
THE
BOOK OF NEHEMIAH.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

THE book of Nehemiah takes up the history of the church very nearly from the close of that of Ezra; at least, not more than ten or twelve years after. The design of the Holy Ghost in giving this memoir of the Church's history, among other divine causes, was, no doubt, to carry on the progress of the church's account in a regular order. It comprizeth a period of not more than *twelve* years. And as far as the connection of history can be preserved, it should seem that this record of Nehemiah opens about ninety years after the return of the people from Babylon; and closes about 433 years before the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is well worthy the Reader's attention, that small and inconsiderable as those records of the church appear at this period, and especially if compared with other nations; yet not a word doth the scripture contain of the mightiest monarchies then existing, excepting in such things as are necessary to relate, from their occasional transactions with the church. The kingdom of *Persia*, which succeeded in the sway of the then known world that of *Babylon*, had now flourished for a century; and *Greece* began to make a conspicuous figure in the earth. *Rome* also was in her infancy about this time, under which *Judea* at length became tributary as a province. Yet not a word of either, unless (as I said before) in a collateral way, from having to do with God's people. It is the seed of Abraham, the church of Jesus, the Holy Ghost records the the memoirs of, whether Jerusalem be in adversity or prosperity; as if (and which is indeed the case) all the rest were regarded no more, or less, but as they ministered to God's people. What a thought to exalt our ideas of the nature and tendency of distinguishing grace! well might the man of God exclaim, *Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord!*

The principal subjects in the book of Nehemiah are—the zeal and concern of Nehemiah, under a commission he received from the king his master, to repair to Jerusalem for the rebuilding the wall of it; redressing the grievances of the people; registering the people; setting up a reform, and following up the plan of Ezra in the dissolution of unlawful marriages.

We cannot help admiring, as we prosecute the history, the very affectionate attachment of Nehemiah to his people; and yet more how much the Lord had imparted to him of his Holy Spirit. Surely the Lord had heard and answered the fervent prayer the

man of God had put up, even before he called, agreeably to his own most gracious promise, and remembered him for good.

I must still beg the Reader before he enters upon the perusal of this precious fragment of the church's history, to keep in memory the request I have all along been making him, namely, to search for Jesus through the whole. I should be tempted to question the authenticity of the book of Nehemiah, if nothing could be found in it either in direct reference, or in secret allusion, to his sacred and most endearing person, to whom all scripture ministers. Reader! depend upon it, Jesus is here. And if here, he will be found of them that seek him. Oh! then for increasing grace, both to Writer and Reader, to search and find him whom God the Father delighteth to honour, and God the Holy Ghost is engaged to glorify. Oh! Lord Jehovah! give us to see him, to know him, to love him, to live to him, to rejoice in him, to hang upon him, and to cleave to him, that he may be our portion in life, in death, and to all eternity. Amen.

CHAP. I.

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The book of Nehemiah opens with an account of Nehemiah's grief at the relation he received of the calamities of the people at Jerusalem. Here is the account also of his fasting and prayer upon the occasion.

THE words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah.
And it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace,

2 That Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.

There is somewhat which in the opening of the history tends to endear Nehemiah to our affection, in that we find his fulness and enjoyments at court did not shut out, or make him forget, his affection to the people of God. Nehemiah was a true Israelite, though serving an heathen prince. The Lord, in his providence, frequently causeth his dear people to be servants to those that know him not. But it is charming to see their love to him and his.

3 And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.

4 And it came to pass, when I heard these words,

that I sat down and wept, and mourned *certain* days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven,

This was a melancholy account of God's heritage. One should have thought that when the captivity was over, and the Lord had brought home his chosen, prosperity would have followed. Reader! mark it down. Jesus's people are to have tribulation in the world. And hereby indeed they will better know how to value his peace; *In me ye shall have peace.* Yes, blessed Lord! it is *in* thee; not *from* thee only, but *in* thee also. John xvi. 33.

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

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

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

8 Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses; saying, *If* ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations:

9 But *if* ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, *yet* will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there.

10 Now these *are* thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand.

11 O LORD, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy

name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cup-bearer.

Reader! look out for Jesus, and see whether in the several parts of this most fervent prayer, the plainest allusions be not made to him, and the plainest intimations of seeking mercy *in* him, and *through* him. Mark how Nehemiah opens his devotion with an eye to the Lord in his covenant character. And what was this but the covenant of redemption in Jesus? The first branch of God's covenant with Abraham, with whom the promise was made, was, that *in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed*. And that none might mistake, the Holy Ghost explains this with a direct reference to Christ: Gal. iii. 16. Observe, moreover, that blessed gospel feature of confessing iniquity, and accepting the punishment of it; and all this not with an eye to the merit of repentance, but to God's promises of acceptance. Levit. xxvi. 41, 42. Add another precious consideration in this view of Nehemiah's prayer, and remark that he puts God in mind of his covenant engagements. If when Israel for sin was scattered, still having an eye in their sorrow to Jesus by faith in a covenant God, they were to expect deliverance, Solomon was commissioned to hold forth a yet stronger representation of Jesus in his temple, to which Israel when scattered in distant countries, was to look by faith when brought acquainted with the plague of their own hearts. And this more fully held forth a covenant God in Christ. 1 Kings viii. 29, 30. I think these are sweet things in the prayer of Nehemiah in allusion to the Lord Jesus. The particular petition of the Lord's giving Nehemiah favor with the king his master, that he might be the Lord's instrument for good, is a noble example of the loveliness of Nehemiah's faith. Surely the Holy Ghost consulted the comfort and encouragement of the church when he caused this prayer to be recorded!

REFLECTIONS.

How truly lovely doth Nehemiah appear in the account here given of him. Not all the splendor of a court, nor the favor of a king, could make him forget the interests of his own country, or prevent tears from running down when he considered the affliction of Zion. Think of this, my soul, in the best moments of any outward providences, and take part in the concerns of the church of Jesus. Doth the church of Jesus lay waste? Are the dear members of his mystical body in affliction? Do they hunger while thou art full? Are they oppressed, and thou takest no part in their oppression? Oh! how canst thou be counted part of Jesus. Oh! gracious God and Saviour, grant to me such a sympathizing spirit in all that concerns thy cause and interest in the earth, that I may never, never lose sight of the wonderful price thy church cost thee, when for redemption thou didst shed thy precious blood. Animate, my soul, I beseech thee, thou Holy Spirit of grace, with the same fire from thine holy altar, as thou didst thy servant the prophet, that like him I may besiege the mercy-seat with clamorous and unceasing petitions, resolving, for *Zion's sake, never to*

hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake never to rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.

Behold, my soul also, in this sweet chapter, the mighty privilege of a throne of grace. Behold in this instance of Nehemiah, that no place, no clime, no country, no situation, is in itself able to keep the awakened soul from God. That throne which John saw surrounded with a rainbow is accessible on every side. Jesus, the Lamb, is in the midst of it. He still hears prayers; still feeds the church which he hath purchased with his blood; still acts as a priest upon his throne; wears thy nature and the priesthood still; and is infinitely more ready to take in petitions and bestow blessings than his people are to ask or receive. Oh! Lord Jesus! I would say, hear me then for myself, for my country, for thy church, for thy people! *do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion; build up her walls and love her still.*

CHAP. II.

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Nehemiah appearing with a sad countenance before the king his master, occasions the monarch to ask the cause. Upon being informed, and Nehemiah making request to go to Jerusalem, the king graciously grants it, and furnisheth him with all suitable things for his journey.

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.*

It is a remark of no small importance to the gracious Reader, in that the Holy Ghost hath caused the names of the two months to be marked in this history. The former chapter tells us that the month in which Nehemiah offered up his earnest supplications on account of the desolations and miseries of Jerusalem, was *Chisleu*. And we are carefully informed in this that the month *Nisan* was arrived before the Lord's merciful answer came to Nehemiah's petition. If I mistake not *Chisleu* corresponds to our *November*, and *Nisan* to our *March*; no less than four months between. Thus, Reader, our gracious God, though hearing, and sometimes answering prayer, before his people ask, according to his promise, yet is pleased even when he hath determined to fulfil their desires, not unfrequently by way of giving occasion to exercise faith upon his covenant faithfulness and love in his dear Son, to make the blessing by delay yet more sweet and precious.

2 Wherefore the king said unto me, *Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid,*

3 And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my father's sepulchres, *lieth* waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?

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

5 And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my father's sepulchres, that I may build it.

6 And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him,) For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time.

7 Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into Judah:

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

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

There is somewhat very interesting in this account; the fear of Nehemiah lest the king should take offence. And as these monarchs of the east were absolute, and the lives of their subjects were at their disposal, there seemed cause for fear. But this fear gave rise to a short but fervent prayer, silently, but powerfully sent up, for grace in the king's sight. Oh! Reader! what blessed privileges are ours. To have a throne of grace to fly to; a propitiation always set forth; and

an advocate always to plead: how can we fail of success in all our supplications, when we ask in the name of Jesus according to the mind and will of God? If *Artaxerxes* so readily answered Nehemiah's petition, let us never doubt but ours will always be answered, since we have one at the court of heaven whom the Father heareth alway.

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

Israel, in all ages, met with *Ammonites* and *Moabites* to vex and oppose them. And what is it otherwise now? Jesus gives a sweet testimony concerning this when he saith, *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.* John xv. 18, 19.

11 So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days.

12 ¶ And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I *any* man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither *was there any* beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon.

13 And I went out by night by the gate of the valley, even before the dragon well, and to the dung port, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire.

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

15 Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall, and turned back, and entered by the gate of the valley, and *so* returned.

16 And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did: neither had I as yet told *it* to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work.

17 ¶ Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we *are* in, how Jerusalem *lieth* waste, and

the gates thereof are burned with fire ; come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach.

