

KINGDOM SPIRIT



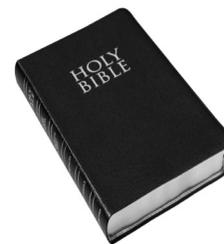
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“SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD”

Matthew 6:33



Issue 1607

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

We begin our study in this issue with Matt. 21. (Read Matt. 21:1-11) These verses are pretty self explanatory. “Hosanna” means “Save, we pray thee.” What is being said here is found in Psalms 118:25-26 (Read). The passage in Psalms was often repeated by the celebrants at the Feast of Tabernacles, however, we are at a time just prior to the Passover and the day this was being done here was not a feast day. Needless to say, Jesus’ coming into Jerusalem created quite a stir.

(Read Matt. 21:12-17) This is the second time that Jesus cast out those that sold and bought in the temple. He continued to heal in the temple which disturbed the chief priests and scribes greatly. Children were singing praises to Him calling Him the son of David. This riled the chief priests and scribes even more, but when they asked Him about it, His answer was classic. Jesus did not stay in Jerusalem for the days leading up to Passover, but rather stayed in Bethany. This was probably at the home of Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead, and his sisters.

(Read Matt. 21:18-21) The curse that Jesus put on the fruitless fig tree is actually a prophecy on Judah, who is quite often represented as a fig tree or as figs. We will see more about this as we continue our study, but Judah had become fruitless and had denied the Messiah. As a result, Jesus, using this fruitless fig tree, cursed them that they would never bring forth fruit. Keep Jeremiah 19 in mind in conjunction with this prophecy.

In verse 21 we might keep in mind that

very often “mountain” is used as a symbol of “kingdom.” This could very well refer to the movement of kingdoms as we see from history what happened once these disciples began to take the gospel of the kingdom to the world.

(Read Matt. 21:23-27) Remember that these same people who are questioning Jesus’ authority to heal as He was doing in the temple were the people who had previously tried to convince the people and maybe themselves that His authority came from Beelzebub. They are still refusing to accept that His authority came from God the Father. Jesus trapped them at their own game and He still didn’t tell them where He received His authority.

(Read Matt. 21:28-32) This is a good example of the hypocrisy and arrogance of the Jews that were trying to destroy Jesus and His ministry. Jesus is likening them to the son who said he would go to work in the vineyard, but didn’t go. By their very titles they were saying in effect that they would go, i.e. do the work of the kingdom. But they were so wrapped up in their own hypocrisy and arrogance that they had refused to work, i.e. they were fruitless.

(Read Matt. 21:33-46) The householder is God; the husbandmen were the chief priests, scribes and Pharisees in this parable. The fact that Jesus says in vs. 38, **“But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance”** tells us that these Jews knew who Jesus was and actually felt that if they killed Him, they could receive the inheritance, i.e. the kingdom that would rule the world. But notice that Jesus let them name their own judgment. Vs. 40, **When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husband-**

men?" Then they named their judgment in vs. 41, **"They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons."** Jesus then quotes Psalms 118:22-23 to them to make sure they understand who He is, that He was the stone they, the builders, were rejecting. Then, as they named their judgment, Jesus tells them in vs. 43, **"The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."** Then He finishes the sentence they pronounced on themselves in vs. 44 with Himself being the stone. Remembering the unconditional promises to Abraham and to David and the prophecy concerning Judah in Jeremiah 19, what happened in 70 A.D. should not be a surprise nor should the fact that the Apostles and other disciples took the gospel of the Kingdom to the descendants of the kingdom of Israel who had been taken into the Assyrian captivity. According to Hosea, it was they who would become the Sons of the Living God.

The chief priests and Pharisees understood this parable and that it was speaking of them. They immediately sought to lay their hands on Christ, but were unable to do so because of the multitude who considered Jesus to be a prophet.

(Read Matt. 22:1-14) Again Jesus starts out this parable with **"The kingdom of heaven is like."** We need to keep this in mind as we study this parable. This is actually a portrayal of the marriage supper of the Lamb in a parable. It will help us understand this better if we first acquaint ourselves with the marriage customs of the time. It is a little strange to me that the only actual wedding ceremony we have in the Bible is the marriage of God to Israel at Mt. Sinai. But we have several references to marriage feasts.

