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COMMENTARY ON THE WHOLE BIBLE

Nehemiah

by Matthew Henry

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AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF

THE BOOK OF

NEHEMIAH

This book continues the history of the *children of the captivity*, the poor Jews, that had lately returned out of Babylon to their own land. At this time not only the Persian monarchy flourished in great pomp and power, but Greece and Rome began to be very great and to make a figure. Of the affairs of those high and mighty states we have authentic accounts extant; but the sacred and inspired history takes cognizance only of the state of the Jews, and makes no mention of other nations but as the Israel of God had dealings with them: for the Lord's portion is his people; they are his peculiar treasure, and, in comparison with them, the rest of the world is but as lumber. In my esteem, Ezra the scribe and Nehemiah the tirshatha, though neither of them ever wore a crown, commanded an army, conquered any country, or was famed for philosophy or oratory, yet both of them, being pious praying men, and very serviceable in their day to the church of God and the interests of religion, were really greater men and more honourable, not only than any of the Roman consuls or dictators, but than Xenophon, or Demosthenes, or Plato himself, who lived at the same time, the bright ornaments of Greece. Nehemiah's agency for the advancing of the settlement of Israel we have a full account of in this book of his own commentaries or memoirs, wherein he records not only the works of his hands, but the workings of his heart, in the management of public affairs, inserting in the story many devout reflections and ejaculations, which discover in his mind a very deep tincture of serious piety and are peculiar to his writing. Twelve years, from his twentieth year (^{<3600>}Nehemiah 1:1) to his thirty-second year (^{<3636>}Nehemiah 13:6), he was governor of Judea, under Artaxerxes king of Persia, whom Dr. Lightfoot supposes to be the same Artaxerxes as Ezra has his commission from. This book relates,

I. Nehemiah's concern for Jerusalem and the commission he obtained from the king to go thither, Nehemiah 1, 2.

- II.** His building the wall of Jerusalem notwithstanding the opposition he met with, Nehemiah 3, 4.
- III.** His redressing the grievances of the people, Nehemiah 5.
- IV.** His finishing the wall, Nehemiah 6.
- V.** The account he took of the people, Nehemiah 7.
- VI.** The religious solemnities of reading the law, fasting, and praying, and renewing their covenants, to which he called the people (Nehemiah 8-10).
- VII.** The care he took for the replenishing of the holy city and the settling of the holy tribe, Nehemiah 11, 12.
- VIII.** His zeal in reforming various abuses, Nehemiah 13. Some call this *the second book of Ezra*, not because he was the penman of it, but because it is a continuation of the history of the foregoing book, with which it is connected (v. 1). This was the last *historical* book that was written, as Malachi was the last *prophetical* book, of the Old Testament.