



III. THE COVENANT WITH GOD (Nehemiah 9:1-38; Nehemiah 10:1-39)

A. The Assembly of the Congregation (Nehemiah 9:1-3)

1. The timing of the assembly (Nehemiah 9:1)
 - a. The day—*“in the twenty and fourth day”*
 - b. The month—*“of this month”*
 - (1) The foundation for this month was established in Nehemiah 7:73.
 - (2) The events of Nehemiah chapter 8 and Ezra chapter 3 are the same and Ezra 3:1 confirmed the month to be the seventh.
 - (3) The phrase “this month” clearly ties the events of Nehemiah chapter 9 to the previous context, confirming that Nehemiah chapter 9 is a continuation of what is written in the historical record, which began in Nehemiah 7:6.
 - c. All things considered
 - (1) The feast of tabernacles began on the fifteenth day of the seventh month and was kept seven days, or through the twenty-first day of the month.
 - (2) The eighth day (the twenty-second day of the seventh month) was a solemn assembly (Leviticus 23:36; Nehemiah 8:18).
 - (3) The twenty-fourth day of the seventh month was a couple of days beyond the observance of the feast of tabernacles.
 - a) No scripture anywhere identifies any obligations the people had to gather on this day.
 - b) The people did as they were supposed to do in the observance of the feast of tabernacles, but the twenty-fourth day involved the actions of willing and loving hearts void of any known obligations.
2. The people of the assembly—*“the children of Israel were assembled”* (Nehemiah 9:1)
3. The character of the assembly (Nehemiah 9:1-2)
 - a. Their repentance (Nehemiah 9:1)
 - (1) Their actions—*“with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them”*
 - (2) Their message—The putting on of sackclothes and ashes/earth indicated great mourning and more specifically in this context mourning and repentance (see Jonah 3:5-8; Matthew 11:21).
 - b. Their sanctification (Nehemiah 9:2)
 - (1) The seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers. That is, they excluded anyone who was not a Jew by birth or practice (see Exodus 12:43-49).
 - (2) To properly worship the Lord, they had to remove from their midst those who were not the children of God. For practical consideration, see (1 Corinthians 5:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14).
 - c. Their confession (Nehemiah 9:2)
 - (1) They stood and confessed their sins.
 - (2) They stood and confessed the iniquities of their fathers.



4. The worship of the assembly (Nehemiah 9:3)
 - a. Foundational considerations of the worship
 - (1) The biblical interpretation of *day* can be a full twenty-four-hour period, but it can also be a twelve-hour period that pairs with *night* to make a full twenty-four-hour period.
 - (2) This is not crucial to the understanding of the text at hand but helps when considering the amount of time encapsulated in “*one fourth part of the day.*”
 - a) At the shorter end, “*one fourth part of the day*” was three hours.
 - b) At the longer end, it was six hours.
 - b. The means of the worship
 - (1) The first portion—reading the law
 - a) They read in the book of the law of the LORD their God.
 - b) The people *stood* in their place. In other words, they were reverent toward the reading of the word (Nehemiah 8:5).
 - (2) The second portion—confession and worship
 - a) They confessed. Note: Based upon the previous context, one would assume that the confession was a confession of sins (Nehemiah 9:2); however, the wording leaves room for the proper interpretation to be that the people “*confessed...the LORD their God*” (see Luke 12:8).
 - b) They worshipped the LORD their God.
- B. The Leadership of the Congregation (Nehemiah 9:4-5a)
1. The personal worship of the leadership (Nehemiah 9:4)
 - a. Their identities
 - (1) Generally—“*of the Levites*”
 - (2) Specifically
 - a) Jeshua
 - b) Bani
 - c) Kadmiel
 - d) Shebaniah
 - e) Bunni
 - f) Sherebiah
 - g) Bani
 - h) Chenani
 - i) Note: Jeshua and Kadmiel are mentioned in Ezra chapter 3, further supporting the notion that Nehemiah chapter 9 is historical.
 - b. Their actions
 - (1) They stood up upon the stairs. Note: Just as Ezra stood upon a pulpit of wood to elevate him so that he could be seen and heard of the people, the Levites took to the stairs to be sure they could be seen by the congregation. Obviously, they were unashamed.
 - (2) They cried with a loud voice unto the LORD their God.