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

Probably the three days before Nehemiah entered upon the great object of his journey, were spent in prayer. His night visit to the walls of Jerusalem serves to convince us, that the cause he had before him would meet with much opposition. His convening the people, and informing them what was in his mind, seems to intimate his great wisdom and good conduct. But let the Reader look through the historical part, to discover the great object intended from the whole as it concerned the church of God. The Lord had prophesied that *Jerusalem should again be built ; that old men should dwell in the streets ; and boys and girls yet play there.* Zech. viii. 4, 5. And more than this, the temple should be built, and the glory of it should exceed the former splendid temple of Solomon. And so it did when the Son of God came into it. Compare Haggai ii. 7, with Luke ii. 26—32. Hence, therefore, the good hand of the Lord was upon Nehemiah, and the Spirit of the Lord was directing him to the work with an eye to Jesus. Oh ! how blessed it is to observe all things, and all providences, in the Old Testament scripture, ushering in the mercies of the New ; and all directed to this one, and this only purpose, to introduce Jesus the Son of God, that we might *believe in him, and that in believing we might have life through his name.* John xx. 31.

19 But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard *it*, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What *is* this thing that ye do ? will ye rebel against the king ?

20 Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us ; therefore we his servants will arise and build : but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem.

There is somewhat very striking in Nehemiah's answer to the enemies of God and of his Christ. Ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem. And another authority confirms the same truth ; the want of a memorial in the book of life, subjects all of this description to the awful doom mentioned by John : Rev. xx. 15. Men may despise and laugh God's people to scorn ; but the day of decision

must come : and an awful decision it will be. Reader ! have you the smallest, even but the smallest evidence, that you love God's cause and God's people, though you fear you have no portion, no interest, no right or memorial among them ? Let this comfort and encourage your soul. None ever truly loved the cause of Jesus, and the people of Jesus, but secretly loved Jesus himself. And John was authorized by the Holy Ghost to mark this down as a standing cause of comfort, when higher evidences were wanting ; *We know (says he) that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.* 1 John iii. 14.

REFLECTIONS.

MARK, my soul, the very different characters which distinguish men of the world from real lovers of God. Their features, manners, customs, pursuits, habits, pleasures, all differ. Whatever root of bitterness it is, I do not presume to say, but certain it is that there is a root of bitterness springing up within them, both the blossom and the baleful deadly fruit appear in all their branches. But while these marks plainly testify whose they are, and in whose cause they are planted ; how blessed is it to see that they can extend their luxuriance no farther than the Lord allows. And how further blessed it is to see, that the Lord makes use of them medicinally to his people for good. *Sanballat and Tobiah* meant not so, neither did their heart intend it ; but yet, in reality, all they did, and all their scoffs and oppositions, only tended to make Nehemiah more assiduous, and more earnest in his recourses to a mercy seat. Reader ! when our enemies do this ; when they drive us to a throne of grace, when otherwise we should not go there, surely the Lord by his overruling wisdom converts their very evil into good, and compels them, contrary to their wishes and intent, to prove our kind friends.

Mark, my soul, in *Nehemiah*, the portrait of God's children. While the Lord's house lies waste, they take no pleasure. While Jesus and his people are oppressed, there is no joy in a gracious soul. See then, my soul, whether, like Nehemiah, thou art anxious for the prosperity of Zion ? Can a throne of grace witness for thee, that thy petitions are lodged there for her welfare ? Dost thou love her courts, her ordinances, her servants, her ministers, her people ? Is the Lord himself precious to thee, and dearer than the golden wedge of Ophir ? Oh ! thou dear Redeemer ! let thy name, thy person, thy work, thine offices, thy character, relations ; all, all that belongs to Jesus, be as ointment poured forth. And oh ! grant, my Lord, that I may be a sweet savor of Jesus, as Nehemiah, to all around.

CHAP. III.

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This Chapter is chiefly directed to record the names of those who arose to build the walls, and the order in which they proceeded in the work.

THEN Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the

sheep gate; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel.

It is no small commendation of the priesthood, that we find the high-priest putting his hand first to the work of the Lord. The sheep-gate led to the temple, and hence here their office particularly called them. And was not this typical of the ever blessed Jesus? His almighty hand must be first with all spiritual builders; for *except the Lord build the house, they labour but in vain that build it.* Psm. cxxvii. 1.

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

3 But the fish gate did the sons of Hassenaah build, who *also* laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof.

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

The relation here made, seems to be with a design to manifest the cheerfulness of the people in the service. No doubt the Lord inclined their heart. When Jesus our High-Priest goeth before us by his Spirit, he well incline believers to follow.

5 And next to them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of the LORD.

It is not said whether this is meant by way of reprobach or not, concerning the nobles. Various degrees the Lord hath appointed in his church, and among his people: and all in their respective situations, when properly conducting themselves, move in a beautiful order.

6 Moreover the old gate repaired Jehoiada the son of Paseah, and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah; they laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, and the locks thereof, and the bars thereof.

7 And next unto them repaired Melatiah the Gibeonite, and Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon, and of Mizpah, unto the throne of the oovernor on this side the river.

8 Next unto him repaired Uzziel the son of Harhaiah, of the goldsmiths. Next unto him also repaired Hananiah the son of *one* of the apothecaries, and they fortified Jerusalem unto the broad wall.

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

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

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

The work must have been generally interesting; for we find goldsmiths and apothecaries engaged in it. Such, blessed Jesus, are thy servants in thine house and family. We find apostles, and prophets, and evangelists, and pastors, and teachers; but all with one view, for *the edifying of the body of Christ.* Ephes. iv. 11, 12.

12 And next unto him repaired Shallum the son of Halohesh, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem, he and his daughters.

The service of *Shallum's* daughters in this work, carries with it a conviction how much the general mind was engaged in this public good. It reminds us of the women Paul speaks of, who *laboured with him in the gospel.* Phil. iv. 3.

13 The valley gate repaired Hanun, and the inhabitants of Zanoah; they built it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof, and a thousand cubits on the wall unto the dung gate.

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

15 But the gate of the fountain repaired Shalum the son of Col-hozeh, the ruler of part of Mizpah; he built it, and covered it, and set up

the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof, and the wall of the pool of Siloah by the king's garden, and unto the stairs that go down from the city of David.

16 After him repaired Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, the ruler of the half part of Bethzur, unto *the place* over against the sepulchres of David, and to the pool that was made, and unto the house of the mighty.

17 And after him repaired the Levites, Rehum the son of Bani. Next unto him repaired Hashabiah, the ruler of the half part of Keilah, in his part.

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

19 And next to him repaired Ezer the son of Jeshua, the ruler of Mizpah, another piece over against the going up to the armoury at the turning *of the wall*.

20 After him Baruch the son of Zabbai earnestly repaired the other piece, from the turning *of the wall* unto the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest.

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

22 And after him repaired the priests, the men of the plain.

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

24 After him repaired Binnui the son of Henadad another piece, from the house of Azariah unto the turning *of the wall*, even unto the corner.

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

26 Moreover the Nethinims dwelt in Ophel, unto *the place* over against the water gate toward the east, and the tower that lieth out.

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

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

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

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

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

32 And between the going up of the corner unto the sheep gate repaired the goldsmith's and the merchants.

I stay not to mark the several particulars in this account. The labourers were all worthy of being recorded, or their names would not have been so noticed by the Holy Ghost. But the only improvement which seems to be generally designed from the relation here given, is that none, who minister in the service of God and his people, shall be overlooked. The smallest offering, in his cause, becomes a precious one: and God is not unrighteous to forget the labour of love, in those who offer it with a willing heart.

REFLECTIONS.

I HOPE the Reader will not peruse this chapter, without gleanings much improvement from it, though the subject relates to nothing more

interesting than the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem. But in the repairing the walls of Jerusalem, we must look beyond the mere letter of the word, and consider that Jerusalem is the city of the great King, and the people of it the nation whom God hath taken into covenant with himself. Were the walls of Jerusalem laid waste? Did the enemy enter in by her gates? Was she carried into captivity by the foe? Yes! all this was done. But by whom was it done, and for what cause? The prophet hath answered; *He that scattereth Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd doth his flock.* Doth the enemy say, *Is this Zion*, whom no man looketh after? Let them know that the Lord doth look after Zion, and *will comfort her waste places.* For he hath said, *I will make you a praise among all people of the earth, when I have turned back your captivity before your eyes, saith the Lord.*

But sweet as these considerations are, in reference to the Lord's mercy manifested to Israel of old, how infinitely more interesting do they become, if viewed through the gospel medium, and having their accomplishment in the recovery from the captivity of sin and Satan, the rebuilding the walls of the church of Jesus, and the bringing home *the redeemed of the Lord to Zion, with songs of everlasting joy upon their head.* Here the subject riseth to an higher degree of sublimity; and we may behold the several worthies in this chapter, headed by their high-priests, as the representatives of the church of Jesus, following the great and glorious High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus, emerging out of all the ruins of the fall, and forming an holy temple to the Lord, through the Spirit. Even in the present day of grace, and beheld only with an eye to the recovery from the powers of darkness, and the dominion of sin in this life, the subject becomes beautiful and interesting. But looking forward to the eventual redemption from everlasting misery in the world to come, nothing can be more animating, nor delightful. Here it is the promise of God, by his prophet, receives its full accomplishment. In Jesus, and his finished redemption, when the Lord hath builded Zion, and made his glory to appear, Jehovah will indeed make every child of Jesus a praise among all people of the earth, in having for ever turned back their captivity, and put a final close to all the oppressions the Israel of God hath sustained from all the enemies of her salvation, for evermore.

CHAP. IV.

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In this chapter we have an account of the opposition the builders of the wall met with from the common enemy. While they mock, Nehemiah takes refuge in prayer, and setteth a watch to prevent their evil designs.

BUT it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews.

2 And he spake before his brethren and the

army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?

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

I would have the Reader look beyond the mere historical relation, to the matter couched beneath the several expressions. It was not simply the walls of Jerusalem which excited the displeasure and malice of their foes; but it was the church of God that those enemies hated, and wished to bring to nought. Reader! the same takes place every day in the world. Let a sinner be only once seriously set out for the salvation of his soul, and all hell is up in arms to oppose him. What the Lord Jesus declared, his people find to be true; *a man's foes are they of his own household.* Hence, saith Christ, *Think not that I am come to send peace, but rather division.* Luke xii. 51.

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

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

Observe, in the conduct of Nehemiah, where the believer's resource is in the time of persecution: even at a throne of grace. Here we may lodge all our concerns. And here we are sure of success; for here is One, *whom the Father heareth alway.*

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.

