

PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

NEHEMIAH

[Nehemiah 1](#)

[Nehemiah 2](#)

[Nehemiah 4](#)

[Nehemiah 8](#)

[Nehemiah 9](#)

[Nehemiah 10](#)

[Nehemiah 12](#)

[Nehemiah 13](#)

NEHEMIAH 1

[NEXT](#) 2:1-20

HISTORY:

Chapter 1 The Book of Nehemiah comes at a most dismal time in history, for the vision was lost and the people became corrupted and uncommitted to the Living God. They lived like other people lived, uncommitted. They left God and God judged them. So Israel had given up hope in itself. The returned exiles had been in Jerusalem for many years and the walls of the city remained unrepaired, leaving the people defenseless and vulnerable. Chapter 1 starts with Nehemiah asking his brother Hanani and the others what was going on in Judah. Nehemiah indeed had a comfort-able lifestyle. He had a prestigious position as cup bearer* to the Persian king Artaxerxes. He had little power but he had great influence. He was trusted by the king and was also a man of God. His name meant "Comfort of Yahweh".

NOTE:

**The cupbearer was a personal body guard to the king, being the one who tasted wine and food before the king did - making sure no one was trying to poison the king.*

The very first thing that happens is that Nehemiah hears about the present situation of his people. He was gripped so much that it interrupted his regular routine. He sat down, wept, mourned* for several days, fasted and prayed because he was deeply grieved about the conditions of Jerusalem and poured out his heart to God to remember His own Promises. He didn't feel like eating. The way it is phrased seems to indicate that this is more a deliberate response rather than an involuntary one. He chose to fast, just like he chose to pray. He prayed about this for 4 months.

NOTE:

**How little we honestly mourn! Our repentant prayers and humbled words are more "lip words" than "heart words." But the Lord wants to see our hearts responding not just our lips. It is so easy for us to say that we care, but are we shaken from our comfortable lives enough to respond? Have you ever fasted for a special need of others or has it always been for yourself? Have you mourned for others more than for yourself? Do you regularly and sincerely pray more for others than for your self? God wants us to pray because there are real needs.*

For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. (2 Chron. 16:9)

PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

A life without prayer is a life without dependence upon God. If we don't depend upon God, then we don't in fact need a Savior. Some think that being saved is all there is to a Christian life. Salvation is the beginning of the Christian life, not the end.

The former nation of Israel was now in shambles. However, the physical rebuilding of the walls* is the theme through the first half of the book. There were "broken down walls in Jerusalem and its gates burned with fire." The rebuilding of the walls speaks about one solitary spark which relit a small flame of hope for the nation which otherwise would have been snuffed out. The book starts and ends in prayer. It shows him praying day and night.

NOTE:

** One has to understand when we talk about rebuilding a wall, that it is not the wall that is so important. The wall's importance is only as important as what stood behind the wall. Look at a watch case, the more special the watch case, the more expensive the watch. The more guards about a home, the more valuable the goods and people within are esteemed. What made the walls of Jerusalem so valuable are not the walls themselves, but what the walls would protect: the heart of the nation of Israel, the heart of God's people, the Jews. By being down, it brought dishonor to the Lord.*

POINT:

Remember Nehemiah was praying for his nation before he even had seen it, or lived in it. Nehemiah didn't just up and quit his job and make haste to Jerusalem. No he prayed and worked faithfully for 4 months.*

[TOP](#)

NEHEMIAH 2:1-20NEXT 4:1-9

INTRODUCTION:

2:1 And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence. Nehemiah had gained the King's respect through his competence on the job. He had to wait on an invitation before "Artaxerxes throne" The rule of the day was that no one was to appear before the king with sadness or bad news. He waited to approach the king in the Lord's time. Due to the close relationship that the king and Nehemiah had, the king could tell Nehemiah was upset and asked what was wrong.

NOTE:

**Nehemiah understood it was not his place to change the king's heart. He prayed and left it up to the Lord, instead of dropping hints and trying to manipulate the situation. Then one day, four months later, the king's heart was different. Are we making the mistake of trying to change someone else's heart, instead of leaving it up to the Lord to do it?*

¹Nehemiah had a lot of tools as well. He pulled them out, one by one, just when he needed them.

1. **Waiting:** The first tool Nehemiah used was the tool called waiting in verse 1. He was a man of decisive action, and when he prayed it was natural for him to ask God to provide an early, if not immediate, opportunity to speak to the king. Remember the closing verse in chapter one indicates that Nehemiah wanted success "today" in the presence of the king. However, he waited patiently on the Lord for an answer, just as we're urged to do in Hebrews 6:12: "...imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what was promised." Nehemiah could weep and pray and he could also wait and pray. Quiet reflection may have provided Nehemiah with fresh insight about how to approach the king.

2:2 Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid. **2:3** And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' s sepulchers, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?

2. **Trusting:** The second tool he fished out of his toolbox was called trusting in Verses 2-3. Fortunately, Nehemiah's faith was greater than his fear. The king asked him a question to find out why Nehemiah was not his chipper self. He knew that he was expected to be perfectly content just to be in the presence of the king. He did the right thing because he believed the Promises of God. Courage filled him when he realized it was no longer possible to hide his grief. Then, using wisdom, he affirms the king by saying, "Long live the king!" What Nehemiah also said was, "I want to honor the burial place of my fathers." This made a lot of sense to the King because the Persians honored their dead as well.

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

¹ Taken from, "How to Tackle a Tough Job" by Brian Bill
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

3. **Praying:** Nehemiah pulls out another very well-used tool – the tool of praying. Verse 4 begins with a direct question from the King: “What is it you want?” Before answering the King of Persia, Nehemiah needed to speak briefly with the King of Heaven. This is encouraging to me. You and I can pray at any time, in any place by sending up a brief prayer to God. Right before we have to give an answer to our boss, or before responding to our spouse, or when disciplining our kids, or when looking for a way to impact our neighbors for Christ, just shoot up a prayer. It doesn’t have to be long or even audible.

2:5 And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my father’s sepulchers, that I may build it. After the king had asked about Nehemiah’s request, Nehemiah prayed* (2:4) silently and quickly to the Lord, to be with him in making his request. He told the king exactly what was bothering him. He answers the king confidently & respectfully! He was tactful when he refers to Jerusalem, not as the capital of Judah, or even by its name, for it had a reputation as a troublesome city and had been the source of revolt in the empire before, but he designates it as “the city where my fathers are buried.” Now he makes the request: “Send me to Judah to rebuild it.”

NOTE:

**We consider the value of prayer many times, but we don't often consider the value of the short prayer that is uttered between the question and the answer; between the first statement and the second, the prayer that invites God into the conversation because we know that we can really mess this up if we do it on our own.*

2:6-10 The king and Nehemiah are still conversing. Nehemiah is being respectful as he plans and trust God.