The marriage feast, which would be our equivalent of a wedding reception, was held before the actual marriage instead of after as we do today. The groom's parents were the hosts. Probably depending on the financial position of the groom's parents, it lasted for up to a full week. Jacob's marriage to Leah and then again to Rachel are examples of this. Also the marriage, or the intended marriage of Samson also tell us this. Normally the feast was held at the home of the groom unless there was considerable distance between the two homes, then it was held at the home

of the bride. It was customary for the parents of the groom to furnish wedding apparel to the guests at the feast that was to be worn during the feast. Wedding invitations were sent out more than once. They were first sent out far in advance of the feast so people could prepare to take the time to be at the feast. A second invitation then was sent just prior to the feast.

With this in mind, let us look at this parable. Obviously the king in the parable is God. The invited guests that the parable refers to would have been the Judahites, which included the priests, scribes, Pharisees, elders, etc. Jerusalem as the capital city then was their city collectively. The servants would have been the prophets.

Vs. 4 would represent the second invitation which was given by John the Baptist. In John 3:29, John the Baptist refers to himself as a friend of the groom. It was customary for the friend of the groom to send out the invitations and prepare for the wedding. In fact sometimes the friend of the groom even chose the bride. So the friend of the groom had pretty heavy responsibility. What we just read in Matt. 21:23-27 about the chief priests and elders not being able to answer Jesus as to whether the baptism of John was from heaven or of men, tells us that it was the religious leaders that rejected John, even though it was Herod that had him beheaded. In rejecting him this set in motion the spiritual forces that brought about his execution.

By rejecting John the Baptist, they rejected Jesus as well. The consequences of this rejection was seen in 70 A.D.

Then the king instructed his servants to go out into the highways and bring in all they could find to the feast. They did this bringing in both the good and the bad and this provided the wedding feast with guests. The fact that they brought in both the good and the bad indicates the Pentecostal age referring to the fact that the offering of Pentecost was to be loaves baked with leaven.

However, when the king came in to see His guests, He saw one without a wedding garment. This would have been because of a deliberate refusal of the man to wear the wedding garment.

I think we can look at the wedding garment at the marriage supper of the Lamb to be the garment of salvation which represents the righteousness of the saints or the overcomers. This

garment would represent the glorified body, that will be received by those taking part in the marriage feast.

This does not mean that the man is not a Christian as I believe that the fact that he was invited meant he was a Christian. It means that though he accepted justification, he failed to proceed any farther in his spiritual maturity. Outer darkness here does not represent "hell". I believe that this feast portrays the ultimate Feast of Tabernacles. While many will be invited to the wedding (be justified), not all will participate in the feast (be a part of those who will rule and reign with Christ). I believe further study will bear this out to us. Those invited to the wedding, not partaking of the feast will be resurrected at the second resurrection, or the general resurrection. John 5:28, 29 tells us, "**Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation (judgment)**".

Starting with verse 15 (read Matt. 22:15-22), we see that the Pharisees don't give up trying to trip Jesus up on some point of the law. Here we're told that they sent some of their disciples with the Herodians to try to trip Him up. The Herodians were probably a party of the Jews who supported King Herod, thus basically supported the rule of the Romans. It is strange that the Pharisees would team up with the Herodians, but the question that was asked of Jesus probably reflects this teaming. The tribute money was a poll tax that was required of anyone signed up in the census. It obviously was a Roman coin, not a Jewish coin, that they brought to Jesus. Jesus' answer is classic.

(Read Matt. 22:23-33) This time the Sadducees tried their luck at tripping Jesus up. Because of the answer that Jesus gave them, I'm sure that they had repeated "**I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob**" many, many times. For Jesus then to say to them, "**God is not the God of the dead, but of the living,**" might have taken a few minutes to sink in, but when it did, they knew they had been had like the Pharisees had. For God to be the God of the living, there has to be a resurrection, the very opposite of the primary doctrine of the Sa-

ducees.