This good-will in the people to the work, and the prosperity of the work itself, were sure answers of prayer.

7 ¶ But it came to pass, *that* when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, *and* that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth,

8 And conspired all of them together to come *and* to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it.

Evil men (saith an apostle) *and seducers shall wax worse and worse.* And here we see it.

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

10 And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and *there is* much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.

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

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

13 Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, *and* on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows.

14 And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them; remember the LORD, *which is* great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.

15 And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work.

Observe how the Lord must have been with the people, when the work, in spite of all impediments, and the fatigue of the people, was so shortly accomplished.

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

17 They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, *every one*

with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other *hand* held a weapon.

18 For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and *so* builded. And he that sounded the trumpet *was* by me.

19 And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work *is* great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another.

20 In what place *therefore* ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us : our God shall fight for us.

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

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

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

I hope the Reader will again and again, as he passeth through this whole chapter, carry his thoughts beyond the literal relation, to the contemplation of the church of God as represented in it. The Christian is both a warrior, and a builder : and sure he is, in every stage of his pursuit, in building the temple of the Lord, to meet with opposition. In all ages there have been *Sanballats* and *Tobiah's*. Like Nehemiah's servants, God's people must have the sword of the Spirit to oppose the adversary ; and the whole armour of salvation, *on the right hand, and on the left*. It is on this account the apostle admonisheth the Ephesian Church *to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*. Ephes. vi. 10, &c.

REFLECTIONS.

READER ! you and I shall derive very sweet improvements from this chapter, if, under the teaching of God the Holy Ghost, we discover our personal interest in it, and amidst all the oppositions we meet with from the enemies of our salvation, like Nehemiah, we learn where our strength is, and from whence help is to be derived. We

are building for eternity, and there are many foes to obstruct our progress. But if our foundation be Jesus; and if he who hath founded Zion, gives us, by his Holy Spirit, to rest all upon this precious Corner Stone, then the promise is sure, *we shall never be ashamed, nor confounded, world without end.* Reader! are you thus engaged? Is Christ your foundation? Have you laid your rest upon him deep and firm? Have you quitted every other foundation? Do you heartily and cordially, lay the whole weight of your salvation on him? Do you live upon him, act faith daily, hourly, upon him? Do you not only live *upon* Jesus, but live *to* Jesus? These are heart-searching enquiries. But if the Lord enable you thus to build upon Christ, depend upon it, in defiance of all opposition, he that enabled you to begin, will help you to complete; *and the top-stone will be at length brought home with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it.* Let a thousand Sanballats arise, or ten thousand Tobiahs mock; yet he that is with you, is more than all that are against you. *The Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it.* Go on, therefore, in the strength of the Lord; crying out in the words of the prophet; *Who art thou, O great mountain? before our Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain.*

CHAP. V

CONTENTS.

In this Chapter we are led to behold Nehemiah reforming certain abuses which had crept in among the people. He sets a noble example of liberality.

AND there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews.

2 For there were that said, We, our sons, and our daughters, *are* many: therefore we take up corn *for them*, that we may eat, and live.

3 *Some* also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth.

4 There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute, *and that upon* our lands and vineyards.

5 Yet now our flesh *is* as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and *some* of our daughters are brought unto bondage *already*: neither *is it* in our power to *redeem them*; for other men have our lands and vineyards.

Though in the laws by Moses, every provision was made for the happiness of Israel, in the several situations of poor and rich; yet there were then, as there is now, and from the same cause, the ruined state of our nature by the fall, many whose hearts felt not for the poor, but for the love of gain, and in direct defiance of God's law, cared not but to oppose their brethren. We have here the complaint. The oppressed felt the evil, and cried out under it. What a sweet thought is it, under all the mortgaged state of our spiritual inheritance, our captive state to sin and Satan; we have a Brother, our next of kin, to redeem both our persons and our inheritance. Levit. xxv. 25.

6 ¶ And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words.

7 Then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them.

8 And I said unto them, We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? Then held they their peace, and found nothing to answer.

9 Also I said, It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?

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

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

12 Then said they, We will restore *them*, and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest. Then I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise.

13 Also I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his

labour, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out, and emptied. And all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the LORD. And the people did according to this promise.

What a masterly speech doth Nehemiah here make! How unanswerable the arguments he adopted to induce tenderness in the minds of the people! And how successful his reasoning. But how infinitely superior is the lesson the Lord Jesus brought forward, in the days of his flesh, to the question of his servant the apostle, on the subject of offences. Jesus hath ransomed us when under a debt of ten thousand talents, which no human ability could ever pay. And therefore to bear hard upon a brother of poorer circumstances, in the paltry debt of an hundred pence, must imply a cruelty unsuited to a regenerated mind. According to Nehemiah's strong figure of shaking the lap, we may well conclude God will shake off, and shake out, all merciless characters of this description; or to use the higher and better words of our Lord Jesus Christ, every such wretch will be delivered to the tormentors; and so will God our heavenly Father do unto us, if we from our hearts forgive not every one his brother his trespasses. Matt. xviii. 34, 35.

14 ¶ Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be the governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year even unto the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes the king, *that is*, twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor.

15 But the former governors that *had been* before me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver: yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God.

16 Yea, also I continued in the work of this wall, neither bought we any land: and all my servants *were* gathered thither unto the work.

17 Moreover *there were* at my table an hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, beside those that came unto us from among the heathen that *are* about us.

18 Now *that* which was prepared *for me* daily: *was* one ox and six choice sheep; also fowls were

prepared for me, and once in ten days store of all sorts of wine: yet for all this required not I the bread of the governor, because the bondage was heavy upon this people.

There is much to admire in this liberality of Nehemiah, who would not avail himself of his office, as governor under the king of Persia his master, to take money or goods from the people. He lost sight of his authority in this particular, in his affection as a Jew. He considered himself as a brother, and as such acted the brotherly part. He must have been a noble character. But oh! at what an infinite distance doth Nehemiah stand, in this nobleness of soul, when we look at the Lord Jesus Christ. He who was rich, yet *for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.* It was generous for Nehemiah to leave the court of Persia to visit Jerusalem in ruins. But what was this, in point of greatness of love, compared to thine, thou adorable, blessed Jesus, in that thou didst leave the court of heaven, and the bosom of thy Father, and camest not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give thy life a ransom for many! Oh! matchless love! Oh! unequalled, unheard-of grace!

19 Think upon me, my God, for good, *according* to all that I have done for this people.

Nehemiah's petition, to be remembered for good, was not offered up as if he looked for a reward from the Lord for his good services; but only implied that he himself might receive from a gracious God the favour of his good will and pleasure. That God who had inclined his heart to love God's people, would remember that his love to the people arose from the love the Lord had put in his heart to the Lord himself, and that God would bless him with the kindness he manifested to Israel, and remember him in his covenant mercy.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT a blessing to every state, and to every people, are faithful governors! placed by a gracious God in the supreme department of magistracy, like the beneficent planets of the earth, they shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. And when the Lord Jesus, who places them where they are, graciously furnishes them with hearts, and heads, and hands, to minister to his glory, and the people's welfare, like Nehemiah, their government becomes a blessing, and their persons sacred and beloved.

But, my soul, while thou art contemplating the happy state of an earthly governor, a faithful magistrate, like Nehemiah, among men, look to thy Jesus, the Almighty supreme Lord of heaven and earth, *by whom kings reign, and princes decree justice.* All the good that is done upon earth he doeth it himself. Yes, blessed Jesus! it is thou that by the sweet and secret influences of thy Spirit dost order, regulate, appoint, and give blessings to the whole events of justice, truth, and faithfulness found among men. In thee, and from thee,

every source of blessing must flow. Nay, thou thyself art the everlasting glory, the honor, beauty, and loveliness of all merciful dispensations. And art thou, then, my governor, my Lord, my God, my Holy One? Oh! give me to hail thee, and to acknowledge thee Lord of all. And while I bend the knee before thee, do thou bring *every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ*. Lord, let me dwell *under thy shadow; revive as the corn, and grow as the vine; that the smell of fragraney in thy sweet sacrifice may be as the wine of Lebanon*.

CHAP. VI.

CONTENTS.

We have revived here the persecution of Sanballat against the church. The work, however, is completed. A secret correspondence is carried on between Tobiah and some of the nobles of Judah.

NOW it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and *that* there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;)

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

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

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

It is worthy observation what obstructions the people of God meet with in every age to hinder their progress in the Lord's service. Sanballat and Tobiah first began to shew their ill designs against Nehemiah and his cause with ridicule and laughter. A fox would be enough they said, to make breaches in the wall. When this failed, they now adopt another plan. Under pretence of much kindness, they invite Nehemiah to a conference, with a view to do him some mischief. So, Reader, are the devices of Satan against the spiritual building of the Lord's household. Satan is a subtle foe. By private fraud, and by open stratagem, as best suits his hellish policy, he attacks God's people.

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

6 Wherein *was* written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith *it, that* thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words.

7 And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, *There is* a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together.

8 Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart.

9 For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, *O God*, strengthen my hands.

Here is a yet deeper-laid plot of Nehemiah's foes, out of which the Lord brought him. Reader! it is sweet and profitable to watch our deliverances. Some, indeed, nay multitudes, no doubt, of Jesus's gracious interpositions, we are unconscious of. But some are revealed to us. And oh! how precious they are. When a soul can look back and say, *Here* my God interposed; and *there* he rescued me from the temptation of the devil. It realizes that blessed promise, 1 Cor. x. 13.

10 Afterward I came unto the house of She-maiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who *was* shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee.

11 And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who *is there*, that, *being* as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in.

12 And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent

him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.

13 Therefore *was* he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and *that* they might have *matter* for an evil report, that they might reproach me.