4. **Planning:** The next tool is planning. Some people think that all you have to do is pray; others focus almost exclusively on planning. We are called to pray and plan; to worship and work; to make requests and to fill out requisitions. Notice that he knew how to answer the king’s questions. He anticipated the question related to how long his journey would take, so when the king asked, Nehemiah gave him a timeframe. He also knew how to plan the dangerous journey by asking for letters on the king’s stationery, which would give him safe passage through the different territories he came across. He didn’t stop there. Look at verse 8. We see here that he wanted permission to take some timber out of the king’s own forest. Nehemiah asked for, and received three things from the king: permission, protection, and provisions.
5. **Testifying:** The final tool he pulled out in **verses 8b-10** was the tool of testifying. He gave testimony to the goodness of God in answering his prayers, guiding his mind, directing his speech, and meeting his needs. Look at the last part of **verse 8**: “...And because the gracious hand of my God was upon me, the king granted my requests.” Only God could have brought about such a dramatic change in the king’s mind and the cupbearer’s destiny. Nehemiah was meticulous in his planning but it would not have been enough were it not for the Lord’s perfect timing, constant guidance, and overruling provision.

We’re still talking about “Overcoming Problems.”

2:11-16 Nehemiah has been given letters of safe travel and provision of timber from the king's forest, and sent with an army of officers and horsemen. Nehemiah was in Jerusalem for three days before he inspected the condition of the wall and gates, and even then he did it by night. He didn't yet want the public to know what he was doing until he had both an accurate picture and an executable plan.

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

Nehemiah was a master builder as well. As we move to the second half of chapter 2, we'll see that he tackled five tasks.

1. Nehemiah first **replenished his resources** in Verse 11. When he arrived in Jerusalem, he could appreciate why his brother Hanani was so bummed out. As he looked at the city's shattered walls and useless gates, he was overwhelmed. But, before he could examine them more closely, there was a greater priority. Nehemiah needed a nap! The journey of four months took its toll on Nehemiah – he was probably suffering from 'camel lag'! Ezra did the same thing when he arrived in Jerusalem many years earlier when he rested for three days (see Ezra 8:32). Just as Elijah needed rest under the juniper tree, and Jesus withdrew with his disciples for rest, so too, you and I need to make sure we replenish our resources on a regular basis. Here's a biblical principle: Don't try to make major decisions when you're tired.
2. After getting recharged, Nehemiah **assessed the need**. We see this in Verses 12-16. He then scouted out the damage to the walls one dark night. He discovered at least three things as he did his assessment:
 - It was a *demanding job*. The circuit of the walls was more than a mile long, and the new wall needed to be three or four feet thick, and fifteen to twenty feet high. This was not going to be easy but Nehemiah knew that he and his people had to give their best to it. The same is true for us – kingdom work is demanding, but it's worth our energy.
 - It was a *hazardous assignment*. Nehemiah went at night because there were enemies lurking around. He said nothing to anyone until the time was right. The careless leakage of information might bring the work to an end even before it started.
 - It was a *co-operative venture*. It was only by surveying the walls and gates that Nehemiah could calculate how the work should be divided.

That leads us to the third task.

2:17-20 Nehemiah didn't believe in a one-man band! He challenged the leaders to work with him, not for him! Sanballat – chief political enemy of Nehemiah and governor of Samaria. Tobiah – is thought to be a Jew with lands in Gilead with many family ties in Jerusalem. Sanballat and Tobiah are joined by GHEH-shem the Arab in opposing the work of the Lord. They mock, despise, and accuse in hopes of causing the Jews to fail. But Nehemiah stood strong and said that God would give them success. This is not the last we've heard from them, though. They are like Satan himself, who, after tempting Jesus.

POINT:

The "weapon of ridicule" is the only weapon some carry! A smirk, a raised eyebrow, or a mocking laugh, have kept many Christians from teaching Sunday School, playing an instrument, following a call to the mission field, moving towards full time ministry. Have you ever run into a Sanballat or a Tobiah? What have you been talked out of? Embarrassed by?

3. Nehemiah now **recruited workers** in Verse 17. *First*, he identifies with the workers: *Next*, he presents spiritual perspectives. *Then*, he invites immediate action.
4. That leads to the next task – Nehemiah **inspired confidence** in the people in Verse 18. While rebuilding the walls is an important job, the central theme in the book is the sufficiency of God. His

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

mind dwells on the greatness of God and he wants his workers to do the same. By telling the people what God had already done, he was firing them up for what He was about to do. His appeal was positive as He focused on the glory and greatness of God. When you think about it, it's amazing that the people said, "Let us start rebuilding."

5. The fifth task comes almost immediately after the decision to make an impact takes place: He **handled opposition**.

Whenever we get serious about kingdom work, Satan will oppose us. The first two enemies have already been identified in verse 10. Now Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite are joined by Geshem the Arab. First, they derided the efforts of the workers. They laughed at the workers and belittled both their resources and their plans. Next, they suggested that they were rebelling against the king – that weapon had worked once before in Ezra 4.

Nehemiah deals with these bad guys. He doesn't answer their lies or engage in a conversation with them. Nor does he just ignore them. He first exalts the God who called him to do the work in **Verse 20**: "The God of heaven will give us success." He wasn't concerned about their fictitious insinuations – he was concerned that God would get the glory in the project.

Nehemiah wanted his people to know that God had everything in control. Even though Geshem controlled the southern approach to the city, and the other two thugs patrolled the north and east, Nehemiah was not ruffled. In his reply, he made three things clear:

- Rebuilding the wall was God's work
- The Jews were God's servants
- Their opponents had no part in the matter.

The last part of **Verse 20** says it rather strongly: "We his servants will start rebuilding, but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it." Their opponents had no past right, not present prerogative (*privilege*) to be there, and no future role in the city.

Let me just say that as believers we should expect spiritual opposition and even be thankful for it. It's a sign that we've angered the enemy and encroached on some territory that He thinks is his. If there's no conflict or opposition, then we're probably not disturbing the enemy enough. Remember, Satan only shoots at moving targets!

The tools are now out of the toolbox – waiting, trusting, praying, planning, and testifying. Are you ready to pick them up and start using them? And the tasks are ready to be tackled – replenish your resources, assess the need, recruit workers, inspire confidence, and handle opposition.

Nehemiah always put God first before he did anything. Our life's problems sometimes threaten to immobilize us, but we have God on our side 24/7! He's our Motivator to motivate someone else!

Hope this has helped you in "Overcoming Problems."

SUMMARY:

The book of Nehemiah is like a gift dropped from heaven so that we could gain a glimpse of how God can work miracles in desperate situations. Nehemiah performed no signs, no wonders, nor any prophesies. He just faithfully did his work and prepared a city for the coming of the Messiah (Dan.9:24-27)

[TOP](#)

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

INTRODUCTION:

Nehemiah is a Jew who served Persian King Artaxerxes I as cupbearer or personal taster and server of royal food. He received a leave of absence to lead a team to Jerusalem to rebuild the city's fallen walls about 445 B.C. and to purify temple practices about 432. He exemplified godly servant leadership, and brought revival and covenant renewal to a dispirited people.

4:1 But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we bullded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. Sanballat was governor of Samaria, the region just north of Judea where Jerusalem was located. He insulted and mocked the Jews, became very angry and greatly enraged after hearing that the wall was rebuilt.

4:2 And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?— Sanballat spoke to his brethren and the army of Samaria saying *"What are these feeble Jews doing?" Will they expect to build this themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they build in a day? Will they revive the charred stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?"* The enemy will always mock your good intentions. God will always put the right one in place where He knows He will get the glory! Mocking someone is a sign of insecurity. There will be adversaries (enemies) speaking and there will be advocates (supporters) speaking. We know that the Samaritans didn't like the Jews and vice versa. But what God had placed within Nehemiah's heart was like fire shut-up in his bones and couldn't be stopped until completed! Even when you want to stop, it'll still be calling you to complete it. This reminds me of a homestead that's left to the family, and it begins to get run-down, but there's one out of the family that will want to rebuild the legacy left to the family, and then there are some that will want to sell and get the money (their share) of the property.

