

# NEHEMIAH 1 vs 1

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In the preface to his Volume II, Matthew Henry wrote: **This is history, it is true history, it is ancient history** – far more ancient than was ever intended to come from any other hand. Homer who lived at the time of Hezekiah king of Judah, his writings were not historical, but mostly poetical fiction, rhapsodies indeed. The oldest historians not extant are Herodotus and Thucydides, contemporaries with the latest of our historians, Ezra and Nehemiah.

**It is church history**, the history of the Jewish sacred society, incorporated for safekeeping the oracles and instructions of God, by a charter under the seal of heaven -- a covenant confirmed by miracles. Many great and mighty nations there were at this time, celebrated for wisdom, learning and valour... illustrious men and illustrious actions; yet their records are lost in silence, while that tiny group of Jewish people dwelt alone, makes such a great figure in the best known, most ancient, and most lasting of all histories; **and no notice is taken in it**, except as they deal with the affairs of the Jewish people.

Such concern has God for His church in every age, and so dear have its interest been to Him. So let them be so to us, that we may be followers of Him as dear children.

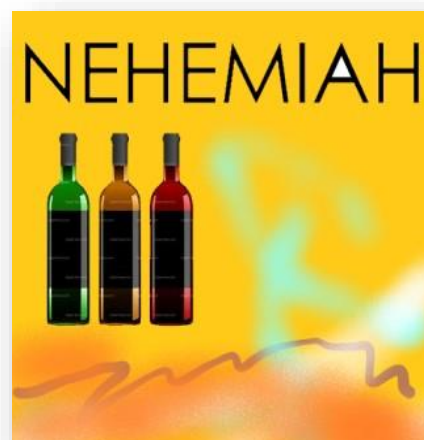
**It is divine history**, given by inspiration of God, that part of the blessed book that is the standing rule of our faith and practice. And we are not to think that though it was spared, we may now pass over or cast a careless eye upon it, as if it were indifferent whether we read it or not; but we are to read it as sacred record, preserved for our benefit... on whom the ends of the world have come.

I cannot pretend to write for the great ones. But if what is done here is helpful in understanding this sacred history, and governing themselves by the dictates of it, let God have all the glory, and let all the rivers return to the ocean from where they came. When I look back on what is done, I see nothing to boast of, but a great deal to be ashamed of; and when I look forward on what is to be done, I see nothing in myself to trust. I have no sufficiency of my own; but by the grace of God I am who I am, and that grace will, I trust, be sufficient for me. Surely in the Lord I have righteousness and strength. M.H. Chester, June 2, 1708

Here we first meet with Nehemiah at the Persian court, where we find him: inquisitive concerning the state of the Jews and Jerusalem; informed of their deplorable condition; fasting and praying thereupon, with a particular account of his prayer; such is the rise of this great man, by piety, not by policy.

<sup>1</sup> **The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah** / 2 Maccabees says, he offered sacrifice; so, was he once a priest?

**And it happened in the month Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan at the palace** / it was the wintertime, Nov - Dec 2500 years ago; in the citadel; this Persian headquarters is also mentioned in the books of both Daniel and Queen Esther, and now here by Nehemiah... people of God who rose to the highest level in their society; all who changed history; which always makes me wonder what happened to those countries? Some enemy of the Lord has been working overtime,



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<sup>2</sup> that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who survived being captive, and concerning Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup> And they said to me, The remnant there in the province who survived the exile are in great misery and shame: the wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates were burned with fire.

<sup>4</sup> And it happened, when I heard these words, I sat down and wept, and mourned for days, fasting and praying before the God of heaven,

<sup>5</sup> And I said, O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and mercies for those who love Him and keep His commandments / 19 times this phrase: keep His commandments... appears in the book of Deuteronomy, as Moses repeatedly warned the people of God to do this... when they entered the land promised to Abraham -- remember: Moses offended God and was not permitted to enter the land with them;

The word **keep** means: **guard to protect**, or put a hedge around; **it is the first assignment the Lord God gave to Adam, something Adam did not do** -- Genesis 2; **the psalmist says 6 times talking about the Lord God, who keeps you, does not slumber nor sleep... He is not snoozing and we all rejoice to hear that good news**—Psalm 121 ...while we ignore Him; it is the last word Jesus the Messiah said 12 times to His disciples the last night He live among us; the night He was betrayed. And it is what the Lord of glory said the church at Philadelphia was doing; and because they did what He asked, they alone were promised to be kept from the terrible testing that will come on the whole earth— Revelation 3.

And here on page 1 of Nehemiah's book we learn, he knew... man did not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord; obviously those words continued ringing in his ears; we hear them again years later... when Nehemiah concludes his assignment and prays—Nehemiah 9:

**O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and mercies** for those who love Him and keep His instructions:

<sup>6</sup> Let Your ears be attentive, and Your eyes be open to hear the prayer of Your servant, which I now pray to You day and night, for Your servants -- those of Israel, confess the sins of the children of Israel, we have done against You: both I and the house of my father have sinned.

<sup>7</sup> We have acted very corruptly against You,

and have **not kept** the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments / it's interesting, compared with those Jewish people who always talk from their Talmud traditions – who rarely quote the Torah or Prophets, it is **only** the Messianic Jews who seem to speak in the same way Nehemiah spoke,

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**which You instructed Your servant Moses** / they thought 10 instructions and 2 statutes **and no more...** written on their hands and hearts... were too burdensome to remember to do; though even a child can learn to value and keep them: 10 commands and 2 statutes... that is all the Lord asked... do that, and you will prosper all the days of your life; if they didn't do it, then they would destroy themselves.

**8 I ask You, remember the word that You instructed Your servant Moses, saying, If you transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations** / if you step over the line; if you keep moving the goal post, I will throw you from the land; and history tells us that is what happened:

**9 But if you return to Me and keep My instructions, and do them; though your exiles are in the uttermost part of heaven** / the furthest horizon, the highest height;

**yet from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I chose to put My Name.**

**10 Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand** / this prayer of Nehemiah is the same intercessory prayer Moses prayed to spare the lives of their rebellious ancestors 700 years earlier -- [Deuteronomy 4, 7, 9](#).

**11 O LORD, I ask You, let Your ear be attentive to Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants, who desire to fear Your Name** / nothing wrong with fearing the name of God; as Dr Dallas Willard of USC said, we know God is powerful, but if His power is anything like electricity, then He is dangerous, and we better learn how to approach Him correctly:

**and prosper Your servant today, and grant him mercies in the sight of this man.**

**For I was the cupbearer of the king** / Nehemiah held the highest office of trust in ancient courts; from the confidential nature of his duties – one duty being to select and taste wine for the king to make sure it was not poisoned; and frequent, unreserved access to the royal presence, he possessed great influence.

## Israeli Band : Psalm 150

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## 3 Days are still on His Calendar