It is more than probable that this *Shemaiah* acted as a prophet. But he could not have received his commission from the Lord. Nehemiah visited him, it seems, for he came into his house. But though set on by Sanballat and Tobiah, yet the Lord gave Nehemiah to discover that his advice was not from the Lord. Reader! what an awful thing is it when men assume the ministerial office, run unsent, and speak unauthorized; and yet worse, if possible, utter lies in the name of the Lord. From all such, of whatever name, or by whatever denomination distinguished among men, I would say for myself and all poor sinners, *good Lord deliver us.*

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

Observe how the open or secret plots of the enemy drive Nehemiah to his knees. Reader! think only how a gracious God in Christ overrules even the malice of the devil to his people's good and his own glory. For if the devices of Satan compel me to go to a throne of grace for strength to resist his temptation, when without this attack of the foul fiend I should not have gone there; and if God my Saviour converts his very ill design into the means of producing greater good, so that thereby my own poverty and weakness is more discovered, and the Redeemer's strength made more precious and interesting: surely even our temptations are blessings in disguise, and are among the *all things which work together for good to them that love God.* Rom. viii. 28. James i. 2—4.

15 ¶ So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth *day of the month* Elul, in fifty and two days.

See what a short work was made of it when the hand of the Lord was upon them, and with them. So is it in divine things. Oh! how often do we find a few days, nay sometimes a few hours, sufficient in the Lord's hand for awakening, convincing, converting, and establishing a poor sinner in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, and redemption by him. When God works he works as God.

16 And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard *thereof*, and all the heathen that *were*

about us saw *these things*, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God.

So in the last day will all the enemies of God and of his Christ be confounded, when the Lord shall bring home *the top-stone of the spiritual building with shoutings, crying grace, grace unto it.* Zech. iv. 7.

17 ¶ Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters unto Tobiah, and *the letters* of Tobiah came unto them.

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

19 Also they reported his good deeds before me, and uttered my words to him. *And* Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear.

That the nobles of Judah should have been in this base conduct against Nehemiah, must have occasioned many painful feelings in his mind. *We wrestle not only against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers.* Ephes. vi. 12.

REFLECTIONS.

It is hardly possible to read this Chapter, and behold the various methods which the enemies of Nehemiah made use of to draw him from the work he had engaged in for God's glory, without immediately having our minds led forth to contemplate the still more plausible and subtle devices which Satan and his agents are unweariedly engaged in to harrass and afflict the people of God. What fiery darts of temptation do they throw forth from the quiver of their hellish malice? And if at any time they are successful, which the Lord sometimes graciously may permit, for our greater advantage and his glory in the end; oh! how do they triumph in our fall. But Reader! there is a way, and it is indeed the only way of counteracting all the subtlety and malice of Satan; namely, as the redeemed now in heaven are said to have done; *they overcame by the blood of the Lamb.* Yes! blessed Jesus! thy name, thy cross, thy precious blood and righteousness; these are the ensigns of victory, by which alone we can resist the devil, and cause him to flee from us. And like Nehemiah we shall finish the wall, subdue all oppositions, and be more than conquerors through thy grace helping us, when by thy blessed Spirit we are made *strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.*

CHAP. VII.

CONTENTS.

This chapter contains the account of the government of Jerusalem under Nehemiah. A register also of the genealogy of them, who returned first from the captivity of Babylon, both of the people, priests, Levites, and Nethinims.

NOW it came to pass, when the wall was built, and I had set up the doors, and the porters and the singers and the Levites were appointed,

2 That I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: for he *was* a faithful man, and feared God above many.

3 And I said unto them, Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun be hot; and while they stand by, let them shut the doors, and bar *them*: and appoint watches of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, every one in his watch, and every one *to be* over against his house.

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

It is to be supposed that the holy city of Jerusalem, stood upon the very same ground as before its desolation. And though at present not peopled as heretofore with a multitude of inhabitants, yet looking for the accomplishment of God's promises, the same room as before was taken in. Zech. vii. 4—7. and Chap. viii. 3 6. By the appointment of Hanani and Hananiah to the government, it seems probable that Nehemiah was looking forward to his return to the court of Persia. This is the same Hanani which brought tidings to Nehemiah concerning Jerusalem, as mentioned in the first chapter, verse 2. The faithfulness of his partner Hananiah is honourably mentioned. May we not spiritualize the passage in reference to the faithful ministers of Christ, and remark, that if the security of Jerusalem, in its frontiers and gates, became so important, how much more should those who stand at the doors of the Lord's heritage use vigilance and circumspection, to see who are admitted, and that they are indeed of the *true household of faith*.

5 ¶ And my God put into mine heart to gather together the nobles, and the rulers, and the people, that they might be reckoned by genealogy. And I found a register of the genealogy of them

which came up at the first, and found written therein,

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

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

8 ¶ The children of Parosh, two thousand an hundred seventy and two.

9 The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two.

10 The children of Arah, six hundred fifty and two.

11 The children of Pahath-moab, of the children of Jeshua *and* Joab, two thousand and eight hundred *and* eighteen.

12 The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four.

13 The children of Zattu, eight hundred forty and five.

14 The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and threescore.

15 The children of Binnui, six hundred forty and eight.

16 The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty and eight.

17 The children of Azgad, two thousand three hundred twenty and two.

18 The children of Adonikam, six hundred threescore and seven.

19 The children of Bigvai, two thousand threescore and seven.

20 The children of Adin, six hundred fifty and five.

21 The children of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety and eight.

22 The children of Hashum, three hundred twenty and eight.

23 The children of Bezai, three hundred twenty and four.

24 The children of Hariph, an hundred and twelve.

25 The children of Gibeon, ninety and five.

26 The men of Beth-lehem and Netophah, an hundred fourscore and eight.

27 The men of Anathoth, an hundred twenty and eight.

28 The men of Beth-azmaveth, forty and two.

29 The men of Kirjath-jearim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred forty and three.

30 The men of Ramah and Gaba, six hundred twenty and one.

31 The men of Michmas, an hundred and twenty and two.

32 The men of Beth-el and Ai, an hundred twenty and three.

33 The men of the other Nebo, fifty and two.

34 The children of the other Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four.

35 The children of Harim, three hundred and twenty.

36 The children of Jericho, three hundred forty and five.

37 The children of Lod, Hadad, and Ono, seven hundred twenty and one.

38 The children of Senaah, three thousand nine hundred and thirty.

39 ¶ The priests: the children of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred seventy and three.

40 The children of Immer, a thousand fifty and two.

41 The children of Pashur, a thousand two hundred forty and seven.

42 The children of Harim, a thousand and seventeen.

43 ¶ The Levites: the children of Jeshua, of Kadmiel, *and* of the children of Hodevah, seventy and four.

44 The singers: the children of Asaph, an hundred forty and eight.

45 The porters: the children of Shallum, the children of Ater, the children of Talmon, the children of Akkub, the children of Hatita, the children of Shobai, an hundred thirty and eight.

46 ¶ The Nethinims: the children of Ziha, the children of Hashupha, the children of Tab-baoth,

47 The children of Keros, the children of Sia, the children of Padon,

48 The children of Lebana, the children of Hagaba, the children of Shalmal,

49 The children of Hanan, the children of Giddel, the children of Gahar,

50 The children of Reaiah, the children of Rezin, the children of Nekoda,

51 The children of Gazzam, the children of Uzza, the children of Phaseah,

52 The children of Besai, the children of Menunim, the children of Nephishesim,

53 The children of Bakbuk, the children of Hakupha, the children of Harhur,

54 The children of Bazlith, the children of Mehida, the children of Harsha,

55 The children of Barkos, the children of Sisera, the children of Tamah,

56 The children of Neziah, the children of Hatipha.

57 ¶ The children of Solomon's servants: the children of Sotai, the children of Sophereth, the children of Perida,

58 The children of Jaalah, the children of Darkon, the children of Giddel,

59 The children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattil, the children of Pochereth of Zebaim, the children of Amon.

60 All the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon's servants, *were* three hundred ninety and two.

61 And these *were* they which went up *also* from Tel-melah, Tel-haresa, Cherub, Addan, and Immer: but they could not shew their father's house, nor their seed, whether they *were* of Israel.

62 The children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred forty and two.

63 ¶ And of the priests: the children of Hebaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai, which took *one* of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite to wife, and was called after their name.

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

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

66 ¶ The whole congregation together *was* forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore,

67 Beside their manservants and their maid-servants, of whom *there were* seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and they had two

hundred forty and five singing men and singing women.

68 Their horses, seven hundred thirty and six; their mules, two hundred forty and five;

69 *Their* camels, four hundred thirty and five: six thousand seven hundred and twenty asses.

Here is a register exactly corresponding to the one made in the days of Ezra, though this must have been at least 40 years after. Ezra ii. When I say exactly, I mean in all the great and leading points in which the value and faithfulness of the record is made to depend. Though I think it not necessary to detain the Reader with making the same observations upon it which I did on that chapter, yet I cannot help observing that as the Holy Ghost hath thought proper to have this register faithfully handed down to the church both by Ezra and Nehemiah, it may serve to shew us its great importance. And next to the one grand cause of all records of families among God's people, which is wholly with an eye to Jesus, it is not, I think, a subject of small moment to consider also how sweetly it testifies of the love of God the Holy Ghost to the people of Jesus, in that the genealogy is thus twice put down. As if to teach every poor, despised and humble follower of the Lord Jesus, that how little soever esteemed he may be among men, yet is he of great price in the sight of God. Think of it, my brother, I beseech you. The Reader will not fail to remark also, as a further confirmation of this subject, that Nehemiah expressly saith *the thing was from the Lord. My God* (said he) *put it into my heart.* Oh! how sweet is it to trace all gracious dispositions up to their source!

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

71 And *some* of the chief of the fathers gave to the treasure of the work twenty thousand drams of gold, and two thousand and two hundred pound of silver.

72 And *that* which the rest of the people gave *was* twenty thousand drams of gold, and two thousand pound of silver, and threescore and seven priests' garments.

73 So the priests, and the Levites, and the porters, and the singers, and *some* of the people, and the Nethinims, and all Israel, dwelt in their cities; and when the seventh month came, the children *were* in their cities.

The liberal gifts of the people plainly testify their sense of the Lord's presence, and his blessing upon them. In all ages these testimonies are among the truest tokens of the real work of grace upon the heart.

REFLECTIONS.