4:3 Now Toblah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they bulld, If a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall. Now Tobiah the Ammonite standing by adds to this criticism saying their stone wall will still break and tumble down even if a fox should climb upon it after building it. So, both Sanballat the Horonite who spoke to his brethren and the army of Samaria, and Tobiah the Ammonite had nothing good to say and cast despairing remarks to what was needed to be done, but didn't like who was doing it. We also had a third in 2:19 by the name of Geshem the Arabian. Three adversaries (*Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem*) and three advocates (*God, the king and the men sent with him*). Three things Nehemiah took into this battle: Purpose, Prayer, and Perseverance. All those things Tobiah and Sandballat were saying was to throw Nehemiah off guard, but he stayed true by pursuing his purpose; he prayed purposely, and he persevered with persistence even when mocked.

4:4 Hear, O our God; for we are despsled: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a

PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

prey in the land of captivity:— Nehemiah prayed, *"Hear us O Lord God for we are being mocked. Turn their reproach (criticism, rebuke, reprimand) upon their own heads, and let them be given up to wasting in a land where they are prisoners."* Nehemiah didn't have to say a word to his enemies. He said it all to God. He told God just how he and the workers felt and what he wanted to see happen to their enemies that were still against what was placed within his heart to do for Jerusalem—his father's sepulchres (2:5). He even wanted them to be placed in captivity like the 70yrs the Jews had been cast into.

4:5 And cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked thee to anger before the builders. The prayer continues: *"Do not cover their guilt or let their sin be blotted out from your sight, for they have opposed the building which we are doing."* Nehemiah laid it on the line. He didn't want them to get off with a slap on the wrist for their behavior. He went so far as to tell God that these men had provoked God Himself to anger in front of the workers. While praying Nehemiah never lost sight on the work to be done.

4:6 So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work. To conclude, in all that went on, Nehemiah and the workers persevered: *"So we built up the wall to half its height around the entire city, for the people had a mind to work."* Everybody had their part to do, and what made it possible was they all had a made-up mind to work. Mark 3:25 says, *"...If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand."* They rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height.

4:7 But it came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wrath,— Now Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and now the Ashdodites became very angry when they heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem had continued, and that the broken places were beginning to be closed. You may not know them, but we never run out of enemies.

4:8 And conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it. These enemies plotted together to come fight against Jerusalem; to hinder the people from the work. We know this is what the Pharisees did when Jesus healed the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath. Matthew 12:14 says *"Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him."* And the chief priests and Pharisees in John 11:47, 53 took council together as to how to put Jesus to death right after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. These men were enemies of God and ready to fight against and hinder the plans of God. When doing anything for God, our fight is spiritual, not physical. It's *"not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit saith the Lord of hosts"* (Zachariah 4:6c).

4:9 Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them. Nevertheless, anyway the enemy is not in control unless you give him control! Nehemiah said we prayed to our God to set a watch; a guard as a protection against them day and night. Prayer is our key weapon, not our second or last option! They didn't give up. You need to say: *"I'm not giving up!"* They just kept praying and kept working. Matthew 10:16-22 (NLT) says...

16 "Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves. 17 But beware! For you will be handed over to the courts and will be flogged with whips in the synagogues. 18 You will stand trial before governors and kings because you are my followers.

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

But this will be your opportunity to tell the rulers and other unbelievers about me. 19 When you are arrested, don't worry about how to respond or what to say. God will give you the right words at the right time. 20 For it is not you who will be speaking—it will be the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. 21 "A brother will betray his brother to death, a father will betray his own child, and children will rebel against their parents and cause them to be killed. 22 And all nations will hate you because you are my followers. But everyone who endures to the end will be saved."

We must not see ourselves as victims but victors. Whatever we go through, God's ending is better than the beginning! Threats may come, but prayer calms us.

SUMMARY:

Sanballat became very angry after hearing that the wall was rebuilt, and he insulted and mocked the Jews. Sanballat spoke to his brethren and the army of Samaria saying *"What are these feeble Jews doing?" Will they expect to build this themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they build in a day? Will they revive the charred stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?* Now Tobiah the Ammonite standing by adds more criticism to this saying *"their stone wall will still break and tumble down even if a fox should climb upon it after building it"* (4:1-3).

Nehemiah prayed, *"Hear us O Lord God for we are being mocked. Turn their hurtful criticism upon their own heads, and let them be given up to wasting in a land where they are prisoners. Do not cover their guilt or let their sin be blotted out from your sight, for they have opposed the building which we are doing. So, we built up the wall to half its height around the entire city, for the people had a mind to work"* (4:4-6).

"Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites became very angry when they heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem had continued, and that the broken places were beginning to be closed. They plotted together to come fight against Jerusalem; to hinder the people from the work. Nevertheless, we prayed to our God to set a watch; a guard as a protection against them day and night" (4:7-9).

[TOP](#)

HISTORY:

Ezra and Nehemiah were contemporaries, although Ezra was probably much older. Nehemiah was the governor (*the political leader*), and Ezra was the Chief Priest (*the religious leader*). No doubt the Jews would have liked to set up the kingdom again as in the days of David, but this would have signaled rebellion against the king of Persia to whom they were subject. The best alternative was having Nehemiah as governor over Jerusalem and Ezra serving in the Temple as priest.

The last verse in Nehemiah 7:73 we find out that the priest, Levites, porters (*gatekeepers*), singers (*choir members*), some of the people, and the Neth'inim (*the Temple attendants*) returned and began to live in their own towns. ²These were the same towns that God had given to their ancestors. Many years later, the nation divided into two parts. The name of the northern part was Israel, and people called the inhabitants Israelites. The name of the southern part was Judah, and people called the inhabitants Jews.

8:1 And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel. The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah are two parts of the same story. This verse resembles Ezra 3:1. Here, Nehemiah explains these events. All the people gathered together as "one man." The idea was that they gathered in unity for the same purpose; having a spirit of unity among them or a fresh resolve suggests it was all for the purpose of God. They met in the street (*open square*) in front of the Watergate which is the main water source outside the city wall. Unity is one of the basic foundations for accomplishing a work for God. That's why it was important for Ezra to speak to them of the book of the Law of Moses. This is the first mention of Ezra in the book of Nehemiah. He had come to Jerusalem 13 years prior to Nehemiah. He holds two offices: that of scribe and that of priest. You will see it being interchanged.

8:2 And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. Ezra brought the Law of the Lord before the congregation. At this time the law was a scroll, as opposed to a text consisting of bound pages. Such a reading was required every seven years at the Feast of Tabernacles. It was vital that they know and understand God's ways even though it had been neglected in the generations since the Babylonian captivity until this occasion. "The first day of the seventh month" was a day to do no work but a day of blowing the trumpets unto the Lord—This made it a solemn preparation for the sacred feasts. Ezra as priest was not leaving anyone out. If they were old enough to understand they gathered together before Ezra.

8:3 And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were

² <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-commentary/nehemiah-lbw.htm>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

attentive unto the book of the law. Ezra began to read the book of the Law of Moses in front of the water gate from the first light of morning until noonday for all those who could understand; all who had attentive ears; all that listened very intently. You've got to remember that there were no comfortable chairs around.

