

# A Covenant Renewal

**Key Verse:** “We will not forsake the house of our God.”  
—*Nehemiah 10:39*

**Selected Scripture:**  
*Nehemiah 10:28-39*

**ARTAXERXES, KING OF** Persia, made a decree during the 7th year of his reign, that any Israelites who had been held captive in Babylon were now free to go to Jerusalem with Ezra, who was a Jewish scribe

and priest. Additionally, Artaxerxes ordered that silver and gold be provided to the Israelites in order for them to buy the offerings needed to sacrifice to the God of Israel and to procure whatever else was needful for the house of God.—*Ezra 7:1-27*

Thirteen years later some of the Jewish men, who had gone with Ezra to Jerusalem, returned to Babylon. They told Nehemiah, a Jew who was the king’s trusted cupbearer, the devastation which still existed in Jerusalem. Upon hearing this report Nehemiah prayed to the Lord. He confessed the sins and shortcomings of Israel and asked God to grant him mercy before the king, when he would ask to be sent to Jerusalem to rebuild the city. Thanks to the grace of God, Artaxerxes granted Nehemiah his request.—*Neh. chapters 1 and 2*

The first work Nehemiah did was to rebuild Jerusalem’s walls. (chapters 3-6) Later, Ezra was called upon to read to the congregation of men and women the law which God had given to Moses. The Levites explained the Law “distinctly” to the people, so everyone would “understand.”—*Neh. 8:1-8*

“All the people wept, when they heard the words of

the law,” realizing they had been under God’s chastisement because they had not obeyed him. Then Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Levites said unto all the people: “This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep.” ... “For the joy of the LORD is your strength.”—vss. 9,10

After this the people worshipped the Lord and confessed their sins, recounting their past transgressions throughout the history of Israel. (Neh. 9:1-37) They vowed to “make a sure covenant” with God, which they wrote and then sealed. (vs. 38) They also promised “to walk in God’s law,” to contribute to all the offerings for the Lord, and to “not forsake the house” of their God.—Neh. 10:28-39

This scene, recorded in the 10th chapter of Nehemiah, could be similar to what will occur during the earthly phase of God’s kingdom. At that time mankind shall return from the land of the enemy—the great enemy, death. God, through the Prophet Jeremiah, said: “I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. ... Thus saith the LORD; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears, ... saith the LORD; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.”—Jer. 31:13,16; I Cor. 15:26

At that time, God will make a “new covenant” with Israel. “This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them. ... I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” (Jer. 31:31-34) As the rest of mankind are brought forth out of the grave, they will also be given the opportunity to return to the Lord under this covenant.—Isa. 56:6-8; 2:2-4 ■