LEAVING the subject of Jerusalem's safety, and the means the zealous Nehemiah adopted to preserve her from the foe, I would call upon myself and Reader to an higher subject arising out of it, and consider how our Almighty Governor, when about to return to the court of heaven, having finished the holy building of salvation in his own blood and righteousness, set watchmen upon the walls of his Zion, and poured forth abundance of grace that a standing ministry might be alive to the safety and security of his redeemed ones. Yes, blessed Jesus! methinks I see thee in the moment of thy departure sending forth thy servants, and bidding them to be very anxious for the everlasting interests of thy Zion; and under thy blessed Spirit to watch at thy gates, and at the doors of thine house, night and day, and to give the Lord Jehovah *no rest, nor peace, until he hath made Jerusalem a praise in the earth.* Ye ministers of my God! see that ye are found faithful to your post! Plead with the people! plead with God in Christ; make mention of his purchase, of his blood, of his cross, of the register of the names in the book of life written in heaven; and never cease, never give over; but *be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort.* And oh thou adorable Emmanuel! do thou bless and crown the labours of thy faithful sent servants, that Jerusalem *may again be peopled with men as a flock.*

CHAP. VIII.

CONTENTS.

This is an interesting chapter, for it records the solemn manner in which Nehemiah caused the law to be read in the presence of the people.

AND all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that *was* before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel.

2 And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.

The first day of the seventh month was a remarkable day in the estimation of Israel, for the Lord had appointed that an holy convocation should be observed on that day; (Numb. xxix. 1.) and the blowing of the trumpets. The various days and services by this ceremony of the

blowing of trumpets, were all significant of the year of redemption. It must have been an animating sight to have beheld Israel once more gathered together in the great street of the city, even their beloved city of Jerusalem, to hear again after the ancient method, the law of God read to them by a scribe. But Reader! think of *your* privileges in having the gospel of salvation proclaimed every day, in every street and city, which is not as the law, the ministration of death, but the power of an endless life in Jesus. And if all Israel gathered as one man upon this occasion, how inexcusable are those who stay away from the house of God, and neglect to hear the wholesome truths of redemption.

3 And he read therein before the street that *was* before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand: and the ears of all the people *were attentive* unto the book of the law.

4 And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiiah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam.

5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up:

6 And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with *their* faces to the ground.

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

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

The length of the service in reading the law implies, that this was a more than ordinary occasion. And it is remarkable that though Ezra had been in Jerusalem, at the time that this service was so so-

lemly observed, for many years, yet we never hear of it before. Probably the building of the wall inspired the people with greater confidence. The bringing out of the book before the people, and opening it in their view; their standing up at the reading of it, by way of testifying their great reverence for it; and Ezra's blessing the Lord, with the people's answering Amen, amen, with lifted up hands, and bowing faces; all these were delightful signs of the real devotion of the heart on this memorable occasion. Blessed be God! amidst all the decays of vital godliness in the mass of the people, still there is a reverence observed, at least in our churches, on the reading of the scriptures. And the sweet savor the people of God feel at those seasons, becomes no small testimony that a relish for divine truths still is among us. Oh! that the Lord would increase it. I beg the Reader to remark what is said, in this account, of the expounding the word, reading, and causing the people to understand the reading. This not only becomes an authority for ministers to expound the word of life, as they read it to the people, but also a lovely example. And surely God doth own, and will bless, the labors of scribes well instructed in the mysteries of the gospel, when under the Spirit's teaching they bring forth out of the *treasury things new and old*.

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.

Tirshatha means governor. And here Nehemiah presided in that capacity. But what I particularly request the Reader to observe with me is, the effect the reading of the Lord's holy law had upon the people. Certainly we may conclude that their tears were both tears of sorrow for sin, and of joy in God's mercy. And as the law, without an eye to Jesus as the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, could never minister joy to any poor sinner; I venture to believe that some, at least, of this assembly were enabled by faith to look beyond the law, and behold him to whom the law acted as a schoolmaster. And if so, what a precious view is here held forth to the church concerning faith in Christ. The Reader will be pleased to observe that I do not speak decidedly upon this point. I rather use caution. I only say, that if Nehemiah, or Ezra, or any of the people, were enabled by the Lord so to do, what an interesting glimpse of Jesus was here afforded; and how charmed must have been the soul of every faithful believer present.

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 the LORD: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength.

11 So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved.

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.

Reader! do observe how truly beautiful when blended together, is charity with devotion. *Thy prayers and thine alms* (said the angel to Cornelius) *are come up for a memorial before God.* Acts x. 4. Observe the expression; Jehovah is your strength. Who doth this mean but Jesus? Surely He is the strength of his people, and the arm of the Lord. Isaiah lii. 1.

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.

How blessed is it to follow up the sabbath day's employment in the study of God's word with the next day's attention, bringing to remembrance what we then heard. When the parlour or the kitchen, or those who have neither, make the chamber an echo to the sanctuary, and rehearse among their household, or their friends, or acquaintance, what they heard on the preceding sabbath concerning Jesus. And what encouragement is there to this in God's blessed word! The prophets tells us that *they that feared the name of the Lord were often talking one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it.* And the Evangelist tells us that while the disciples of Jesus were talking of him by the way, *Jesus himself drew near and went with them.* Luke xxiv. 15. Reader! depend upon it, when Jesus, in the sweetness and preciousness of his name, is in the mouth and upon the lips, from the abundance of the heart awakened by grace, the Lord will bless such edifying conversation, and impart greater degrees of knowledge both to speaker and hearer. See Malachi iii. 16, 17. Luke xxiv. 14, 15.

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:

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.

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.

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.

18 Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day *was* a solemn assembly, according unto the manner.

This custom of erecting booths is kept up to the present hour by the Jews. But alas! to what purpose? Do they read the law as their fathers did, from the first day to the last of their feasts? I fear not; though I presume not to judge them. But thus far I am authorized to say; *their minds are blinded; for until this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.* But what a precious scripture is that which so sweetly and graciously promiseth: *Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.* 2 Cor. iii. 14—16. Oh! who will not add, in all the fervency of prayer, Hasten, Lord, the gracious hour! may the Lord Jesus, the great deliverer, *arise in Zion, and take away ungodliness from Jacob!*

REFLECTIONS.

PRECIOUS chapter this, which in the view of Ezra reminds me of Jesus! how was it possible indeed to see Ezra taking the book, and opening it before the people, and not call to mind what I have read of thee, thou Holy Saviour, when as a Lamb thou, and thou alone, wert found worthy to open the book of God, and loose the seals thereof. And were the people of the captivity anxious to hear Ezra the scribe read out of the book of the law, and shall I not be extremely solicitous that thou, most blessed Jesus, should open to me the precious words of salvation? Did they weep with holy tears at what they heard. And shall my soul remain unmoved at the gracious words which proceed forth from thy mouth? Was the law of Moses, which contained the ministration of death, glorious to their view? And shall not life from the dead in the gospel of thy blood and righteousness, be abundantly more glorious? Oh! precious, precious Lamb of God; let me join

the universal song that filled heaven and earth, in the moment redemption work was made known, and cry out with them; *Thou art worthy to take the book, and open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God, by thy blood.* Yes! thou adorable Redeemer; the church hail thee in heaven; the church praise thee on earth. Oh! let a poor worm send forth his feeble breathings, poor and feeble as they are, and sing as they did, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.* May all glory be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. Amen.

CHAP. IX.

CONTENTS.

We have in this chapter an account of a solemn fast appointed in Jerusalem, in which the Levites take a very principal part in confessing their sins.

NOW in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes and earth upon them.

2 And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers.

This fast seems to have been appointed with a view to implore the pardon of God for the mingling with the idolatrous nations of the earth. And as the law, that enjoined them not to make intermarriages, was evidently with an eye to the promised seed in Jesus, this fast must be considered more particularly as a solemn ordinance of faith.

3 And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the LORD their God *one* fourth part of the day; and *another* fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the LORD their God.

The order of the fast is here stated. Reading and prayer divided the service. When we have by meditation, and the diligent perusal of God's word, informed ourselves of God's mind; prayer by faith in Jesus sweetly follows.

4 ¶ Then stood up upon the stairs of the Levites, Jeshua, and Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Chenani, and cried with a loud voice unto the LORD their God.

5 Then the Levites, Jeshua, and Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabaniah, Sherebiah, Hodijah, Shebaniah,

and Pethahiah, said, Stand up *and* bless the LORD your God for ever and ever: and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise.

The names of the Levites who engaged in the solemn service of the day are here recorded with honourable testimony. It is a blessed thing to bear a part in the duties of the sanctuary, when done with a single eye to God's glory.

6 Thou, *even* thou, *art* LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their hosts, 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.

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;

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:

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

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.

11 And thou didst divide the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land; and their persecutors thou threwest into the deeps, as a stone into the mighty waters.

12 Moreover thou leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar; and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way wherein they should go.

13 Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest

them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments:

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

15 And gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger, and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and promisedst them that they should go in to possess the land which thou hadst sworn to give them.

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

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

18 Yea, when they had made them a molten calf, and said, This *is* thy god that brought thee up out of Egypt, and had wrought great provocations:

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

20 Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst.

21 Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, *so that* they lacked nothing; their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not.

22 Moreover thou gavest them kingdoms and nations, and didst divide them into corners: so they possessed the land of Sihon, and the land of

the king of Heshbon, and the land of Og king of Bashan.

23 Their children also multipliedst thou as the stars of heaven, and broughtest them into the land, concerning which thou hadst promised to their fathers, that they should go in to possess *it*.

24 So the children went in and possessed the land; and thou subduest before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gavest them into their hands, with their kings, and the people of the land, that they might do with them as they would.

25 And they took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards, and oliveyards, and fruit trees in abundance: so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness.

26 Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to thee, and they wrought great provocations.

27 Therefore thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou heardest *them* from heaven; and according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies.

28 But after they had rest, they did evil again before thee: therefore leftest thou them in the hand of their enemies, so that they had the dominion over them: yet when they returned, and cried unto thee, thou heardest *them* from heaven; and many times didst thou deliver them according to thy mercies;

29 And testifiedst against them, that thou

mightest bring them again unto thy law: yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto thy commandments, but sinned against thy judgments, (which if a man do, he shall live in them;) and withdrew the shoulder, and hardened their neck, and would not hear.

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.

31 Nevertheless for thy great mercies' sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou *art* a gracious and merciful God.

