at the temple. And thus, there was joy as they praised and sang for what the Lord had done for them and the presence of God in their midst.

(Verses 44-47): **And at the same time some were appointed over the rooms of the storehouse for the offerings, the firstfruits, and the tithes, to gather into them from the fields of the cities the portions specified by the Law for the priests and Levites; for Judah rejoiced over the priests and Levites who ministered. 45 Both the singers and the gatekeepers kept the charge of their God and the charge of the purification, according to the command of David and Solomon his son. 46 For in the days of David and Asaph of old there were chiefs of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving to God. 47 In the days of Zerubbabel and in the days of Nehemiah all Israel gave the portions for the singers and the gatekeepers, a portion for each day. They also consecrated holy things for the Levites, and the Levites consecrated them for the children of Aaron.**

at the same time: That is, the days of Nehemiah. **the storehouse** = the storehouse of the offerings, the first fruits, and the tithes, **for Judah rejoiced** = that is, they gave willingly. **who ministered** = those who performed the guard service....etc.

chiefs of the singers = the singers were having chiefs in the days of David and returned to the same system in the days of Nehemiah.

They also consecrated = the word sanctification means setting apart. The $\frac{1}{10}$ for the Levites, and the tenth of the tenth, the tenth of what the Levites had, goes to the priests.

Chapter 13

(Verses 1-3): **On that day they read from the Book of Moses in the hearing of the people, and in it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever come into the assembly of God, 2 because they had not met the children of Israel with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them. However, our God turned the curse into a blessing. 3 So it was, when they had heard the Law, that they separated all the mixed multitude from Israel.**

read from the Book of Moses: The benefit of reading the Bible is to expose our mistakes so that we may know them. **should ever come into the assembly of God** = The dignity of the people of Israel was that they were a people separated for God and would not mix with the nations. Thus, the dignity of the people of God is always isolation from evil. Whoever entered the assembly of God would have all the assembly's rights from worship, adhering to all the law, and marrying from them.

His saying **On that day** = most likely means Nehemiah's return from Persia for the second time, and he had spent about a year with the king. **they separated** = that is, they prevented the foreign leaders from participating in prayers and feasts and does not mean expelling them from the city.

(Verses 4-9): **Now before this, Eliashib the priest, having authority over the storerooms of the house of our God, was allied with Tobiah. 5 And he had prepared for him a large room, where previously they had stored the grain offerings, the frankincense, the articles, the tithes of grain, the new wine and oil, which were commanded to be given to the Levites and singers and gatekeepers, and the offerings for the priests. 6 But during all this I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I had returned to the king. Then after certain days I obtained leave from the king, 7 and I came to Jerusalem and discovered the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, in preparing a room for him in the courts of the house of God. 8 And it grieved me bitterly; therefore I threw all the household goods of Tobiah out of the room. 9 Then I commanded them to cleanse the rooms; and I brought back into them the articles of the house of God, with the grain offering and the frankincense.**

Eliashib: He is the high priest. He took advantage of Nehemiah's absence and committed great evil. He wasted the wealth and storehouses of the temple to build a great chamber for the pagan Tobiah [the Ammonite slave (Nehemiah 2: 10)], who was plotting evil against Jerusalem and who continued to fight Nehemiah and resist the building of the wall. He was like the Jewish people when they took advantage of Moses' absence on the mountain and made a golden calf. Thus, Satan sows thorns while people are asleep (Matthew 13: 25). What Eliashib did is considered contempt for the priesthood, as he gave his son, who was also a priest, in marriage to a pagan woman. It was the ultimate contempt for him to give a room in the temple to the pagan Tobiah, and this is similar to what his fathers did when they placed idols in the temple. **was allied with Tobiah** = perhaps the son of Eliashib who married a pagan woman and she was a relative of Sanballat. Because of Sanballat's and Tobiah's friendship, Tobiah became a relative of Eliashib, so it is a relationship of connection and alliance. In (verse 5) **And he had prepared for him a large room** = the rooms were used as stores for incense and offerings...etc. = he took a room that was used as a storeroom and turned it into a room in which Tobiah would reside.

therefore I threw all the household goods of Tobiah out of the room:

Tobiah here represents Satan. Therefore, we must cast away all his tools that he uses to arouse our lusts, to make our members as members of righteousness. When Satan comes, he will find nothing to use in us. And just as Tobit cleansed the temple, so Christ cleansed the temple.