2. The provocation to worship by the leadership (Nehemiah 9:5a)
 - a. The participants in the provocation
 - (1) Generally—“*the Levites*”; Note: As was their service, the Levites led the people in worship (see Numbers 8:24).
 - (2) Specifically
 - a) Jeshua
 - b) Kadmiel
 - c) Bani
 - d) Hashabniah
 - e) Sherebiah
 - f) Hodijah
 - g) Shebaniah
 - h) Pethahiah
 - i) Note: Hashabniah, Hodijah, and Pethahiah were not in the first group; whereas, Bunni, Bani, and Chenani, which were in the first group, were not included in the second group.
 - b. The admonition in the provocation
 - (1) Stand up.
 - (2) Bless the LORD your God for ever and ever.
 - a) The immediacy—“*Bless the LORD your God*”
 - b) The continuation—“*for ever and ever*”
- C. The Worship of the Congregation (Nehemiah 9:5b-31)
1. The superiority of the Lord (Nehemiah 9:5b-6)
 - a. Of His name (Nehemiah 9:5b)
 - (1) The addressee of praise—“*thy*”; Note: Upon admonishing the congregation to stand and bless the LORD, and in the revived spirit of the day, the Levites immediately turned from addressing the people to speaking to God. This could be viewed as prayer or praise, but truthfully the two should be so intertwined that one could hardly tell the difference.
 - (2) The declaration of praise—“*blessed be*”
 - a) This phrase is found sixty-three times in sixty-two verses.
 - b) In this usage, the word *blessed* is an adjective, a word used to describe the person being spoken of. Historically, as an adjective, the word *blessed* was used to signify one that was supremely happy or consecrated/holy.
 - c) In the passage at hand, it speaks, not specifically of a person or being, but of a being’s glorious name. This name is consecrated as noted by the next phrase suggesting that it is “*exalted above*” all blessing and praise.
 - (3) The object of praise—“*thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise*”; Note: The people were to bless a God and His name; yet, the Lord’s name is exalted ABOVE all blessing and praise. In other words, their worship could not match God’s name, but that did not excuse them from offering it.



- b. Of His position (Nehemiah 9:6)
 - (1) The declaration of His position—*“Thou, even thou, art LORD alone”*
 - (2) The evidence of His position
 - a) His work
 - i) His creative work
 - (a) Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host. Note: The pronoun *their* leads us to believe that there is reference made to more than one of the three heavens. Certainly, the heaven of heavens would point to the third heaven or the place of God’s abode.
 - (b) Thou hast made earth, and all things that are therein.
 - (c) Thou hast made the seas, and all that is therein.
 - ii) His preserving work—*“thou preservest them all”* (see Hebrews 1:3)
 - b) His worship—*“the host of heaven worshippeth thee”*
 - i) The lower heavens—the sun, moon, and stars (Deuteronomy 4:19)
 - ii) The third heaven—the spiritual beings (Luke 2:13)
2. The calling of the Lord (Nehemiah 9:7-8; see Genesis chapters 12, 13, and 17)
 - a. Note: After giving general praise to God, the people glorified God on a more personal level for the mighty works He did for Israel. They began essentially at the Israel’s founding and recounted all that God had done. Obviously, it brings glory to God to call attention to what He has done for us personally.
 - b. The declaration of worship—*“Thou art the LORD the God”* (Nehemiah 9:7)
 - c. The cause of worship (Nehemiah 9:7-8)
 - (1) The call of Abraham (Nehemiah 9:7)
 - a) The Lord chose Abram.
 - b) The Lord brought Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees.
 - c) The Lord gave him the name of Abraham.
 - (2) The covenant with Abraham (Nehemiah 9:8)
 - a) The proving for the covenant—*“foundest his heart faithful before thee”*
 - b) The giver of the covenant—*“madest a covenant”*
 - c) The recipients of the covenant
 - i) With him
 - ii) With his seed
 - d) The subject of the covenant—*“to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites”*
 - e) The keeping of the covenant—*“hast performed thy words; for thou art righteous”*