This is a beautiful recapitulation of Israel's history as a church. It takes in some of the principal features of God's gracious dealings with his people in his covenant engagements. And I cannot but beg the Reader to remark with me how the Lord the Holy Ghost evidently taught, by causing it to be recorded and handed down in the church's history, that the best possible argument, in imploring God's mercy and blessing upon future occasions, is to tell the Lord what mercies and blessings he hath shewed in what is passed. Reader! make use of this argument with an eye to Christ; and see how unanswerable it becomes. Oh! how precious is it to tell God our Father, who is here called *a God of pardons*, in all our approaches, that we hope and expect his mercy, because he hath already, in the first and greatest of all mercies in the gift of his dear Son, exceeded all he hath now to bestow, or we to need.

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.

33 Howbeit thou *art* just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly;

34 Neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept thy law, nor hearken-

ed unto thy commandments and thy testimonies, wherewith thou didst testify against them.

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.

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:

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.

38 And because of all this we make a sure *covenant*, and write *it*; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal *unto it*.

Here is contained the great request Israel had to make to the covenant God of their fathers. They acknowledge God's justice in all that was come upon them. But they still plead for mercy on the ground of God's covenant. And the chapter closes with an account of the solemn sealing of the covenant anew by the princes, Levites, and Priests. So that here is a vast deal of gospel in this transaction. For whether the whole body of Israel were so well informed of the grand features of the covenant, as to eye the Lord Jesus as the sum and substance of all, is not to the purpose. It is sufficient to us in proof, that the Lord's eye was upon it to this one end. God had given his dear Son for a covenant to his people. And in the publication of this covenant to Abraham and his seed, certain it is that the charter of it ran in these words; *In thy seed, which is Christ, shall all the families of the earth be blessed.* Gal. iii. 16, with Gen. xvii. 1—8.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! there is a sweet improvement suggested to us in this solemn fast of God's ancient people, which we shall do well to observe, for this will be to convert their afflictions into a source for our joy. I mean the sense they had of the long series of blessings shewn to them and their fathers, and their sad use and abuse of them. And was Israel singular in this? May not you and I justly take up the same language? Have not our lives been marked with mercy? Our fathers' and their fathers' through every past generation; what do the historie,

of all speak, but the same solemn truth; God's grace and man's unworthiness. Hence the Psalmist, after a long and beautiful recapitulation of divine love and goodness, as manifested in the history of Israel, makes this charming observation; *Whoso is wise will ponder these things; and they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord.* And Reader! if we ponder these things as they concern our own private history, depend upon it, like Israel, we shall discover God's gracious tokens all the way along the path of life we have trodden; and his pardons and blessings in the midst of all our ingratitude, and rebellion, and sin.

But when the mind is oppressed and overwhelmed under such a sense of departures and backslidings from the Lord God of our fathers, what a relief is afforded in the contemplation of God's covenant love in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. How infinitely precious to every poor sinner becomes the view then of Jesus and his finished salvation? How delightful is it to take refuge in Jesus when under a conscious sense that I am nothing but sin, he is the Lord my righteousness; and he is made of God to all his people *wisdom, and righteousness, sanctification and redemption.* Oh! precious Redeemer! to thee I come; in thee my soul finds confidence. Thy blood and righteousness pleads more for thy people's salvation than all their transgressions plead against them. Here, then, do I desire, like the Princes, and Levites, and Priests of the congregation, to renew the covenant in thee, for thou art the whole of it, and set to my seal *that God is true.*

CHAP. X.

CONTENTS.

This chapter records the names of them that subscribed to the covenant. And here also are the outlines of the covenant itself.

NOW those that sealed *were*, Nehemiah, the Tirshatha, the son of Hachaliah, and Zidkiah,

2 Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah,

3 Pashur, Amariah, Malchijah,

4 Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch,

5 Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah,

6 Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch,

7 Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin,

8 Maaziah, Bilgai, Shemaiah: these *were* the priests.

9 And the Levites: both Jeshua the son of Azeniah, Binnui of the sons of Henadad, Kadmiel;

10 And their brethren, Shebaniah, Hodijah,
Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan,
11 Micha, Rehob, Hashabiah,
12 Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah,
13 Hodijah, Bani, Beninu,
14 The chief of the people; Parosh, Pahath-
moab, Elam, Zatthu, Bani,
15 Punni, Azgad, Bebai,
16 Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin,
17 Ater, Hizkijah, Azzur,
18 Hodijah, Hashum, Bezai,
19 Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai,
20 Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir,
21 Meshezabeel, Zadok, Jaddua,
22 Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah,
23 Hoshea, Hananiah, Hashub,
24 Hallohesh, Pileha, Shobek,
25 Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah,
26 And Ahijah, Hanan, Anan,
27 Malluch, Harim, Baanah,
28 And the rest of the people, the priests, the
Levites, the porters, the singers, the Nethinims,
and all they that had separated themselves from
the people of the lands unto the law of God, their
wives, their sons, and their daughters, every one
having knowledge, and having understanding;

I did not think it necessary to interrupt the progress of the reading in going over the catalogue of those that signed the covenant. It was not done by all the people, but by the elders and leading men, beginning with the *Tirshatha*, that is the governor; then followed the priests; next to them the Levites; and then the chief of the people; making in all eighty-four persons, including Nehemiah the governor. And we are told that the rest of the people joined in the covenant, both men and their wives, their sons and their daughters; all, as many as were arrived to years of discretion and knowledge. Was not this a type of the gospel church, concerning which the Lord promised in the last days to pour out of his Spirit, that our young men should prophecy, and our old men see visions, and upon the Lord's servants and hand-maidens that grace should be given? What a precious thing it is to behold and trace the uniformity between the Jewish and the gospel church; and to discover that the covenant is one and the same, being

founded in the everlasting love of Jehovah, and summed up and finished in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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;

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

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

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

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

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

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

36 Also the firstborn of our sons, and of our cattle, as *it is* written in the law, and the firstlings of our herds and of our flocks, to bring to the

house of our God, unto the priests that minister in the house of our God :

37 And *that* we should bring the first-fruits of our dough, and our offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine and of oil, unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God ; and the tithes of our ground unto the Levites, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of our tillage

38 And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes : and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure house.

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

Here are some of the particulars to which the people pledged themselves by this covenant to be bound. But what I would desire the Reader to regard, as in my esteem being beautifully descriptive of the great feature of the gospel, is the redemption of the first-born of their sons, so strikingly set forth in the law : Exod. xiii. 11—16. And as this was expressly appointed as typical of the people's deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, nothing can be more plain than that the deliverance from the bondage of sin and death, which that event prefigured, immediately pointed to the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus we find in all ages, and in all periods of the church, God the Holy Ghost kept alive in the minds of his people the glorious redemption of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the whole covenant from beginning to end referred to this, and in this had its completion.

REFLECTIONS.

How truly beautiful is the church of God when considered in her several orders and characters. Here in this chapter we have a faint representation of it. The people of God are here set forth as renewing their covenant, signing and sealing to the testimony of God's truth, their right of covenant blessings in him ; and his authority and power over them by virtue of his having taken them into covenant with him. These distinguishing relations, if I may so call them, are marked down.

Each in his rank and order subscribe his hand to the blessed truth. The governor begins, the Priests and Levites follow; and the rest of the people bring up the great account. And is this not the case of God's church and people in all ages? Chosen *out* of the world, and distinguished and set apart *from* the world, God acknowledgeth himself to be the gracious Father of his Christ; and his people in Christ as a people which he hath formed for himself, and who shall shew forth his praise. Jesus is the true *Tirshatha*, the governor of his people; all his people are made kings and priests unto the Father by him. And as all his household, both young and old, both high and low, of both sexes, and characters, subscribe and set to their seal that God is true; so He graciously poureth out of his Holy Spirit on all, according to *the measure of the gift of Christ*. My soul! art thou of this family? Hath the Lord this day avouched thee to be his servant? And hast thou avouched the Lord to be thy God? Yes! blessed Jesus! in thee I pray to be found. Thou art the covenant, and the whole of the covenant. Here would I subscribe my hand, and set to my seal. And oh! blessed Lord, do thou set me as a seal upon thine heart and as a seal upon thine arm. Let thy blessed Spirit seal my soul unto the day of redemption. Amen.

CHAP. XI.

CONTENTS.

We have in this chapter an account of the residence of the rulers and certain others who voluntarily undertook to make Jerusalem the place of their abode. The list also of those chosen by lot to dwell there.

AND the rulers of the people dwelt at Jerusalem: the rest of the people also cast lots, to bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem the holy city, and nine parts *to dwell in other cities*.

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

It doth not appear what was the cause that the generality of the people were averse to live in Jerusalem. (As it was the holy city, one might have expected that they would have been more eager to have fixed their residence there, than in the distant villages or lesser towns of Israel). Probably the fear of the enemies of Israel, or the apprehension of the Persian power, under which they were in tribute. Certain it is, however, that those who volunteered to live there were considered true patriots, and had the blessing of the people. Reader! even now it requires much grace to step forward in the cause of Jesus, and declare ourselves to be volunteers in his cause.

3 ¶ Now these *are* the chief of the province that dwelt in Jerusalem: but in the cities of Judah dwelt every one in his possession in their cities, *to wit*,

Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the Ne-
thinims, and the children of Solomon's servants.

4 And at Jerusalem dwelt *certain* of the children
of Judah, and of the children of Benjamin. Of the
children of Judah; Athaiah the son of Uzziah, the
son of Zechariah, the son of Amariah, the son of
Shephatiah, the son of Mahalaleel, of the children
of Perez;

5 And Maaseiah the son of Baruch, the son of
Col-hozeh, the son of Hazaiah, the son of Adaiah,
the son of Joiarib, the son of Zechariah, the son
of Shiloni.

6 All the sons of Perez that dwelt at Jerusalem
were four hundred threescore and eight valiant
men.

7 And these are the sons of Benjamin; Sallu the
son of Meshullam, the son of Joed, the son of Pe-
daiah, the son of Kolaiah, the son of Maaseiah,
the son of Ithiel, the son of Jesaiah.