8:4 And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaliah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam. Ezra was standing upon a pulpit of wood. This sounds like the first "*pulpit*" mentioned in the bible. This platform was large enough to hold, along with Ezra, six priests who stood on his left and seven priests who stood on his right as he read. All of these people stood with him upon the platform.

8:5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up:— And when Ezra and all the priests stood on the pulpit above the people, opened the book of the Law and reads it, the congregation also stood up. ³The fact that they stood up, showed great respect for Ezra and for the law he was holding in his hand.

8:6 And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground. Ezra begins blessing the Lord with praises coming from His lips. The people responded to this thanksgiving by saying Amen (*twice*), coming into agreement with him. They began lifting their hands as a sign of praise lifted up to heaven to God. They bowed their heads in humility, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground in unison with Ezra. How awesome is that? The "*Amen*" was an affirmation of what Ezra had just did, bringing in the presence of God by lifting Him up. This was a very symbolic moment of humility in the presence of the Lord. They felt they were unworthy to lift their faces to heaven.

8:7 Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kellita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaliah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place. Now the above named Levites assisted Ezra by moving through the crowd to see if the people were able to understand what was being read. Apparently the reading of the Law was interrupted by several events. At certain times the people responded with an Amen and by worshiping the Lord. Second, the Levites took time to explain the various portions of the Law to the crowd.

8:8 So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. They would read and expound on the Law of God in which the people lacked understanding. They helped the people to understand its meaning; to breakdown the text into its parts so that the people could understand it.

8:9 And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. "*Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha*", meant Nehemiah is

³ <http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/nehemiah/08.html>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

governor; *"Ezra the priest the scribe"* were the two offices Ezra held; and the Levites altogether were able to teach the people. They began to declare unto the people: *"This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep."* At this point, hearing the words of the Law brought weeping from all the people when they realized how far they were from obeying the Lord. It was important to weep when you find out you have sinned. They had not been utterly destroyed as a nation in spite of their sin, so this was a day when they would celebrate one of the Lord's feasts and they were to be joyful.

8:10 Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength. Because they had had a chance to listen and understand God's Word, Ezra now tells them go and celebrate; eat and drink; celebrate by giving others a portion of what you have prepared. This was not a time to be selfish. When having this type of joy in your hearts you can't help but be giving to another. We've always quoted the last part of this scripture many times for strength. Well, capture the moment when you gave to someone and even someone you didn't even know, and how it brought strength to your being. The Spirit of God takes that joy of giving and strengthens your thoughts, your attitude, your conversation, and your life, equipping you with power! Do you see how the joy of giving brings you strength? It shows you not to be sorry for yourself and it prepares you to be blessed.

8:11 So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved. The Levites began to calm all the people that were weeping, saying, *"Hold your peace, for the day is holy; don't be grieved."*⁴ Three times the people are told that the day is "holy" (vv 9, 10, 11) and they are commanded to be joyful. The assumption is that holiness is not glumness, but that holiness and happiness are the most congenial bedfellows! In this being a holy day unto God, therefore, they were to rejoice not weep. The last line of verse 10 contains the primary argument against sadness: *"For the joy of Yahweh is your place of safety."* Perhaps there is the suggestion that ongoing sorrow and grief, while proper at times, can leave the people of God "unprotected"; the text implies that joy and delight in Yahweh fulfill a protective function in believers' lives, keeping them, perhaps, from being swallowed in despair.

8:12 And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them. They were obedient, ceased their grieving, and went their way to eat, drink, and send portions to others because of their understanding of the Word of God that was declared unto them in the reading. *"To make great mirth"* meant to celebrate with great rejoicing (*with music, vocal and instrumental*).

8:13 And on the second day were gathered together the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests, and the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, even to understand the words of the law. The Word of the Law was reiterated again to various heads of the households (*those who had authority in their homes*) and the religious leaders (*those who had authority in the Temple*) as they came together on the second day. They studied, went deeper with a more intimate understanding of what God desired. You know how it is when we truly get to studying God's Word, He gives a simpler yet deeper understanding of what we need.

⁴ http://reformedperspectives.org/newfiles/ral_davis/OT.Davis.Neh.8.pdf
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

8:14 And they found written in the law which the Lord had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month:— They discovered and realized that they are in the seventh month where they were to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles (*Booths; Shelters*) which had been commanded by God to Moses. They would therefore dwell, live in these booths during these feasts in the seventh month.

8:15 And that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written. Upon their findings in the Word of God, they began to publish and proclaim; they made a proclamation that everyone should observe this feast. Go into the mount meant the Mount of Olives and get these specific branches (*olive branches, pine branches, myrtle branches, palm branches, and branches of thick trees*) and instructed what preparations were to be made (*make the booths*). These were temporary structures to live in during the week of Feast of Tabernacles.

8:16 So the people went forth, and brought them, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim. In their studying the Word further they found something within it they had to act upon. That means they were obedient to what they had learned. So the people kept this feast by living in temporary dwellings made from branches to commemorate how they had lived in booths in the wilderness after God had brought them out of Egypt. Some of the people who lived in Jerusalem built their booths on top of their house, while others built in the courts of the Temple, and in the streets. Those who did not live in Jerusalem probably built their booths in the streets. All of this celebration occurred within the walls of Jerusalem (in the square at the Water Gate and the square at the Gate of Ephraim).

8:17 And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness. All who had returned from captivity made and lived in the booths. Some had observed the Feast of Tabernacles previously (Ezra 3:4), however, the present celebration was the most festive and well-attended one since Joshua had brought the Israelites into the Promised Land. All of the Jewish community had not celebrated in this manner in a long time. This reflects growing joy and spiritual strength; great gladness among the Jews who returned from exile.

8:18 Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner. Each day during the feast (seven days), Ezra read the book of the Law of God to the people. On the eighth day a solemn assembly was required. As required in the Law of Moses on this day, they did no work or strenuous activity. It was time to stop, take stock of the situation and return to whole-hearted devotion to God.

SUMMARY:

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

⁵After Ezra read God's laws to the people they continued to study them as they desired a deeper and more intimate understanding of what God desired (8:13). A careful reading of scripture always calls for a response such as: what should I do with this knowledge? Or how should my life change? During the seven days of the feast, the Jews lived in booths made of branches (8:14). This was a time of looking back and remembering the nation's forty years of wandering in the wilderness when they lived in temporary shelters. They were to think about God's protection and guidance during their years of wandering and the fact that God would still protect them and guide them if they obeyed His Word. It was a time to remember where they came from, where they were that day, and what they would do in the future. They decided to obey what they had found written in the Law that was read. It focused on the feast in the seventh month to dwell in booths (8:14). A proclamation was published and proclaimed in the cities. They gathered the branches to live in the booths they were to make (8:15).

They gathered the branches to live in the booths they were to make living on the roofs of their houses, in the courts, and in the streets (8:16). All those that returned from captivity made the booths and lived in them showing much gladness (8:17). Day after day for the seven days Ezra read the Book of the Law to them. They feasted for those seven days and on the last day, the eighth day a solemn assembly was called according to scripture (8:18).