(Read Matt. 22:34-40) The Pharisees made another try, this time using a lawyer, to catch Jesus in a misstatement concerning the law. Instead the lawyer got a lesson in the law. The Ten Commandments could be divided into these two laws, the first four would fall under "**Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.**" The next six would fall under "**Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.**"

(Read Matt. 22:41-46) Jesus then takes the offensive and asks them "**what think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?**" He, of course is referring to Himself, but they don't know this. They had been taught that the Messiah or the Anointed would descend from King David, thus their answer, "**the son of David.**" Jesus then trips them up by asking, "**How then doth David in spirit call him Lord?**" and then He quotes Psalms 110:1 to them, "**The LORD said unto my LORD, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.**" Then He asks them "**If David then called him Lord; how is he his son?**" The only way to answer this would be to admit the virgin birth and all the miracles that He had done was from God the Father. This they couldn't do as this would completely erase their credibility, at least as they thought. So they gave up trying to trip Jesus up on some point of the law or the prophets.

(Read Matt. 23:1-12) In Colossians 2:13-14 Paul says, "**And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross.**" Paul is talking about the same things that Jesus is talking about here in Matt. 23, "**For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.**" (vs. 4) Hypocrisy is one of the worst sins that Jesus accuses the Jews of. While Jesus advises the people to respect the authority of the scribes and priests, He warns them to not follow what these same scribes and priests do. He warns against calling men Rabbi, Master, or Father. To do so very often puts that person above God in the mind of the

one calling men by these names. The men called by these names love to have it so. Men are no different today. Many people who call their priests “Father” or I would go so far as to say that many people, in calling their preacher “Reverend”, or many of the other names that people call members of the clergy of their particular denomination actually put that person above God in their mind whether they realize it or not. People will do whatever their particular priest, preacher, or teacher tells them to do without ever going to Scripture to see what God says to do or not do. Because of this, it goes to the head of many of these clergymen and they become little dictators.

(Read Matt. 23:13) This is kind of a pet peeve of mine. Sanctification, instead of being given by God, in the priests and scribes mind it was something that they had the power to give. They determined what constituted “keeping the law” instead of what God says. Obedience was to the priests and scribes, not to God. We face the same problem today. Preachers, priests, etc. demand obedience to them and they never tell the people what the kingdom of God really is, if they themselves know. Sanctification, that which determines whether one attains to the kingdom, or the first resurrection, is determined by God based on our obedience to Him. It is a maturing process. It can take a lifetime, or it can be over a short period of time, based on the relationship of one’s heart to God. I do not believe it to be something quantitative, but rather qualitative.

(Read Matt. 23:14) My wife, in her work running our local post office, could probably tell you that probably the most faithful donors to televangelists are widows in our area. In our own ministry, the same is pretty much true. I certainly don’t say this is wrong, but should a minister be unscrupulous, it would be quite easy for him to take advantage of these women and certainly there has been evidence that several have done so. The same thing applied to the priests and scribes of Jesus’ day. Jesus is accusing them of being unscrupulous. It is usually fairly easy to spot one who would fit this description if one knows the Scripture any at all, but if one comes along with good charisma, is handsome, has a good voice, this is all it takes for many people to follow them no matter what they are teaching.

(Read Matt. 23:15) It seems that people tend to take great delight in convincing someone to believe as they do, whether it is politics, religion, or science. It appears to me that the more wrong one is in religion, or Christianity, the harder they work to proselytize other people, and when they do, they work even harder to push that person beyond where they themselves have gone. The word “hell” in this verse is from the Greek, *gheena*. We have discussed this before as referring to God’s judgment.

(Read Matt. 23:16-22) This reminds me of one time when we were in Mexico City and were on a tour of the city. One of the stops on the tour was the Roman Catholic Cathedral with the main attraction being the gold that covered the walls and ceiling of the building. It was pretty and something to see. But as you went into the cathedral you had to step around widow women who were there begging. I see a correlation with these verses. It is hard for man to assign the proper value to the things of God. To swear by something in effect places a value on it. Whatever vow one is swearing has to be of lesser value than that which they swear by as I understand swearing by something.