3. The redemption from Egypt (Nehemiah 9:9-21; see Exodus 2:23-25; Exodus chapters 6-12; Exodus 13:21-22; Exodus chapter 14; Exodus chapters 19-20; Exodus chapter 32; Deuteronomy chapters 1, 2, 8; and Deuteronomy 29:5)
 - a. The deliverance from Egypt (Nehemiah 9:9-11)
 - (1) The Lord was aware of the needs of His people (Nehemiah 9:9).
 - a) He saw the affliction of the fathers in Egypt.
 - b) He heard their cry by the Red sea.
 - (2) He dealt with the Egyptians in their land (Nehemiah 9:10).
 - a) He showed signs and wonders.
 - i) Upon Pharaoh
 - ii) Upon all Pharaoh's servants
 - iii) Upon all the people of Pharaoh's land
 - b) He knew of Pharaoh's pride.
 - c) He got Himself a name for His plagues against the Egyptians.
 - (3) He dealt with the Egyptians at the Red sea (Nehemiah 9:11).
 - a) The Lord divided the sea before the Israelites.
 - b) The Israelites went through the midst of the sea on dry land.
 - c) The Lord threw Israel's persecutors into the deeps, as a stone is thrown into the mighty waters.
 - b. The guidance through the wilderness (Nehemiah 9:12-21)
 - (1) He led Israel in the way (Nehemiah 9:12).
 - a) The means of His leading
 - i) In the day by a cloudy pillar
 - ii) In the night by a pillar of fire
 - b) The hope of His leading—*"to give them light in the way wherein they should go"*
 - (2) He gave them His law (Nehemiah 9:13-14).
 - a) He came down upon mount Sinai (Nehemiah 9:13).
 - b) He spake with them from heaven (Nehemiah 9:13).
 - c) He gave them right judgments, true laws, good statutes and commandments (Nehemiah 9:13).
 - d) He made known His holy sabbath, commanded them precepts, statutes, and laws (Nehemiah 9:14).
 - e) He did this through the hand of Moses, His servant (Nehemiah 9:14).
 - (3) He provided for their needs (Nehemiah 9:15).
 - a) He gave them bread from heaven for their hunger.
 - b) He brought water out of the rock for their thirst.
 - (4) He gave them hope for possessing the land—*"promisedst them that they should go in to possess the land which thou hadst sworn to given them"* (Nehemiah 9:15).
 - (5) He suffered the people's rebellion (Nehemiah 9:16-17a, 18).
 - a) They dealt proudly (Nehemiah 9:16).
 - b) They hardened their necks (Nehemiah 9:16).
 - c) They hearkened not to His commandments (Nehemiah 9:16).