APPLICATION:

How quickly do you obey when you hear the Word of God? Do we have to hear it continuously before we get it? Each person is different, but it's good to be swift to hear. Three positive words we must look at: hear—obey—rejoice.

It takes all to accomplish the plan God has for us.

[TOP](#)

⁵ [http://www.family-times.net/commentary/the-feast-of-tabernacles/
http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html](http://www.family-times.net/commentary/the-feast-of-tabernacles/http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html)

9:1 Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and sackclothes, and earth upon them. You've got to remember, they departed the river Ahava on the 12th; came to Jerusalem and stayed 3 days; the 15th to 22nd Day of the 7th Month began The Festival of Booths, two days afterwards comes Day 24th of the seventh month, the children of Israel assemble to place themselves in sackclothes to fast. The wearing of sackclothes (burlap fabric or grave clothes), and placing dirt upon themselves is a symbol of great mourning and sorrow.

9:2 And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers. The seed of Israel meant those who were of the pure lineage of Israel, separated and confessed their sins and their father's sin. Their sorrow and mourning was evidenced by the fact of Ezra's reading of the Law. They were willing to make a clear separation from the heathen nations around them. And the fact of coming clean to repent by confessing their sin and the sins of their fathers separated them unto God. They had just come out of a festive time and were told not to weep (Neh.8:9-11) and now they decide to take it a step further and really be sincere to obey God's Law by striping themselves and confessing their sins and their father's sins in fasting and wearing mourning clothes, pouring dirt over themselves. They wanted to begin again and this brought them closer to God.

9:3-5 They began to read (actually the Levites read the law to them) one fourth part of the day (this would be about three hours of listening). For another fourth part of the day they confessed, and worshiped the Lord their God (9:3). Then stood Jeshua and other Levites on the stairs (probably the wooden platform Ezra utilized), and cried with a loud voice unto God (leading with repentance, confession, and mourning) (9:4), then the Levites said *"Stand and bless the Lord your God for ever and ever: and blessed be the glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise."* The people had been lying prostrate in grief before their Lord. They were, now, told to stand up and bless and praise the Lord. As one body, they read, they confessed, and they worshiped the Lord their God (9:5).

9:6 Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee. They remembered God's Greatness: that God was God alone who made the heaven, the heaven of heavens meaning all Creation and including the angels. He made the earth and all things in it: the seas preserving them all; the angels of heaven that worship Him. They let us know all that God has done for them.

9:7 Thou art the Lord the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham;— They remembered God's Goodness. God chose Abram who was an idolater in a pagan city, brought him out of his homeland, Ur of the Chaldees, whereby God even changed Abram's name (exalted father) to Abraham (father of a multitude) because He had promised

PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

to make him a great nation. All of these continued verses are rehearsing the history of Israel and revealing God's goodness.

9:8 And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say, to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou art righteous;— God made a covenant with Abram. It involved two specific promises.

1. To give the land...
2. To give it to Abram's seed.

God saw a faithful heart toward Him. Therefore, God made a covenant with Abram to give the land and from his seed would come a nation. It is because of this covenant that God continued to deal with the rebellious children of Israel.

9:9 And didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heardest their cry by the Red sea;— Two facts are stated here:

1. God saw the affliction of their fathers in Egypt.
2. God heard their cry by the Red Sea.

In God delivering them, they were to have no further relationship with Egypt.

9:10 And shewedst signs and wonders upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land: for thou knewest that they dealt proudly against them. So didst thou get thee a name, as it is this day. The signs and wonders refer to the miracles done against Pharaoh to compel him to release the Israelites. God established His righteous reputation over the powers of Egypt by the miracles of immense power performed against the Egyptians. He had made a name for Himself as it is known today!

9:30 Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy spirit in thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the people of the lands. God had plenty patience for many years with the Israelites. Even in sending His prophets to speak to them of their sins, they failed to listen or obey; therefore, God went another route by sending or delivering them into the hands of the heathen enemies of the land. For the northern kingdom, this meant Assyria (2Kgs.17), while for Judah it meant Babylon (2Kgs.24-25).

9:31 Nevertheless for thy great mercies' sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them: for thou art a gracious and merciful God. For it was God's mercy that prevented Him from totally consuming them. He always saved a remnant to start again. He gives us chance after chance, again and again. Praise God!

9:32 Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble seem little before thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day. Ezra recognizes God's greatness, His might, and that He is a <http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

terrible God meaning awesome. It is made known that God keeps His covenant (His promises) toward His people and shows mercy. In Ezra's petition to God he asks to let not all their troubles; their hardships that they've gone through to not be light or insignificant. For all the misery that came upon them, their kings, their princes, their priests, their prophets, and their fathers from the time the kings of Assyria, their enemy triumphed over them, even to now, was not a small thing. It's like saying, "*Lord, You were right to do this.*"

9:33 **Howbeit thou art just in all that is brought upon us: for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly.** The people recognized that all of the problems that came from their captivity were well-deserved. They had done wickedly and it was the wickedness of the people that had brought on the terrible times and they recognize their sin. God is a just God!

9:34 **Neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments and thy testimonies, wherewith thou didst testify against them.** The list of people mentioned here is similar to that in verse 32 with the exception of the prophets. The prophets suffered from the captivity, but were not one of the causes of the captivity. The list of people did not keep the law, nor did they pay attention to God's commandments and His warnings that were given. Their actions in turn became a testimony against them.

9:35 **For they have not served thee in their kingdom, and in thy great goodness that thou gavest them, and in the large and fat land which thou gavest before them, neither turned they from their wicked works.** Living in their kingdom, they didn't serve God. They lived in the extensive and rich country God bestowed to them and in God's great goodness and blessings they still did not turn from their wicked works. It looks like their blessings made them independent of God instead of being thankful to God.

9:36 **Behold, we are servants this day and for the land that thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold, we are servants in it: —** The Israelites were in the strange position of being slaves in their own land, having to turn over a part of their resources each year to a foreign king. How ironic, since God had given the land to them but they are servants in the land.

9:37 **And it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins: also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we are in great distress.** The enemy kings enjoyed the bounty of the increase the land yielded, that would have been Israel's because of the consequence of sin—disobedience. At the pleasure of the enemy, they had dominion over the Israelites' bodies and over their cattle which placed them in dire distress.

9:38 **And because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it.** And yet, in view of the Israelites becoming servants in the land God gave their fathers; and in view of their enemy kings eating the fruit of their land, and having dominion over their bodies and cattle, and because all of this have caused them great distress, they will draw up a binding pledge—a sure covenant. And the princes, Levites, and priests were to sign and seal the covenant.

PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

SUMMARY:

The seed of Israel separated themselves. They broke off all relations with foreigners, stood up, and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their parents (**9:2**).

They began to confess God's greatness and His faithfulness: He is God alone; He created the universe and the host of heaven who worship Him. They bring up that God chose Abram and changed His name to complete His promise. God saw a faithful heart toward Him. Therefore, God made a covenant with Abram to give the land and from his seed would come a nation. (**9:6-8**).

They knew that God saw the sufferings of their fathers in Egypt and when they were at the Red Sea He heard their cry for help. They remembered the signs and wonders against Pharaoh, his servants, and all the people of his land which still shows His greatness and goodness which establishes His name till this day (**9:9-10**).