(Read Matt. 23:23-24) It was more important to these Pharisees and scribes that they extract every last bit of tithe, even of the smallest things one might acquire like the spices of mint, anise and cumin than it was to teach the people principles of the law. Christ is not condemning them for going after the tithe, but rather making that a priority much more important than the things the people needed to be taught. In straining at a gnat, they were concentrating on making sure the people followed their law to the letter, and in swallowing a camel, they were letting the far more important things go by.

We will begin our next issue looking at vs. 25-26. JRL

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF EZRA

We are ready for the seventh chapter of Ezra in this issue. We are approximately 80 years from King Cyrus issuing his proclamation that sent Zerubbabel and Joshua to Jerusalem from Babylon to rebuild the temple. Ezra, the scribe, gathers some more of the Judahites that were still in Babylon to go with him to Jerusalem. (Read Ezra 7:1-10) It took them 4 months to make the trip. Verse 10 tells us, **“For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.”** So we see that Ezra was a priest specially educated in God’s law and able to teach it to others. As we will see, there was a problem in Jerusalem that Ezra was not aware of which was probably the reason that God was sending this man, educated in the law, to deal with.

(Read Ezra 7:11-26) Whether by request from Ezra, or of a decision reached by the king, we’re told that the king sent Ezra to Jerusalem with the intent that Ezra set up magistrates and judges among the people in Jerusalem and he includes all the people west of the Euphrates River.

The king and his counselors donated gold and silver and had Ezra collect gold and silver from among the Jews in Babylon who were asked to give a free will offering. The purpose of this money was to purchase animals and grain to be used as sacrifices to Ezra’s God plus whatever was left over was to be used as Ezra saw fit after the will of God. Also part of the proclamation absolved all of the priests from paying any tolls, tribute or customs. Whosoever would not obey the law of God and the law of the king were subject to judgment whether it was to death, banishment, confiscation of goods, or imprisonment.

(Read Ezra 7:27-28) Ezra blesses God who has put it into the heart of the king to beautify the temple in Jerusalem and has extended mercy to Ezra before the king and his counselors.

(Read Ezra 8:1-20) Ezra gives a list of the chief fathers of those that went up with him. At this point genealogy was quite important. When Ezra had gathered the people together, he found that there were not any descendants of Levi with them, so he sent to Iddo, who was the chief of the Nethinims at Casiphia asking him to bring some descendants of Levi and some of his own brethren to go with Ezra. Several priests and over 200 of the Nethinims responded.

(Read Ezra 8:21-23) Ezra then proclaimed a fast before they began that they might seek God’s protection as they traveled. Keep in mind that they are carrying considerable gold and silver. Ezra says that he is ashamed to ask the king for soldiers to escort them since he had told the king that God would protect them, so he went before God asking Him for that protection.

(Read Ezra 8:24-30) Ezra chose 12 priests to be responsible for the gold and silver and the vessels of gold, silver and brass and weighed it all out to them with the idea that they would then weigh it out at the temple in Jerusalem.

(Read Ezra 8:31-36) When all of this was done, they started their journey to Jerusalem. Ezra tells us that God indeed did protect them from harm in their journey and after they had been in Jerusalem 3 days the gold and silver was weighed in the temple and the weight and number that had been entrusted to the 12 priests in Babylon was accounted for. A celebration was held and then the messages from the king to his lieutenants and governors were delivered.

Now comes the problem that Ezra was ap-

parently unaware of. (Read Ezra 9) The law referred to is in Deut. 7:1-3 (Read). This law does not include the Moabites and Ammonites or the Egyptians. However, Deut. 23:3-6 (Read) explains why the Moabites and Ammonites were off limits so far as marriage was concerned. God makes an allowance for the Egyptians in Deut. 23:7-8 but there are some restrictions as you can see. I believe that Deut. 7:4 is the reason for this ban on marriage with any of these people. **“For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.”** Even wise King Solomon found this to be the case. (Read I Kings 11:1-8) Even in this case in Ezra, vs. 2 tells us that the rulers over the people were the most guilty. While there is a great deal of controversy today over inter-racial marriages the primary reason for forbidding these marriages is what God said in Deut. 7:4. Though there are exceptions, most inter-racial marriages that I am aware of turn out the way King Solomon’s did.