8 And after him Gabbai, Sallai, nine hundred
twenty and eight.

9 And Joel the son of Zichri *was* their over-
seer: and Judah the son of Senuah *was* second over
the city.

10 Of the priests: Jedaiah the son of Joiarib,
Jachin.

11 Seraiah the son of Hilkiyah, the son of Me-
shullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth,
the son of Ahitub, *was* the ruler of the house of
God.

12 And their brethren that did the work of the
house *were* eight hundred twenty and two: and
Adaiah the son of Jeroham, the son of Pelaliah,
the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah, the son of
Pashur, the son of Malchiah,

13 And his brethren, chief of the fathers, two
hundred forty and two: and Amashai the son of

Azareel, the son of Ahasai, the son of Meshillemoth, the son of Immer,

14 And their brethren, mighty men of valour, an hundred twenty and eight: and their overseer *was* Zabdiel, the son of *one of* the great men.

15 Also of the Levites: Shemaiah the son of Hashub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni;

16 And Shabbethai and Jozabad, of the chief of the Levites, *had* the oversight of the outward business of the house of God.

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

18 All the Levites in the holy city *were* two hundred fourscore and four.

19 Moreover the porters, Akkub, Talmon, and their brethren that kept the gates, *were* an hundred seventy and two.

That the dwellers in Jerusalem were counted worthy of double honor is evident from the Holy-Ghost having caused their names to be thus honourably recorded. Oh! it is most valuable indeed to be recorded among the servants of the Lord.

20 And the residue of Israel, of the priests *and* the Levites, *were* in all the cities of Judah, every one in his inheritance.

21 But the Nethinims dwelt in Ophel: and Ziha and Gispah *were* over the Nethinims.

22 The overseer also of the Levites at Jerusalem *was* Uzzi the son of Bani, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micha. Of the sons of Asaph, the singers *were* over the business of the house of God.

23 For *it was* the king's commandment concerning them, that a certain portion should be for the singers, due for every day.

24 And Pethaiah the son of Meshezabeel, of the children of Zerah the son of Judah, *was* at the king's hand in all matters concerning the people.

25 And for the villages, with their fields, *some* of the children of Judah dwelt at Kirjath-arba, and *in* the villages thereof, and at Dibon, and *in* the villages thereof, and at Jakabzeel, and *in* the villages thereof.

26 And at Jeshua, and at Moladah, and at Beth-phelet,

27 And at Hazar-shual, and at Beer-sheba, and *in* the villages thereof,

28 And at Ziklag, and at Mekonah, and in the villages thereof,

29 And at En-rimmon, and at Zareah, and at Jarmuth,

30 Zanoah, Adullam, and *in* their villages, at Lachish, and the fields thereof, at Azekah, and *in* the villages thereof. And they dwelt from Beer-sheba unto the valley of Hinnom.

31 The children also of Benjamin from Geba dwelt at Michmash, and Aija, and Beth-el, and *in* their villages.

32 And at Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah,

33 Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim,

34 Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat,

35 Lod, and Ono, the valley of craftsmen.

36 And of the Levites *were* divisions *in* Judah, and in Benjamin.

No doubt all these, though not resident in Jerusalem, were of high esteem, and probably gracious souls scattered through the cities and villages of Judah to be examples of others in following the Lord. It is well to be noticed in any way that is honourable in the service of the Lord. No one, however humble in his station, is overlooked or forgotten when thus a follower of the Lord. How graciously God himself speaks of such, when as the High and lofty One, inhabiting eternity, Jehovah declares that he *dwelleth with the man that is of an humble and contrite spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.* Isaiah lvii. 15.

REFLECTIONS.

MY soul! whilst thou readest the honourable testimony that is given to the people who willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem, the holy city; and observest how the people blessed them for it; think of the yet far happier privilege of those who dwell under the continual light of God's countenance, and are *citizens with the saints and of the household of faith*. Their admission into the church is sacred; their residence there is blessed; great are their privileges, and everlastingly secure their interest. United to their spiritual head, the Lord Jesus; united to each other in him; members of his mystical body, and members of one another; how closely joined to Jesus; what blessings, mercies, enjoyments, portions, are they born to, and entitled to, by their new birth, their redemption in Jesus, and their privileges in his blood and righteousness? My soul! is this thy mercy? Art thou indeed a resident in the holy city? Hath the Son of God made thee free indeed! oh! how sweet to live under his constant eye; to see now the king in his beauty by faith, and shortly to see him in his glory! Blessed king in Zion! precious Lord of Jerusalem, even the beloved Jerusalem, which in the days of thy flesh thou didst weep over; and for the redemption of which thou didst shed thy blood; be thou my chief joy, my daily portion. Thy people shall indeed dwell alone, and not be reckoned among the nations. They shall be continually praising thee. Lord, make me of the happy number, that dwelling in thy Jerusalem below, I may at length be admitted into the new Jerusalem which is above, when she shall come down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, to take all her citizens that God himself may be with them, tabernacle for ever in them, and wipe away all tears from their eyes.

CHAP. XII.

CONTENTS.

Though this Chapter contains little more than a record of the names of those who first returned from the captivity with Zerubbabel, yet it forms a most important Chapter, because it hath in it the record of the several characters as they succeeded in the High Priest's office.

NOW these are the priests and the Levites that went up with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra,
 2 Amariah, Malluch, Hattush,
 3 Shechaniah, Rehum, Meremoth,
 4 Iddo, Ginnetho, Abijah,
 5 Miamin, Maadiah, Bilgah,
 6 Shemaiah, and Joiarib, Jedaiah,
 7 Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah, Jedaiah. These were

the chief of the priests and of their brethren in the days of Jeshua.

8 Moreover the Levites: Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, *and* Mattaniah, *which was* over the thanksgiving, he and his brethren.

It should seem that the office of superintending the subjects of thanksgiving, was of no small importance in the priests' employment, by the testimony here given.

9 Also Bakbukiah and Unni, their brethren, *were* over against them in the watches.

What is meant by being appointed over against them in the watches, unless it means making responses in praising God, is not easy to gather.

10 ¶ And Jeshua begat Joiakim, Joiakim also begat Eliashib, and Eliashib begat Joiada,

11 And Joiada begat Jonathan, and Jonathan begat Jaddua.

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

13 Of Ezra, Meshullam; of Amariah, Jehohanan;

14 Of Melicu, Jonathan; of Shebaniah, Joseph;

15 Of Harim, Adna; of Meraioth, Helkai;

16 Of Iddo, Zechariah; of Ginnethon, Meshullam;

17 Of Abijah, Zichri; of Miniamin; of Moadiah, Piltai;

18 Of Bilgah, Shammua; of Shemaiah, Jehonathan;

19 And of Joiarib, Mattenai; of Jedaiah, Uzzi;

20 Of Sallai, Kallai; of Amok, Eber;

21 Of Hilkiah, Hashabiah; of Jedaiah, Nethaneel.

22 The Levites in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, and Johanan, and Jaddua, *were* recorded chief of

the fathers: also the priests, to the reign of Darius the Persian.

23 The sons of Levi, the chief of the fathers, *were* written in the book of the chronicles, even until the days of Johanan the son of Eliashib.

24 And the chief of the Levites; Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brethren over against them, to praise *and* to give thanks, according to the commandment of David the man of God, ward over against ward.

25 Mattaniah, and Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, Akkub, *were* porters keeping the ward at the thresholds of the gates.

26 These *were* in the days of Joiakim the son of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor, and of Ezra the priest, the scribe.

It should seem that the service of the gates, appointed by David, the people of the captivity were anxious to revive. But how it was performed, or what particular service made use of, is not known.

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

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;

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.

30 And the priests and the Levites purified themselves, and purified the people, and the gates, and the wall.

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;

32 And after them went Hoshaiah, and half of the princes of Judah,

33 And Azariah, Ezra, and Meshullam,

34 Judah, and Benjamin, and Shemaiah, and Jeremiah,

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:

36 And his brethren, Shemaiah, and Azareel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethaneel, and Judah, Hanani, with the musical instruments of David the man of God, and Ezra the scribe before them.

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.

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;

39 And from above the gate of Ephraim, and above the old gate, and above the fish gate, and the tower of Hananeel, and the tower of Meah, even unto the sheep gate: and they stood still in the prison gate.

40 So stood the two *companies of them that gave thanks* in the house of God, and I, and the half of the rulers with me:

41 And the priests; Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Michaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, *and* Haniah, with trumpets;

42 And Maaseiah, and Shemaiah, and Eleazar, and Uzzi, and Jehohanan, and Malchijah, and Elam, and Ezer. And the singers sang loud, with Jezrahiah *their* overseer.

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.

Nehemiah had very largely described, in the former part of his book, the labours in building the wall; and therefore he will not pass over the dedication of it. The account is truly interesting. And as he himself, though governor, took an active part in the service, it is no wonder that all ranks and orders of the people joined in the festivity. The joy was so great, that their voices and musical instruments were heard afar off. But Reader! think what joy of soul that will be, when *the Lord shall build up Zion, and her glory shall appear*. When the king of Zion shall arise to turn away ungodliness from Jacob! In the longing expectation of this great event, how hath the mind of the faithful been directed in all ages! How fervent the cry which hath in different periods burst from innumerable hearts; Lord, cut short thy work in righteousness, and hasten thy kingdom!

44 And at that time were some appointed over the chambers for the treasures, for the offerings, for the firstfruits, and for the tithes, to gather in to them out of the fields of the cities the portions of the law for the priests and Levites: for Judah rejoiced for the priests and for the Levites that waited.

45 And both the singers and the porters kept the ward of their God, and the ward of the purification, according to the commandment of David, *and* of Solomon his son.

46 For in the days of David and Asaph of old *there were* chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God.

47 And all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel,

and in the days of Nehemiah, gave the portions of the singers and the porters, every day his portion: and they sanctified *holy things* unto the Levites; and the Levites sanctified *them* unto the children of Aaron.