God never failed them. He brought forth prophets to tell them of their sins, yet they wouldn't listen. God still did not consume them but he was gracious and merciful. In His mercy He didn't give them what they deserved. Ezra who is praying this beautiful prayer recognizes God's greatness, His might, and that He is a terrible God meaning awesome. God still did not consume them, but in His mercy He didn't give them what they deserved. He kept covenant but now they didn't want the trouble that had come upon them to be light. They truly deserved all that had come on them since the time of the Assyrian king until now. God did everything right. Even those in high offices didn't listen to God's commandments. All of them that ranked in high office and lived in the fat of the land that God generously gave them did not turn from their wicked works. The people acknowledge that they are servants in the land God had given their fathers and now they are servants under these kings because of their sins. Therefore, they are in great distress; deep trouble. And because of the above they will draw up a binding pledge— a sure covenant. And the princes, Levites, and priests were to sign and seal the covenant (**9:30-38**)

APPLICATION:

Reviewing our past helps us understand how to improve our behavior, however, reading and studying the Word of God can show us where we are sinning.

[TOP](#)

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

10:28 And the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the porters, the singers, the Nethinims, and all they that had separated themselves from the people of the lands unto the law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, every one having knowledge, and having understanding;—

Chapter 10 began with a list of these leaders signing the covenant. Nehemiah, the governor signed and there were others named who signed. This verse deals with the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the porters (*gate-keepers or security guards*), the singers, the Nethinims (*Temple staff or servants*); along with their wives, sons, and daughters. Anyone who was old enough to understand made agreement unto the law of God and all that had separated themselves from the people of the lands, and had knowledge and understanding of what they were doing signed the covenant.

10:29 They clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord, and his judgments and his statutes;—

They all joined with their noble kinsmen and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law. They made the oath in the name of the whole multitude, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to keep and carry out all the commandments of the LORD their Lord, and his judgments and his statutes. If they broke the law or failed to keep their promises, this made them accountable for their obedience to God's Word.

SUMMARY:

Remember, the people made an agreement with God. Their names were on it. Anyone who was old enough to understand made agreement unto the law of God and all that had separated themselves from the people of the lands, and had knowledge and understanding of what they were doing signed the covenant. They all joined with their noble kinsmen and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law. If they broke the law or failed to keep their promises, this made them accountable for their obedience to God's Word (**10:28-29**).

[TOP](#)

SYNOPSIS:

12:1-9 **“The priests and the Levites who came up with Zerubbabel** — ⁷Nehemiah recorded the names of the first priests and Levites to return from exile. Zerubbabel led the people back to Judah about 93 years before the time when Nehemiah and his companions returned. Jeshua was the name of the chief priest at the time of Zerubbabel.

12:10-11 **Succession of High Priests** — Nehemiah then recorded the family of the chief priest. It was important for Jews to know about their ancestors. But it was especially important for the priests to know about their ancestors also. They could only do their special work if they were genuine descendants of Aaron, the brother of Moses. The chief priests came from one family. When the people had had a king, they had counted their dates by the years of the king’s rule. But now they did not have a king, so they counted their dates by the names of the chief priests (1 Chronicles 6:3-15; Nehemiah 12:12).

12:12-21 **Priests “in the days of Joiakim”** — Then Nehemiah recorded the names of the most important priests at his own time. These men were the heads of the families of the priests when he was the ruler of Judah. Joiakim was the chief priest. Most of the family names are the same as those of Zerubbabel’s time when Jeshua was the chief priest (Nehemiah 12:1-7). The priests clearly used the same family names. It was important for them to know to which family they belonged.

12:22-26 **Records kept “in the days of Darius the Persian,” and “in the days of Nehemiah the governor, and in the days of Ezra, the priest, the scribe.”** — The people kept records for many years of the families of the priests and the Levites; (Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan and Jaddua were the chief priests during these years.) These records were very important. Only the descendants of Levi, the son of Jacob, could serve as Levites. Only the descendants of Aaron, who was a Levite and the brother of Moses, could serve as priests (Nehemiah 7:63-65). Some of the Levites praised and thanked God. This was their special task at the temple. Centuries before, King David had made rules about the worship at the temple. David also wrote many of the Psalms (songs) that these Levites used to praise God. Other Levites took care of the temple and the equipment for the temple.

12:27 **And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings, and with**

⁶ http://www.tbcpdx.org/curriculum/10-3_exile/lesson_13_faithful.pdf
⁷ <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-commentary/nehemiah-lbw.htm>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps. This begins to describe the role of the Levites at the dedication of the city wall. The Levites had settled in various places surrounding Jerusalem but they were brought back for the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem. The job of the Levites was to lead the people when they praised God. The dedication was to be a time of gladness, with thanksgiving. There would be much singing, playing of instruments, praising God, and blowing of the victory trumpet. Singing is reminiscent of the joy at the completion of the temple. Joy is the right attitude at all feasts of celebration before the Lord. ⁸To dedicate something to God means that you are giving it to God. The Jews knew that God helped them to build the wall.

12:28 And the sons of the singers gathered themselves together, both out of the plain country round about Jerusalem, and from the villages of Netophathi;— There were specific Levitical families that came from the villages round Netophathi (south of Jerusalem). They were the sons of the singers; all Levites. Their responsibility involved singing.

12:29 Also from the house of Gilgal, and out of the fields of Geba and Azmaveth: for the singers had builded them villages round about Jerusalem. The sons of the singers also came from Beth-Gilgal, a village erected where the Israelites encamped after they had crossed the Jordan. ⁹The singers had built them villages round about Jerusalem; that they might be near it, to do their duty when required; by which it appears that the said places were near Jerusalem. They periodically had to come to Jerusalem to minister with their music and song.

12:30 And the priests and the Levites purified themselves, and purified the people, and the gates, and the wall. Before they commenced dedication of the walls, the priests and Levites realized the necessity for self-purification. They would be instrumental to sanctify others and set themselves apart for God, with purity of mind and sincerity of intention. Without the purity and holiness, we cannot effectively communicate with or worship God. Sometimes they killed an animal for a sacrifice (2Chron.29:20-24) or they washed their bodies and their clothes, perhaps by sprinkling the water of purification on them (Numbers 8:6-7). Purify means to make something clean. ¹⁰The purification of the priests and Levites was of a spiritual nature. The purification of gates and wall would be of a more physical nature. All was purified to honor God.

12:31 Then I brought up the princes of Judah upon the wall, and appointed two great companies of them that gave thanks, whereof one went on the right hand upon the wall toward the dung gate:— Nehemiah brings up; brought the princes of Judah. These were all the leaders from Jerusalem and its surrounding villages and cities. These were the chiefs of the nation, both lay and clerical. The leadership of the entire Jewish community gathered for the dedication festivities. Nehemiah divided the people up into two companies or processions (singers or choirs). This first group led by Ezra went on the right hand upon the wall toward the Dung Gate. The Dung Gate was leading to the city dump. You arrived at the Dung Gate after you have passed the Valley Gate. The Valley Gate and the Dung Gate are linked together. Spiritual "dung" represents two things: The shame of the old life and the glory of the old life. The wall was their accomplishment. It was protected for the temple, but it also protected the people. Without walls, the Jews

⁸ <http://www.easyenglish.info/english-learners-bible/nehemiah-taw.htm>

⁹ <http://biblecommenter.com/nehemiah/12-29.htm>

¹⁰ <http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/nehemiah/13.html>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

would become even weaker. The people were spread across the wall.