Judah was being given a new start here. They had drifted far away from their God, had turned to idol worship and had forgotten God’s laws. As a result, they had been sold into captivity by God, but now they were being given the chance for a new beginning. I think we can share Ezra’s frustration. His humbleness and his shame for his people is so evident in his prayer before God. I can see him throwing up his hands before God with a very penitent “what do I do now?” thought. Ezra felt they could not stand before God because of this trespass.

(Read Ezra 10:1-8) When Ezra prayed about this and confessed their sin, a great congregation of men, women and children gathered before the temple. A man by the name of Shechaniah stood up before Ezra and confessed that they had trespassed God’s law, but he felt he had a solution. He suggested that all the men who had taken strange wives put away their strange wives and the children that were born to them, but that it be done according to law. I’m not real sure what this meant, whether it just a procedure to put away their wives, or if they were to follow the divorce law. I suspect it was the latter. However, Jesus puts a little different light on the subject in Matt. 5:31-32 (Read). First we need to note a translation error in verse 32. The words “put away” in

verses 31 and 32 and “divorced” in verse 32 are all from the same Greek word, “apoluo.” Divorce is from a different word as used in verse 31, “apostasion”. According to the divorce law as we find it in Deut. 24:1, divorce required two things, a written bill of divorce or disownership, and the putting away of the wife, or putting her out of the man’s house. **“When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.”** Jesus quotes the law in Matt. 5:31, but the people were apparently forgetting part of that law, the written bill of divorcement. So when He says in vs. 32, **“That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced (put away) committeth adultery.”** He is saying that without the written bill of divorcement, the woman technically still belongs to the first husband, thus she and whoever she marries would be guilty of adultery. Notice, however, he makes an exception in the case of fornication. I have found five different examples in the New Testament of fornication. One of these is in Hebrews 12:16 where Esau is called a fornicator. The only reason that I can find that he would be called such is the fact that he married two Canaanite women (Gen. 26:34). The point here is that the marrying of women of the land could have been considered fornication and thus just putting them away might have been sufficient. The fact that Shechaniah stated that this putting away should be done according to the law might infer that he felt that the full divorce proceeding should be relied on to get them back into the good graces of God.

Ezra took Shechaniah’s advice and made the chief priests and all Israel to swear to do this thing. A proclamation was then made that all the men of Judah and Benjamin should gather at Jerusalem within three days, or their property would be forfeited. So all the people gathered in the street before the temple and we’re told that they were trembling because of this matter and because of the rain. Ezra commanded that those who had taken strange wives put them away.

(Read Ezra 10:9-17) The people agreed audibly, but said that since there were so many of

them, the people should appear before their rulers, elders and judges to resolve this as quickly as possible, but at appointed times as it was raining hard and the people did not want to stand out in the rain while this process was completed. According to vs. 15, two men stood and objected to this and two others supported them, but they were apparently overruled and the process was started. It took a little over two months to complete.

The rest of chapter 10 as well as the book of Ezra lists the names of the priests who had taken strange wives and had now agreed to put them away.

Some 13 years after Ezra went to Jerusalem from Babylon to teach the laws of God, another Jew felt compelled to go to Jerusalem from Babylon for another purpose after he received word that the walls of Jerusalem were still in disrepair. (Read Nehemiah 1) Nehemiah was the king's cup bearer. This job included being the king's food and wine taster in case someone happened to put poison in the king's food or wine. So his residence was in the palace and it was here that some of the Jews that had gone to Jerusalem had returned to Babylon and Nehemiah asked how things were going in Jerusalem. To his dismay, the word was not good. It seems that the people just couldn't get their act together in Jerusalem. He was told that they were in great affliction and that the walls of the city were broken down and the gates burned. Nehemiah went to God in prayer apparently feeling that he had a part to play in God's plan to finish the restoration of Jerusalem. He first confessed the people's sin and then asked God to grant him mercy before the king.

(Read Nehemiah 2:1-8) Nehemiah's great dismay at the news of Jerusalem had a physical effect on him, so much so that when the king saw him the next time he brought wine to him, he indicated a concern for Nehemiah's health. When asked what the problem was, Nehemiah told him the story. The king responded asking what he could do. Nehemiah asked for permission to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the city and the walls and for letters to the governors of the various countries between Babylon and Jerusalem that Nehemiah might have a safe journey. He also asked for timber from the king's forest to use in the rebuilding. Not only did the king grant permission, he sent a military delegation along with Nehemi-

ah.

