THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

"The Feast of the Lord"
Nehemiah 8:13-18

Introduction

1. The walls and the doors of the city of post-captivity Jerusalem were up (7:1). The job for which Nehemiah had returned to the land was done.

2. Furthermore, Nehemiah took a register of those of the nation who went up from the captivity to Jerusalem (7:5-67). The possessions they brought are listed (7:68-72). The nation was in the land (7:73).

3. When all was in readiness, Ezra read the Word of God to the entire nation (8:1-8). There was a glorious response to the testimony of the Word (8:9-12). One specific feature is singled out which provoked the people to obedience (8:13-18). This obedience is centered in the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles (8:14). This is called Sukkos and follows Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur by five days and last 8 days (8:18). What about this feast? Note its major aspects: -

1. It was HISTORICAL

a. Recorded. Nehemiah clearly confirms this for he notes that as Ezra read the Word, the information about the feast was found (vv. 14, 15, 18). It is good to see "it is written" for this is the form we follow! Not what man says, but what God declares!

b. Timed. Like the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), this feast was celebrated in the seventh month (v. 14). This is what the law concerning it required (Lev. 23:23, 27, 34, 39, 41). This was the month of beginnings, but also of completions as is the meaning of number seven (cf. 7 days of creation). This is the crown of the other six feasts of the Lord, being the seventh one (Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement).

c. Detailed.

1) Sacrificially. (Lev. 23:33-38). It was wrought by fire (v. 36) and included sacrifice (vv. 37,38).

2) Naturally. This feast was related to the ingathering of the fruit (Lev. 23:39-40), hence, it is also called the Feast of Ingathering (Ex. 23:16; 34:22). In this connection, the booths were constructed from the

trees (Neh. 8:15). It was a time of great joy (Deut. 16:15; Neh. 8:17). The Hebrew for "gladness" (v. 17) means to rejoice with a merry and cheerful countenance. Think of doing this for 8 days (v. 18)! This was to be done "before the Lord" (Lev. 23:40).

3) Memorially. Only Jews were expected to keep the feast (Lev. 23:42). It was a fitting testimony to their wilderness journey for 40 years when God walked in a tent amongst them (2 Sam. 7:6). This is probably why the feast was now kept after the captivity in Babylon. They had celebrated the feast since Joshua's day, but had not done so in the booths (cf. 2 Chron. 8:13; Ezra 3:4; v. 17).

4) Abundantly. Details are not given here as to what was included in the feast, but it does say it was "according unto the ordinance" (v. 18). This may be a reference to instructions given elsewhere (Num. 29:12-38). This is the largest display of the burnt offerings of any of the feasts: 70 bullocks! What a display of the provision of the Lord!

2. It was TYPICAL

a. Implied. (Mark 9:5). The word "tabernacles" is the word for "booth" or "tent." It spoke to Peter of the presence of the Lord as the transfiguration of Christ in His glory and kingdom (Matt. 16:28 - 17:13). This is what the feast of Tabernacles marks: the coming of our Lord in His presence with the nation Israel in the kingdom (Ezekiel 48:35).

b. Explained. Just as Israel returned from captivity and celebrated with great joy in the booths, so it will be in the final regathering of the nation for kingdom blessing (Isa. 11, 35, Jer. 31). Then the nation will enjoy its true Sabbath-rest in the land with the Lord (Zech. 14:11). This follows Yom Kippur which speaks of cleansing (Lev. 23:26-32; Zech. 3:1-7; 13:1). It will be experienced during the Millennium or thousand year reign of our Lord on earth. Hallelujah! The feast will be celebrated again during the Millennium as a memorial to His blessings upon the nation (Zech. 14:16, 18, 19).

Conclusion The Word of God stands. What it commands is to be obeyed. May the Lord stir our hearts to do even as Israel— all that is written (vv. 16-18).