12:32 And after them went Hoshaiah, and half of the princes of Judah,— Then followed Hoshaiah and half of the princes of Judah. These processions advanced in different directions; the first one went right and they proceeded to give thanks and sang psalms.

12:33 And Azariah, Ezra, and Meshullam,— Along came Azariah, Ezra, and Meshullam in this procession.

12:34 Judah, and Benjamin, and Shemaiah, and Jeremiah,— Along came Judah, and Benjamin, and Shemaiah, and Jeremiah in this procession.

12:35 And certain of the priests' sons with trumpets; namely, Zechariah the son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Michaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of Asaph:— These certain priest's sons blew the trumpets, marched, and thanked God with joy in coming to the wall.

12:36 And his brethren, Shemaiah, and Azarael, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethaneel, and Judah, Hanani, with the musical instruments of David the man of God, and Ezra the scribe before them. At the head of one procession went Ezra, the scribe with the musical instruments of David. This refers to the same kind of instruments David's musicians used, or the actual instruments constructed in David's time.

12:37 And at the fountain gate, which was over against them, they went up by the stairs of the city of David, at the going up of the wall, above the house of David, even unto the water gate eastward. The walls were so wide and strong that the people could march on them. The Fountain Gate was the gate by the Pool of Siloah. The fountain represents the life source of God Himself. They went up by the stairs to the Water Gate on the east wall of the city.

12:38 And the other company of them that gave thanks went over against them, and I after them, and the half of the people upon the wall, from beyond the tower of the furnaces even unto the broad wall;— Now we get to the second company that marched upon the wall. At the head of the second half of the procession was Nehemiah marching clockwise to the north. Ezra and his group went right; Nehemiah and his group went left going from the Tower of the Furnaces to the Broad Wall.

12:39-42 They proceeded around the city in a different direction. The idea described in these verses is that there were two distinct processions moving in opposite directions. As they walked around the wall, they gave thanks and praised the Lord. After walking around the circumference of the walls, they met at the Temple.

12:43 Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced: for God had made them rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off. This was a great day of rejoicing as they offered great sacrifices. These sacrifices probably referred to thank <http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

offerings. The people would partake and eat of these offerings and rejoice for it was God who made them rejoice with great joy. The entire family rejoiced including the wives and children for the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off.

12:44-47— The dedication of the city wall was characterized by joy, praise, and singing. Nehemiah repeatedly mentioned King David, who began the custom of using choirs in worship in David's day. Israel was then a vigorous God-fearing nation. These exiles who had returned wanted their rebuilt Jerusalem to be the hub of a renewed nation, strengthened by God. Therefore, they dedicated themselves and their city to God.

SUMMARY:

¹¹The Jews were accustomed to having workers and watchers on the walls of Jerusalem, but now Nehemiah and Ezra assigned people to be worshipers on the walls. They conducted a dedication service with such enthusiasm that their shouts and songs were heard "afar off" (v. 43). Note that the emphasis was on joyful praise on the part of all the people. Singing is mentioned eight times in this chapter, thanksgiving six times, rejoicing seven times, and musical instruments three times. Thankfulness is always part of true celebration. These people were thankful.

The order for the dedication service was unique. The leaders and singers were divided into two groups, with Ezra leading one group and Nehemiah (following the choir) directing the second group. Why did Ezra and Nehemiah organize this special kind of a dedication service? Why not just meet at the temple area, let the Levites sing and offer sacrifices to the Lord, and send everybody home? To begin with, it was the walls and gates that were being dedicated; and it was only right that the people see and touch them. But there is another reason for this unique service: The people were bearing witness to the watching world that God had done the work, and He alone should be glorified. The enemy had said that the walls would be so weak that a fox could knock them down (4:3), but here were the people marching on the walls! What a testimony to the unbelieving Gentiles of the power of God

But the most important thing about this dedication service was not the march around the walls. It was the expression of joyful praise that came from the people. They offered their praise thankfully (12:27, 31, 38, 46), joyfully (12: 27, 43-44), and loudly (12:42-43), accompanied by various instruments (12:27, 35-36). It was not a time for a quiet and meditative worship. It was a time for "pulling out all the stops" and praising the Lord enthusiastically.

APPLICATION:

In completing a specific task, we would want everyone to know that God made it happen! So as we celebrate with others, God should never be left out. God should ever be before us because in accomplishing the task, it was never in our ability, but it was His ability in us! Praise God!

[TOP](#)

¹¹ <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/nehemiah-dedicates-the-wall/>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

HISTORY:

13:1 On that day they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was found written, that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever;— ¹²Twelve years after the people rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, Nehemiah returned to Persia. Some time later, he asked the king to allow him to return to Judah. "*On that day*" seems to mean a particular day after Nehemiah returned to Judah. It seems that, until then, the people had neglected to read the law of God. And when Nehemiah returned on that particular day, they heard the law. This section of the Law was read dealing with the Ammonite and Moabite should not join the people of God (referring to Deut.23:3). The Ammonites and Moabites were descendants from the sons of Lot and his two daughters.

13:2 Because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them: howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing. ¹³The Ammonites and Moabites were forbidden to come into the assembly of God because they had refused to give food and water to Israel and had hired and paid Balaam to call down a curse on the Jews (Deut.23:4). But God did good things for the Jews instead (Num.23:11-12, 19-20).

13:3 Now it came to pass, when they had heard the law, that they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude. So the people obeyed God after hearing the Law and they separated themselves from all foreigners. God had strictly forbidden in the Law of Moses for the Israelite men to marry the daughters of foreigners.

13:4 And before this, Eliashib the priest, having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God, was allied unto Tobiah;— Before the above law was read, and observed and acted upon, Eliashib the high priest being responsible for the rooms of the house of God became allied to Tobiah. ¹⁴Tobiah had established a close relationship with Eliashib the High Priest, whose grandson had married the daughter of Sanballat the Horonite.

13:5 And he had prepared for him a great chamber, where aforetime they laid the meat offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the new wine, and the oil, which was commanded to be given to the Levites, and the singers, and the porters; and the offerings of the priests. So Eliashib, the high priest (Neh.3:1) used his influence to get this special room for Tobiah. Tobiah

¹² <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-commentary/nehemiah-lbw.htm>

¹³ <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/when-the-cats-away-the-mice-will-play/>

¹⁴ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tobiah_\(Ammonite\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tobiah_(Ammonite))

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

along with Sanballat were the ones who had opposed the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem and its walls under Nehemiah's governorship. And here Eliashib allows him to have his own room in the Temple. The rooms of the house of God were to be used as a storehouse to keep the meat offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the new wine, and the oil offerings which were to be given to the Levites, singers, and porters.

13:6 But in all this time was not I at Jerusalem: for in the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon came I unto the king, and after certain days obtained I leave of the king:— Eliashib had been appointed custodian over the Temple chambers and Nehemiah explained that he was not in Jerusalem but in the king's palace of Babylon when this situation occurred, referring to the thing with Eliashib and Tobiah. Twelve years after the people rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, Nehemiah returned to Persia. Nehemiah had returned in the 32nd year of the Persian king Artaxerxes of Babylon. Some time later Nehemiah obtained leave; permission to leave the king to return to Jerusalem.