(Verses 10-14): **I also realized that the portions for the Levites had not been given them; for each of the Levites and the singers who did the work had gone back to his field. 11 So I contended with the rulers, and said, "Why is the house of God forsaken?" And I gathered them together and set them in their place. 12 Then all Judah brought the tithe of the grain and the new wine and the oil to the storehouse. 13 And I appointed as treasurers over the storehouse Shelemiah the priest and Zadok the scribe, and of the Levites, Pedaiah; and next to them was Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah; for they were considered faithful, and their task was to distribute to their brethren. 14 Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and do not wipe out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for its services!**

the portions for the Levites had not been given them: Because of this, Malachi rebuked the people for neglecting the right of the house of God (Malachi 2: 8). His saying "**had not been given them**" may mean that the people neglected to pay their portions, or it may mean that the leaders took everything and did not give to the Levites. The Levites were forced to leave their service and go to the fields to earn their living. Therefore, Nehemiah renewed the whole system.

(Verses 15-22): **In those days I saw people in Judah treading winepresses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and loading donkeys with wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I warned them about the day on which they were selling provisions. 16 Men of Tyre dwelt there also, who brought in fish and all kinds of goods, and sold them on the Sabbath to the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. 17 Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said to them, "What evil thing is this that you do, by which you profane the Sabbath day? 18 Did not your fathers do thus, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Yet you bring added wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath." 19 So it was, at the gates of Jerusalem, as it began to be dark before the Sabbath, that I commanded the gates to be shut, and charged that they must not be opened till after the Sabbath. Then I posted some of my servants at the gates, so that no burdens would be brought in on the Sabbath day. 20 Now the merchants and sellers of all kinds of wares lodged outside Jerusalem once or twice. 21 Then I warned them, and said to them, "Why do you spend the night around the wall? If you do so again, I will lay hands on you!" From that time on they came no more on the Sabbath. 22 And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should go and guard the gates, to sanctify the Sabbath day. Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of Your mercy!**

Men of Tyre dwelt there: They lived in Jerusalem for a few days for their trade. **brought in fish** = they salted it and sold it. **Then I contended with the nobles of Judah** = those who took over the affairs in his absence. **Did not your fathers do thus** = because their fathers neglected the Sabbath, God punished them. **and charged that they must not be opened till after the Sabbath** = so that nothing will enter, as

appears in (verse 20). He appointed some of his young men to guard the gates temporarily until the guards of the gates from the Levites were arranged (verse 22) or the Levites returned to guard. Nehemiah's young men withdrew after the crisis ended, and things returned to normal.

(Verses 23-27): **In those days I also saw Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. 24 And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and could not speak the language of Judah, but spoke according to the language of one or the other people. 25 So I contended with them and cursed them, struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, "You shall not give your daughters as wives to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons or yourselves. 26 Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? Yet among many nations there was no king like him, who was beloved of his God; and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless pagan women caused even him to sin. 27 Should we then hear of your doing all this great evil, transgressing against our God by marrying pagan women?"**

It has now been about 25 years since Ezra purged the people of their pagan wives, but we find them returning again to the same mistake. The result was that the children either spoke half Hebrew and half Ashdodite. Or half the children of the family spoke the Hebrew tongue or language, and the other half spoke Ashdodite. Nehemiah was strict with them as the governor. If he had been lenient in this matter, the whole Jewish religion would have been lost, and they would have turned to paganism and worshipped idols. They are not wiser than Solomon, who fell into the same fall. Despite Solomon's wisdom, the pagan women he loved and married overcame him.

(Verses 28-30): **And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was a son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite; therefore I drove him from me. 29 Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites. 30 Thus I cleansed them of everything pagan. I also assigned duties to the priests and the Levites, each to his service,**

therefore I drove him from me: He committed a great sin because he was of the lineage of the priesthood. He defiled the priesthood by doing this and defiled the covenant of the priesthood. The priest had to be pure to serve in the temple. Nehemiah expelled him because he probably refused to leave his pagan wife. Josephus says that the name of this expelled priest was Manasseh. After Nehemiah expelled him, he went to his father-in-law Sanballat, who built a temple for him on Mount Gerizim and made him chief priest of Samaria (John 4: 20).

Another question:

Why did Nehemiah succeed where others failed, and why was he able to build the wall that remained in ruins for 140 years?

1. God wants the work to be done. The devil wants it not to be done. Therefore, every good work must be met with resistance. If the resistance coincides with internal laziness among the servants, the work stops, not because the devil is strong, but because the servant is lazy and lukewarm.

2. When Nehemiah was found with a zealous heart, a man of work and prayer, whose heart was occupied with the glory of God and the condition of his people and was concerned to work, all obstacles were humbled before him, and the weakness of Satan appeared before the power of God. The power of God appears with those who ask faithfully and put it in their hearts to work.

The Lord Christ says, "How often I wanted ... but you were not willing!" (Matthew 23: 37). When we want, we find that the unlimited power of God works with us, and this is the meaning of "for My strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12: 9).

(Verse 31): **and to bringing the wood offering and the firstfruits at appointed times. Remember me, O my God, for good!**