- d) They refused to obey (Nehemiah 9:17a).
- e) They were not mindful of God's wonders (Nehemiah 9:17a).
- f) They hardened their necks and appointed a captain to return to their bondage (Nehemiah 9:17a).
- g) They made themselves a molten calf (Nehemiah 9:18).
 - i) Claiming the calf to be the God that brought them out of Egypt
 - ii) Performing great provocations
- (6) He continued in His mercies (Nehemiah 9:17b, 19-21).
 - a) God's character declared (Nehemiah 9:17b)
 - i) He is a God ready to pardon.
 - ii) He is gracious and merciful.
 - iii) He is slow to anger.
 - iv) He is of great kindness.
 - b) God's character manifested (Nehemiah 9:17b, 19-21).
 - i) He forsook them not (Nehemiah 9:17b, 19).
 - (a) The pillar of cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way.
 - (b) The pillar of fire departed not from them by night, to show them light, and the way wherein they should go.
 - ii) He gave His spirit to instruct (Nehemiah 9:20).
 - iii) He sustained them on the way (Nehemiah 9:20-21).
 - (a) Specifically (Nehemiah 9:20)
 - (i) He withheld not His manna.
 - (ii) He gave them water for their thirst.
 - (b) Generally (Nehemiah 9:21)
 - (i) He sustained them for forty years.
 - (ii) They lacked nothing.
 - (iii) Their clothes did not wax old.
 - (iv) Their feet swelled not.
- 4. The provision of the Lord (Nehemiah 9:22-25a; see Joshua chapters 11 and 12)
 - a. Providing them kingdoms and nations (Nehemiah 9:22)
 - b. Multiplying their children (Nehemiah 9:23)
 - c. Giving them strength over their enemies (Nehemiah 9:23-25a)
 - (1) Taking them into a promised land (Nehemiah 9:23-24)
 - (2) Subduing the people under their hands (Nehemiah 9:24)
 - (3) Giving them the blessings of the land (Nehemiah 9:25a)
- 5. The faithfulness of the Lord (Nehemiah 9:25b-31; see Judges 2:16-23)
 - a. The people ate, were filled, became fat, and delighted themselves in God's goodness (Nehemiah 9:25b).
 - b. He suffered the rebellion of the people (Nehemiah 9:26).
 - c. He gave them into the hand of their enemies (Nehemiah 9:27a).
 - d. When they requested, He delivered them (Nehemiah 9:27b).
 - e. He continued to suffer through their rebellions (Nehemiah 9:28-29).
 - f. He preserved them because of His great mercy (Nehemiah 9:30-31).



D. The Desire of the Congregation (Nehemiah 9:32-38)

1. Their appeal (Nehemiah 9:32)
 - a. The recipient of their appeal
 - (1) His person
 - a) Our God
 - b) The great God
 - c) The mighty God
 - d) The terrible God
 - (2) His work—*“who keepst covenant and mercy”*
 - b. The impacted of their appeal
 - (1) Us
 - (2) Our kings
 - (3) Our princes
 - (4) Our priests
 - (5) Our prophets
 - (6) Our fathers
 - (7) All thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day
 - c. The nature of their appeal—*“let not all the trouble seem little before thee, that hath come upon us”*; Note: They certainly believed that God had done right in judging them, but they were concerned that God might deem the judgment to be too little for their crimes. They wanted Him to view the judgment given as an equal and sufficient response to their conduct.
2. Their acknowledgment (Nehemiah 9:33-35)
 - a. God’s righteousness (Nehemiah 9:33)
 - (1) He was just in all that was brought upon Israel.
 - (2) He had done right.
 - b. Israel’s sinfulness (Nehemiah 9:33-35)
 - (1) Israel had done wickedly (Nehemiah 9:33).
 - (2) Israel had neglected God’s law (Nehemiah 9:34).
 - a) The people of neglect
 - i) Our kings
 - ii) Our princes
 - iii) Our priests
 - iv) Our fathers
 - b) The work of neglect
 - i) They had not kept the law.
 - ii) They had not hearkened to God’s commandments and testimonies which He testified against them.
 - (3) Israel had neglected God’s service (Nehemiah 9:35).
 - a) They had not served God in their kingdom.
 - b) They turned not from their wicked works.
 - i) In spite of God’s great goodness that He had given them
 - ii) In spite of the large and fat land which God had given them