13:7 And I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God. And upon returning to Jerusalem, Nehemiah learns of the situation with Tobiah. Nehemiah says that Eliashib had done something evil— that of preparing a chamber in the courts of the house of God for Tobiah. This seems to be like the same sin they were to separate from in verse 1. This Tobiah was an Ammonite, one of the very kind of people that we just read should be put out from the assemblies of God's people.

13:8 And it grieved me sore: therefore I cast forth all the household stuff to Tobiah out of the chamber. Tobiah had furnished his "chamber" as a dwelling-house. In order to accommodate Tobiah, they had moved the articles of the house of God from their rightful place to make provisions for one who opposed the very rebuilding of Jerusalem and put idols in the temple courts. Nehemiah is upset! And he exploded with righteous indignation, throwing all of Tobiah's belongings out of the chamber.

13:9 Then I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers: and thither brought I again the vessels of the house of God, with the meat offering and the frankincense. Nehemiah's response to the desecration of the temple was similar to Christ's almost 5 centuries later (Matt.21:12, 13; Jh.2:13-17). Nehemiah commanded the chambers be cleansed to bring back the vessels of the house of God, with the meat offering and the frankincense.

13:10 And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given them: for the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field. In Nehemiah's absence, the Jews violated their previous covenant with God regarding offerings (10:35-40). The people had not been faithful in supporting the work of the Levites. Consequently, the Levites were discouraged and had left the Temple to work in the fields to make a living.

13:11 Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken? And I gathered

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

them together, and set them in their place. Nehemiah gathers the rulers together and asks why they had disbanded their commitment to serve the Lord? Why is the house of God forsaken? It was the rulers who were responsible for the continuation of God's worship. The people had probably lost confidence in the spiritual leadership because of the lack of integrity of the high priest Eliashib. They couldn't store any of the offerings in the chambers to support the Levites because of what Eliashib had done. Nehemiah brings the Levites back to Jerusalem and puts them in their proper position of serving God in the Temple.

13:12 Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn and the new wine and the oil unto the treasuries. By rejecting the tithe, the people failed to support the Levites and the rulers failed to implement it. But now, once again Judah is able to bring the tithe of the corn, the new wine, and the oil unto the treasuries. They were now able to fill the chambers to store the provisions and offerings—all that was needed to restore their worship unto God.

13:13 And I made treasurers over the treasuries, Shelemiah the priest, and Zadok the scribe, and of the Levites, Pedaiah: and next to them was Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah: for they were counted faithful, and their office was to distribute unto their brethren. Nehemiah recognizes that the people need strong leadership. Therefore, he appoints faithful men into this office over the people to supervise and oversee the storehouses for the tithes and offerings. Note that these men represented the priests, Levites, scribes, and laymen. They were also responsible for distributing the needs and necessities to the Levites.

13:14 Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof. Nehemiah then prays, asking God to remember him; to not forget him concerning all that he is trying to do. Meaning that when God looks upon him, that God would not to wipe out all the good things he's done for the house of God, and for its services. He wanted the tithes and the offerings to continue in the temple. God remembers everything but He doesn't hold everything when we give it to Him!

13:15 In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day: and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals. This was a day or time to honor the Sabbath and keep it holy that Nehemiah had come across the people treading wine, bringing grains loaded on donkeys; wine, grapes, and figs apparently to be sold. God had told Moses that the Jews must not work on the Sabbath Day. The Jews must keep that day to rest and worship God (Exodus 20:8-11). He found them not only doing business on the Sabbath, but also doing their daily work and carrying unnecessary burdens. This went against God's covenant and Nehemiah began to rebuke them.

13:16 There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. There were even merchants from Tyre bringing fish and all kinds of goods to the children of Judah and in Jerusalem to be sold on the Sabbath. You can't fault the men of Tyre. They were not breaking the law; they didn't observe Sabbath because they had no covenant with God. The sin was that of Israel, who allowed the buying of fish and wares on the Sabbath. They were willing to open the gates to let them in and violate the Sabbath Day.

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

13:17 Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day?—Nehemiah took three steps toward changing things with the people. Earlier, he had approached the rulers (v.11) and asked for accountability. Now he goes a little bit higher and gathers the elite of the community; the nobles together, rebuking them concerning their sin. He called this an evil thing, the same as when confronting Eliashib (v.7).

13:18 Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath. Nehemiah reminds the nobles of Judah that it was because of their desecration of the Sabbath that God had judged Israel. Jeremiah had rebuked their fathers for the same things (Jer.17:21). By such acts their fathers had brought the misery of exile and oppression, and they were doing the same—increasing God’s wrath against them by profaning the Sabbath.

13:19 And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath: and some of my servants set I at the gates, that there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath day. This is the third change. Nehemiah begins to enforce—Sabbath Day Worship—setting guards at the gates of Jerusalem to shut them when the Sabbath begins and to prevent anyone from bringing materials to buy or sell. The Sabbath begins on Friday night or evening about dark and goes to Saturday night about the same time. No burdens were to be brought in on the Sabbath day. These burdens refer to the food and materials that people were selling and buying.

13:20 So the merchants and sellers of all kind of ware lodged without Jerusalem once or twice. That means once or twice the merchants and sellers had to reside outside of Jerusalem.

13:21 Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye about the wall? if ye do so again, I will lay hands on you. From that time forth came they no more on the sabbath. Nehemiah warned the merchants of their being outside residing around the wall on the Sabbath. ¹⁵Nehemiah threatened to arrest the merchants, who came to Jerusalem and waited outside the gates. This made a noisy Sabbath, and Nehemiah would not allow this. He would arrest them because the Sabbath would not be broken without or within the city walls of Jerusalem. This kept them away.

13:22 And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should come and keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath day. Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy. Nehemiah also commands the Levites to be cleansed; sanctify themselves again for their task of keeping the gates and re-establishing worship. These Levites were already assigned this duty, when the gates were re-built. He asks God again to remember and show favor toward him, spare him according to God’s greatness of mercy.

SUMMARY:

¹⁵ <http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/nehemiah/14.html>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

¹⁶ Nehemiah saw some on the Sabbath day treading winepresses; others brought all kinds of burdens on the Sabbath to Jerusalem; while still others sold victuals. And men of Tyre sold fish and other wares to the people on the Sabbath. During Nehemiah's absence the Law of God was no longer read, or they could not have fallen into this evil if so. This entire downward slope begins with the neglect of the Word of God.

Then Nehemiah contended with the nobles. The question was asked, *"What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? Yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath."*

Again, Nehemiah not only rebuked the evil, but acted upon it! ¹⁷Nehemiah gave orders that people must not trade on the Sabbath day of the week. He ordered the guards in Jerusalem to shut the gates of the city during the Sabbath day. He also spoke to the people from other nations who brought goods to sell. He warned them not to come on the Sabbath day of the week. He told the Levites to make themselves clean and holy and to guard the gates of the city. Nehemiah prayed again. He remembered God's great love. And Nehemiah asked God to show him His kindness.

APPLICATION:

Getting it right will always take us putting the Lord first. We can't get on track and then continue to get off track. If we don't have anyone to keep us accountable, we still must follow what we've been taught concerning God.

[TOP](#)

¹⁶ <http://swartzentrover.com/cotor/E-Books/christ/Gaebelein/AnnotatedOT/Nehemiah.htm>

¹⁷ <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-commentary/nehemiah-lbw.htm>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>