THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

"The Sinai Pact"
Nehemiah 9:13-15

Introduction

1. Both Levites and people have risen to their feet to give praise to God for His person and His works (vv. 4, 5). They have raised their voices toward heaven for Him Who is Creator (v. 6), Keeper of the Abrahamic Covenant (vv. 7, 8), and Deliverer from Egypt (vv. 9-12).

2. The peon of praise unto God continues with some blessed comments about the Word of God (vv. 13-15). The facts provided are:-

1. It is INSPIRED.

There are two phrases which, when combined, connote exactly what the Bible really is: the Word of God. It is stated that God "came down" and "spoke from heaven" at Sinai (v. 13). This has always been the orthodox position that the record in the Bible is the word "of God." It is not a production of man. But God did use men, hence it is stated that what was given was "by the hand of Moses" (v. 14). There is no more clear example of the claim of the Bible than here. It is a divine (God-inspired) human (holy men of God speaking) production. Ample Scripture supports this (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 2 Pet. 1:19-21). Incidentally, this belief is correctly described as verbal, plenary, inerrant inspiration of the Bible. It is the only view of the Bible which truly honors the Scriptures.

2. It is DIRECTED.

Repeatedly the text uses the third plural personal pronoun to indicate "Israel" as the nation to whom the matters mentioned are designed (e.g. v. 13). This shows that all of Scripture is for us, but not to us. Certain passages belong to Israel, some to the Gentiles, and others to the church (cf. 1 Cor. 10:32). Interpretation is one; application is manifold. This is all a matter of hermeneutics or Bible interpretation.

3. It is DETAILED.

Some of the items in the Word of God are actually listed in the text. These include: -

a) Legal items. At least four different words are used in the text to show this: "judgments" are in fact "ordinances" or specific laws or a peculiar sort. "True laws" are commonly known as "torah." This comes from a root meaning to "throw." Hence, "torah" is that which points the direction by throwing out the hand or guidance from God in certain directions. It is a general term. "Statues" are literally "laws engraven." They are laws enacted by a lawgiver and form the basis of "statuary" laws as opposed to "consuetudenary laws" (customary or habitual items). Finally, "commandments" are charges laid upon men as expressions of God's will. The variety of these terms shows that God sought to cover all aspects of human and divine relationships in His Word. He declared Himself to be God indeed by His Word.

b. Sabbath observance. This has been a problem with many, but the simple testimony of the Bible is clear. The "sabbath" was given to Israel in the law addressed to them (Ex. 20:8-11). It was never meant for the Gentiles nor the church! This is the reason that sabbath is a sign between the Lord and Israel (Ex. 31:13-17; Ezek. 20:12, 20). Let it be noted that grace-dispensation believers have not changed the sabbath to Sunday, but left that sabbath where it belongs — for Israel as a nation. The sabbath will be reinstituted in the tribulation (Matt. 24:20, 21) and the millennium (Isa. 66:23). Believers today worship on the first day of the week, not the seventh, and do so to commemorate a finished and complete redemption through Christ. Whereas the sabbath of the O.T. was a day for rest, the N.T. counterpart was of ceaseless activity (the day of His resurrection!). Let's not allow the legalists (e.g. seventh day adventists) to confuse the Word of God!

c. Land possession. The land of Palestine was given by God to the nation Israel (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:18-21; 17:6-8). The ownership of this piece of real-estate should never be questioned. What is a concern is the actual possession of that land. The Palestinian Covenant gives it to the nation Israel upon their return to the Lord (Deut. 30:2-6). It will be a glorious day of fulfillment of the Word of God.

Conclusion Just as the nation joined in hearty appreciation of the Word given to them, may it be your heart expression to glorify Him for the entire Bible at your disposal. Bless God continually for the truth provided! Amen.