3. Their cry (Nehemiah 9:36-37)
 - a. The desire of their cry—“*Behold*” (Nehemiah 9:36)
 - b. The condition of their cry (Nehemiah 9:36)
 - (1) Their position
 - a) We are servants this day.
 - b) We are servants.
 - c) Note: A large group of Jews returned from captivity with Zerubbabel, but they were truly still in bondage as others ruled over them.
 - (2) Their potential—“*the land that thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof*”
 - c. The loss of their cry (Nehemiah 9:37)
 - (1) The land yielded much increase unto the kings set over them.
 - (2) The kings had dominion over:
 - a) Their bodies
 - b) Their cattle
 - d. The understanding of their cry—“*because of our sins*” (Nehemiah 9:37); Note: Although man’s nature is to be bitter toward God when He allows hardships and chastisement, the current leaders refused bitterness, understanding that the reason God allowed all this evil to happen unto them was because of their sins.
 - e. The conflict of their cry
 - (1) The kings were pleased.
 - (2) The people were in great distress.
4. Their decision (Nehemiah 9:38)
 - a. The cause of their decision—“*because of all this*”
 - (1) Chastisement has restoration as its purpose.
 - (2) All the evil that had befallen Israel had brought them to a place of repentance and renewal.
 - (3) This was God’s desire and purpose.
 - b. The steps of their decision
 - (1) They made a covenant.
 - (2) They would write the covenant.
 - (3) They would seal unto the covenant.
 - a) The princes
 - b) The Levites
 - c) The priests
 - c. The nature of their decision—it was a “sure” covenant
 - (1) The diligence in the covenant
 - a) This was more than just a light-hearted covenant spoken in haste; rather, it was thought through and written out so that there was record made.
 - b) This covenant would not have been such, light-hearted, as they had to take time to think it through and write it out (consider Ecclesiastes 5:4).
 - (2) The determination in the covenant—“*sure*”; They promised what they fully intended to do.



E. Practical Considerations on Prayer/Praise from Nehemiah Chapter 9

1. God's purpose in testifying against His people (Nehemiah 9:26, 29-30)
 - a. When the people turned from God and rebelled against His commandments, He sent prophets among them.
 - b. The purpose of sending these prophets to the people was "*to turn them to thee*" so that they could get their hearts right.
 - c. God always sent these prophets prior to bringing judgment and chastisement on the people.
 - d. Had the people been receptive to the prophets, they could have avoided much of the suffering and trouble they endured.
 - e. Christians today forsake the peace of God (Philippians 4:7 and Colossians 3:15) for the pleasures of the world and suffer from discontentment, strife, bitterness, envy, and misery all because they do not want to submit themselves and be obedient to God's perfect word (Psalm 32:8; Psalm 37:23-24; Psalm 143:8).
2. God's descriptive words
 - a. The words used by the Levites to describe God indicate much about the reverence and fear they had for Him. The words used of God were:
 - (1) Glorious—in reference to His name (Nehemiah 9:5)
 - (2) Righteous, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, of great kindness—in reference to his character (Nehemiah 9:8, 17)
 - (3) The great, the mighty, and the terrible—in reference to His majesty (Nehemiah 9:32)
 - b. How we speak about God to others and in prayer show forth the truth of our hearts. One should consider how he describes God and what this says about his heart's condition.
3. God's abundance of mercy
 - a. Although in their prayer and praise, the Levites described much of the evil and suffering they went through, they did not fail to see and express the great mercy of God through it all (see Lamentations 3:22).
 - b. God's mercy was spoken of seven times in this prayer/praise:
 - (1) Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and **merciful** (Nehemiah 9:17)
 - (2) In thy manifold **mercies** (Nehemiah 9:19)
 - (3) According to thy manifold **mercies** (Nehemiah 9:27)
 - (4) According to thy **mercies** (Nehemiah 9:28)
 - (5) Thy great **mercies** (Nehemiah 9:31)
 - (6) Thou art a gracious and **merciful** God (Nehemiah 9:31)
 - (7) Who keepest covenant and **mercy** (Nehemiah 9:32)
4. God's worthiness to receive praise—The people had been through great trials of affliction, but they understood this to be the hand of God and their just dessert. In acknowledgment of such facts, they declared the works of God and praise Him for those works, whether deemed blessings or acts of judgment (Psalm 40:5; Psalm 73:28; Psalm 145:4).