(Read Nehemiah 2:9-20) We are introduced to Sanballat, apparently a Moabite, and Tobiah, his servant, who were opposed to the Jews in Jerusalem. Sanballat apparently took notice of and was suspicious of anyone who came to Jerusalem. Nehemiah spent 3 days in Jerusalem without telling anyone why he was there. Finally he went out in the night to survey what all needed to be done to rebuild the wall and then he came back and told the people why he was there, that God was with them and that the king was supporting them. The people took courage and agreed to begin work on the restoration. However Sanballat and his cohorts laughed at them and accused them of building and then rebelling against the king. Nehemiah answered him saying that the God of heaven would prosper them and that he, Sanballat, and his cohorts had no business in Jerusalem.

(Read Nehemiah 3) The people then formed groups, some based on family, some on the city they came from, some based on their particular trade, and others based on their particular position and each group chose a particular gate and portion of the wall and began the restoration work.

(Read Nehemiah 4:1-6) When Sanballat and Tobiah heard that the building was started on the walls, they mocked and derided the Jews about their strength and their building. So Nehemiah prayed unto God an imprecatory prayer against Sanballat and his cohorts and went right on with the building of the wall.

(Read Nehemiah 4:7-11) Sanballat gathered forces to fight against the Jews as they built. But Nehemiah continued to pray and set up a watch day and night against Sanballat and those gathered with him.

(Read Nehemiah 4:12-23) Jews that came to Jerusalem from cities and towns where these adversaries of the Jews lived, warned Nehemiah saying that these enemies would suddenly come upon them from any area that they might look. So Nehemiah set soldiers behind the workmen, sometimes alternating with each other, so that there was always someone on guard and carrying weapons. Nehemiah kept the one who sounded the trumpet with him so that if he ran into any trouble anywhere along the wall the trumpet player could sound the alarm and all would advance to that area. He had all the people who normally lived outside the walls to move themselves and their servants

into the city so that they would be protected and could help in the building and the protection.

Chapter 5 appears to be a parenthetical story inserted in a break in the story of rebuilding the wall. (Read Nehemiah 5:1-5) There had apparently been a drought that had brought hardship upon many of the families and many of the more well to do Jews did the same thing that they did in Jerusalem before the captivity. If some of their poorer neighbors either could not pay for food or borrowed money to pay for the food and then could not pay it back, the more well to do Jews were taking the lands and vineyards and also the sons and daughters of the poorer people as bond servants until the debt was paid.

(Read Nehemiah 5:6-13) When Nehemiah found out what was going on, he went to the nobles and the rulers (the most guilty) and reprimanded them sharply. They were charging interest, or usury, which was strictly against God's law. (The margins of some Bibles and many Christians teach that "usury" was excessive interest. This is false teaching. Usury was interest no matter the percentage. God forbade the charging of any interest except to non-Israelites.) Nehemiah himself had been lending money and grain, or food, to the people, but was not charging interest. He made the people promise to return the land, the vineyards, the olive yards, and houses to the people whom they had foreclosed on plus all the interest they had collected from them and the grain, wine and oil that they had exacted of the people as usury on their debts. The people repented and did as Nehemiah instructed them to do.

(Read Nehemiah 5:14-19) Though it hasn't been stated in so many words up to this point, Nehemiah had been appointed governor of Jerusalem. He tells us that for the twelve years he has been governor up to this point, he has not taken any compensation from the people even though he normally had 150 people eating at his table. It took one ox and six sheep

plus some fowls plus the wine to feed the people at his table each day and this Nehemiah apparently paid for out of his own funds. Apparently the wages of the governor normally was the people furnished the food for his table plus he was given 40 shekels of silver per year. But Nehemiah took no such compensation. Nehemiah is apparently telling all of this to God and asks Him in vs. 19, **"Think upon me, my God for good, according to all that I have done for this people."**

We will take up chapt. 6 next issue. JRL

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