I pass over every inferior consideration in those verses, to call the Reader's attention to what appears to me infinitely surpassing every other: I mean, that the holy songs of Nehemiah were evidently corresponding, if not in the very words with David's Psalms; for so it is here remarked; and let the Reader recollect that all these treated of Jesus. Of the incarnate Jehovah Nehemiah therefore sung. What a blessed testimony that the same gospel views as we now have, and the same gospel songs as we now sing, were in the days of Nehemiah. The only difference lies here: they sung of him that *was* to come—one of his well-known titles. We sing of him that *hath* come, and accomplished all things. But one and the same subject occupied the minds of both, namely, Redemption. Blessed be God, may the church say, in all ages, for Jesus Christ, *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.* Ephes. i. 7.

REFLECTIONS.

FROM the perusal of this Chapter my soul may learn that the minutest point belonging to the church of Jesus, in all ages, hath been interesting. The very porters of God's house are spoken of with honourable testimony. David, indeed, though a prince, and a great one, declares himself that he would rather have been *a door-keeper in the house of God than dwell in the tents of ungodliness*. Think, then, my soul, to what an honour art thou arrived, if so be Jesus hath betrothed thee to himself, and made thee his in an everlasting covenant and union not to be broken? Pause, and contemplate thine high privileges. Given by God thy Father to the person of his dear Son, Jesus hath bought thee, purchased thy ransom, subdued the unwillingness and stubbornness of thy nature by the sovereignty of his grace; endowed thee with all spiritual gifts, and graces, and blessings; undertaken, by the influences of his Spirit, to complete thine education; and by his own power when life is ended to bring thee unto glory. Are these thy mercies, my soul, and thy privileges in Jesus! And dost thou not love him, adore him, desire to live to him, and make him thy whole glory? Oh! precious Redeemer! be thou more and more precious, more and more lovely and desirable to my view. Oh, marvellous grace! Oh, stupendous mercy! Jesus hath loved me, and given himself for me, an offering and a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour! Lord! banish all other thoughts, drive out every buyer and seller from thy temple, which is my body and thy lawful right. Come in, Lord Jesus, and live, and reign, and dwell there. Be thou my God, my Lord, my righteousness, and let my soul's salvation be to thy glory.

CHAP. XIII.

CONTENTS.

We here arrive to the close of Nehemiah's wise and pious government. The chapter relates several interesting circumstances. Nehemiah had returned to his master at Persia; and as it should seem, was permitted to visit Jerusalem a second time. He reforms certain abuses crept in during his absence, and particularly restores the sabbath to its original sanctity.

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;

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.

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

The history of Moab's conduct to Israel, and the vile attempt of Balaam, we have Numb. xxii. 23, 24. And the Lord's commands in consequence we have Deut. xxiii. 3—5. But added to these, the prohibition of alliances with the people of the land was among the distinguishing features of the Lord's covenant. God's people *were to dwell alone, and not to be reckoned among the nations*. Oh! how precious and blessed is it in all this to eye Jesus. I must not dismiss these verses without first taking notice how blessed the reading of the law was to the people. When they had heard of God's holy will, that the stranger should be separated from Israel, the people obeyed. See, my soul, how vastly important it is to have the word of the Lord read in our churches, in our houses, families and closets. Oh! blessed book of God, I would say, thou Holy Bible, the merciful epistle sent down from heaven; be thou my meditation all the day, and let mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I may be occupied in it. Oh! blessed Jesus, thou holy Lamb, who alone wast found worthy to open the book, and loose the seals, do thou, Lord, open to my soul all the wondrous things of thy law; and open my heart to the right apprehension of it, that I may separate all that is mixed and corrupt in my heart, and cast it out.

4 ¶ And before this, Eliashib the priest, having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God, was allied unto Tobiah:

5 And he had prepared for him a great chamber, where aforetime they laid the meat offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the new wine, and the oil, which was commanded *to be given* to the Levites, and the singers, and the porters; and the offerings of the priests.

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:

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.

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

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.

It should seem very plainly from what is here said, that Nehemiah had returned to Persia, and now was come back to Jerusalem. During his absence *Eliashib* the High Priest, to his everlasting disgrace, from his alliance with *Tobiah*, had not only paid this open enemy of God and his church great respect, but had dared to desecrate the temple by giving him an apartment in it: and to make room for him had removed the things belonging to the temple service. What an awful character must have been this High Priest! Oh! how unlike thee, thou great High Priest of our God and of thy people! But stop, my soul; doth not every minister do the same, nay, if possible, worse than *Eliashib*, who substitutes falshood for truth in the services of the sanctuary? Who teaches the people to accommodate *Tobiahs* of every description and character, instead of Christ. Alas! alas! what rubbish of any thing, of nothing, of worse than nothing, is sometimes made to supply the place of Jesus, and his one-salvation, for poor perishing sinners. Oh! for the spirit given to Nehemiah to reform these abuses, to be poured out now, that an holy zeal might cast forth the false refuges of lies out of the Lord's chambers wherever they are found.

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.

11 Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken? And I gathered them together, and set them in their place.

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

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.

This forms an interesting passage, and makes a good lesson for the regulation of ministers with their people. Wherefore the Levites had fled, is not said. I should hope not because their stipend was kept back. And yet if they fled away, and in consequence the people then withheld it, the story tells much worse. In either case it is a sorry representation. Had the Levites kept up an eye to God, however ill their services were requited, God would have taken care that his servants should have been fed. Oh! what an huge volume of complaints is gone up before God, and the dreadful pages multiplying daily, of unfaithful ministers fleeing from their post like those Levites; fleecing, but not feeding their flocks; and taking wages, but giving no service. And on the other hand, how many of the people receiving their ministers labors, but not requiting them, except with ill-will: of all horrible accounts at the last day, surely this will be found the most tremendous!

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.

I admire the frequent expression of Nehemiah in which he prays to be remembered. It is not said by way of heightening his labours; for let the Reader remark with me, he doth not ask for a *reward*, but only the Lord's *remembrance* of him. Sweetly, Lord Jesus, doth it suggest thy desire of being remembered by thy disciples, when in the holy supper thou didst provide a standing token for a memorial.

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.

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.

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?

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

Reader! doth it not strike thy mind while reading this account of the profanation of the sabbath, that there is but too great a resemblance between the days of Nehemiah and the present, in this crying sin of our guilty land. Must not every one say that will speak the truth, that there never was a period more alarmingly evil in this particular than the present. Oh! ye masters of families! parents of the rising generation!

are ye not seriously concerned what judgments of the Lord may follow! and will ye not attempt a reform to prevent a sin big with the most awful evil, both as it concerns the present life and that which is to come. And oh! ye ministers of the sanctuary and faithful magistrates of the people, may the Lord encourage your hearts and hands to follow the bright example of Nehemiah, and to bring back the hallowed sabbaths of the Lord to their original sanctity. Nehemiah's prayer at the close of this passage for God's remembrance of him, sweetly explains the sense in which he looked for that remembrance; namely, in the greatness of divine mercy. And where is the greatness of God's mercy but in Jesus Christ.

23 In those days also saw I Jews *that* had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, *and* of Moab.

24 And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people.

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

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

27 Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to transgress against our God in marrying strange wives?

28 And *one* of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliahshib the high priest, *was* son in law to Sanballat the Horonite: therefore I chased him from me.

29 Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites.

30 Thus cleansed I them from all strangers, and appointed the wards of the priests and the Levites, every one in his business;

31 And for the wood offering, at times appointed, and for the firstfruits. Remember me, O my God, for good.

Here we have recorded another instance of the zeal of Nehemiah in reforming abuses, both as it concerned the divine honor, and the people's happiness. Nothing could be more important than the preservation of God's people to themselves. The Lord by the prophet complained of this abuse. *I had planted thee (said God) a noble vine, wholly a right seed; how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me.* Jeremiah ii. 21. And spiritually considered, did it not all along point to the undefiled union between Jesus and his church;—Jesus and his people? How sad a breach then was this ungracious alliance in God's Israel? And that even the sons of the Priests should be foremost in this degeneracy! Nehemiah closes his book with once more repeating his prayer, for the Lord's remembrance of him. And that blessed promise which God hath left upon record by his servant the prophet seems to be a sweet answer. *The Lord hearkened and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him.* And the Lord adds, *and they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in the day when I make up my jewels.* Malachi iii. 16, 17.

REFLECTIONS.

BEHOLD, my soul! how God's people have been enjoined in all ages to keep separate from all others, and never to mingle with them, much less to form alliances with them, and learn their works. See then that thou art come out from among them and touch not the unclean thing. In God's original appointment the people of his dear Son dwell alone. They have a distinct mark and character. Given to Jesus. Purchased, redeemed, ransomed by Jesus. Regenerated by the spirit of Jesus, and set as a seal of the Spirit on Jesus' hand, and in Jesus' heart. Oh! then as one of the Lord's ransomed sinners may it be my portion thus to be known, and distinguished. Let no *Tobiahs*, no *Sanballats*, neither *Ammonites* nor *Hanaanites* be in my alliance. But oh! let me be found one with Jesus, united to my Lord: and Christ my Lord be formed in my heart, *the hope of glory.* And oh! for grace to be so known in reverencing the sabbaths of my Lord, the ordinances of Jesus, his word, the ministrations of his grace, and all his holy things. Lord, remember me for my good in all these, according to the greatness of thy mercies, in Jesus thy dear and ever blessed Son.

And now farewell, thou noble *Tirshatha*, thou magnanimous *Nehemiah*, thou great and faithful servant of the most high God! I pray for grace to imitate thy lovely example. And amidst all the opposition of the *Sanballats* and *Tobiahs* of the present day, may it be my happiness to be distinguished, as thou wert in thy generation, valiant for the truth's sake; and only zealous to be approved before God.

But oh! Almighty God! thou who didst give to Nehemiah all he possessed of fortitude and grace in this blessed cause; to thee would I chiefly look, and while delighted with the history of the servant, recog-

nize the hand of the Almighty Master; influencing, guiding, guarding, and giving success to Nehemiah in all! Yes! Holy Spirit! it is thou which hast in all ages raised up faithful servants, to be honoured instruments in thy almighty hand, for good to thy people. To thee, then, be all the praise and all the glory. I desire to bless thee for thy mercies to this great man, in giving him so distinguished a post in thy church. I desire to bless thee for causing his history to be handed down as an example to succeeding ages. And oh! Lord, grant that all may be blessed to bring glory to God, and happiness to thy people in Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be endless praise. Amen.