

**“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
June 24, 2016**

Nehemiah 7:66–8:18. Israelites’ obedience to the Law.

1 John 5:6–12. Biblical faith is absolute assurance, not “hoping something is true that one deep down does not believe,” or some “make believe world.”

Psalms 110:1–7. Prophecy of the Priestly King Messiah.

COMMENTS:

Nehemiah 7:66–8:18. In this section we see the ministry of Ezra. He was a very skilled teacher of the Word of God (the Law) according to Ezra 7:6, 11-12, 21. When Ezra first arrived in Jerusalem, the moral and spiritual condition of the people was deplorable (Ezra 9:1–4; 10:2, 10). But as he prayerfully taught them God’s Word, they began to respond to and to obey the laws of God. A few years later Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem and challenged them to trust God to help them rebuild the walls. The effectiveness of Ezra’s ministry is also reflected in the people’s behavior after the walls were completed. The two-month building program was an interlude in Ezra’s teaching, but apparently it helped motivate the people to want to know more of God’s Law. They themselves asked Ezra to continue his teaching ministry among them, they loved the Word of God: Nehemiah 8:1, *Now all the people gathered together as one man in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate; and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded Israel.* Adults and children who were old enough to understand (Neh. 8:2–3) listened attentively all morning. The people’s response to the reading of the Scriptures and to Ezra’s praises was a wonderful experience. Note how they shouted Amen! Amen! in an expression of agreement with God’s Word. Then they fell on their knees and bowed low as they worshiped the Lord (8:6). Nehemiah did not explain exactly how Ezra and the Levites read and explained God’s Law to this large crowd that may have numbered between 30,000 and 50,000 people (7:66–67). Possibly Ezra read sections of the Law in the presence of all the people (8:3), and then at certain times the Levites circulated among them and made it clear and explained what Ezra had read as the people stood in groups (7–8). The most gratifying thing that happened, of course, is that the people obeyed God’s Word. What they heard touched the depths of their souls, for they wept as they heard the Law (9). Apparently they were remorseful over their past disobedience to the Law and contrite over their sins. In verses 10-18 we see Nehemiah encouraging the people to consider the day sacred and to eat, give to others in need, and rejoice in the Lord, their source of strength. Holiness and joy were to go together! I often think about, and sometimes joke about, the “fat” and the “sweet” of verse 10 on our First Wednesdays at the Masseys☺ On a more serious note, as far as joy that transcends this world, there is no transcendent joy apart from the perfection and fulfillment of the believer’s immaterial intellect (by faith), and immaterial will (by hope and love). Without faith, hope, and love there is no supernatural joy as there are no supernatural virtues of any kind. With them, the believer obtains spiritual virtue, true Christian character, as he lives in the grand reality of God and the things of God. However, there are no spiritual formulas to automatically make spiritual virtue appear like some *deus ex machina*. Everything God does is done concurrently, and all it takes is an attitude of not loving God or others to have these virtues withdrawn as they cannot exist in natures that are their opposites. In sum, the believer who lives for the world will lose his

faith (absolute certainty about God and the things of God), hope (eager expectation of being with God), and love (that sees, adores, and lives for God as greatest good of life). The only question is the rate of the attrition and that depends upon how God stands between the believer and his new “good,” which God now threatens and thus is viewed as needing removal by redefining Him, ignoring Him, or denying Him. It is impossible to love God or even truly see Him as one’s good if He is viewed as standing in the way of what a believer really wants—i.e., sees as his true good.

1 John 5:6–12. For John there is no middle ground between those who have the Son and thus eternal spiritual life and those who do not have the Son and thus do not have eternal life. Anyone who denies the central truths of Jesus Christ impugns the character of God—makes God out to be a liar! Biblical faith is not to be confused with modern notions of “faith,” as in “make-believe.” Biblical faith is certainty that is infused in the believer. It is supernatural and undefeatable (unless the believer lives a life of grieving and quenching the Holy Spirit, like refusing to live in the love of God for others). If there is any doubt at all, then it is not biblical faith. What does it take to be absolutely convinced without any doubt with the certainty that $2+2 = 4$? It takes nothing less than God the Holy Spirit bringing light to understanding of the gospel and the Word of God about Jesus Christ, which is so perspicuously true that a person’s intellect assents with absolute certainty. For example, if I am given some truth about Jesus Christ, my intellect will either assent to it with certainty or it will not give assent because of doubt. In the former there is biblical faith; the latter remains in the realm of opinion or conjecture and has nothing to do with biblical faith. Again, there is no doubt in biblical faith.

Psalms 110:1–7. David heard a heavenly conversation between the Lord (YAHWEH) and David’s Lord (ADONAI), that is, between God the Father and the Messiah. In this oracle Yahweh said that David’s Lord, the Messiah, is seated at Yahweh’s right hand (5), the place of authority, until the consummation of the ages (2:8–9). At that time the Lord will send David’s Lord, the Messiah, to make his enemies subject to Him. A footstool pictures complete subjugation. Note that Yahweh affirms an oath that the Messiah will be a “Priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.” That ancient unity of priest and king in one person will be reunited in the Messiah, a fact which necessitates the end of the line of Aaron’s priesthood. This is precisely the point of the writer to the Hebrews, who four times said Melchizedek is a type of Christ (Heb. 5:6; 6:20; 7:17, 21). As a Priest Jesus sacrificed Himself by His death on the cross (Heb. 7:27–28; 10:10). Not in Aaron’s line (cf. Heb. 7:11–18), He is the eternal High Priest (cf. Heb. 7:21–26, 28) of the New Covenant (cf. Heb. 8:13; 9:15). Because He is also the promised Davidic King, both offices are united in one Person. Note David’s anticipation of the victory of the Messiah in verses 5–7. According to the New Testament Christ, accompanied by His saints, will return to judge the world and establish His kingdom on earth.

Romans 11:36 For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

Pastor Don