

**Nehemiah 9:1** ¶ Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them.

**Nehemiah 9:2** And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers.

**Nehemiah 9:3** And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the LORD their God *one* fourth part of the day; and *another* fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the LORD their God.

“the 24<sup>th</sup> day of this month” – I am assuming it is still the 7<sup>th</sup> month since the feast of tabernacles is to start on the 15<sup>th</sup> day and run for 7 days, bringing us to the 22<sup>nd</sup>. The 8<sup>th</sup> day was a solemn assembly, and this is the next day.

The people of Israel gathered together to fast clothed with sackcloth and with dirt on their heads. Those of Jewish birth separated from all foreigners and stood together to confess their sins and the sins of their fathers. They stood together and read from the book of the law for ¼ of the day; another ¼ of the day they confessed their sins and worshipped the LORD their God.

Ironside makes a thought-provoking observation: “So the Bible-reading is again prominent. The first quarter of the day is spent in hearing the Word. Then the next quarter is given up to prayer: “They confessed and worshiped the Lord their God.” It is unwise, and may be hurtful, to reverse this order....One who gives himself pre-eminently to the Word, neglecting prayer, will become heady and doctrinal-likely to quarrel about “points,” and be occupied with theoretical Christianity to the hurt of his soul and the irritation of his brethren. On the other hand, one who gives himself much to prayer while neglecting the Word is likely to become exceedingly introspective, mystical, and sometimes fanatical. But he who reads the word of God reverently and humbly, seeking to know the will of God, and then gives himself to prayer, confessing and judging what the Scriptures have condemned in his ways, and words, and thoughts, will have his soul drawn out in worship also, and thus grow both in grace and in knowledge, becoming a well-rounded follower of Christ.”

**Nehemiah 9:4** ¶ Then stood up upon the stairs, of the Levites, Jeshua, and Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, *and* Chenani, and cried with a loud voice unto the LORD their God.

**Nehemiah 9:5** Then the Levites, Jeshua, and Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabniah, Sherebiah, Hodijah, Shebaniah, *and* Pethahiah, said, Stand up *and* bless the LORD your God for ever and ever: and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise.

**Nehemiah 9:6** Thou, *even* thou, *art* LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all *things* that *are* therein, the seas, and all that *is* therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.

Eight of the Levites are identified as crying out to the LORD in prayer with a loud voice. This was followed by five of those same Levites plus three others urging the people to bless the LORD “your God” forever, also declaring His

name to be glorious and exalted beyond what they could truly express. They recognized the LORD as the Creator of the heavens and all that is in them and the earth and seas and all that is in them. They acknowledged that the continued existence of all that He created was dependent upon Him. They noted that all the host of heaven worshipped Him.

This is a truth about which I am constantly in awe. I love to meditate on the beauty, complexity and variety in God's creation. It's awe inspiring to know that He sustains it all moment by moment in accordance with His purpose and plan.

An excerpt from my study in Colossians applies here: "I heard a wonderful audio presentation of the truth of this verse by Dr. Mark Eastman on Chuck Missler's [www.khouse.org](http://www.khouse.org) website. The excerpts from this article (shown below) by Lambert Dolphin (found at the same website) is similar to the type of information that I heard and explains in a way that I never could quite a bit more about what this verse [v17 "...and by Him all thing consist."] means.

#### What Holds the Universe Together?

The nucleus of the atom contains positively charged and neutral particles-to use a simplistic model. Mutual electrostatic repulsion between the like-positive protons would drive the nucleus apart if it were not for the "strong force" which binds the nucleus together....Similarly, accelerated electrons circling the nucleus should quickly radiate all their energy away and fall into the nucleus unless there exists an invisible energy source to counteract this.

The third New Testament creation-related passage which talks about atomic structure and physics is found in the Apostle Peter's Second Epistle: But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise [rhoizedon, a rushing roar] and the elements [stoicheion, atoms] will be dissolved with fire and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up. (2 Peter 3:10) The Greek word translated "elements" in the above mentioned passage from Colossians (and in 2 Peter also) is stoicheion, which can mean "the building blocks of the universe," or "the ordered arrangement of things." It can also mean the "atomic elements." The word translated "dissolved" in 2 Peter 3:10 is literally (in Greek) luo, meaning "unloosed." This language suggests that there will come a time in the future when God lets go of the nuclear forces which hold the atom together. This passage, like the one in Colossians, strongly suggests that the active power of God is behind the mysterious strong force that holds every atomic nucleus together. If this is so, all the other fundamental forces of nature are likewise forces that originate with Christ and His sustaining direction of the old creation.

If God "sustains the universe by His mighty word of power," moment by moment, were He to merely relax His grasp on the universe, every atom would come apart "by fire" (that is, by nuclear fire). It is inescapable that the Bible claims that God dynamically sustains the universe, including the very atoms themselves. Atoms, it would seem, are "stable" only because force and energy are being supplied into their physical nuclear binding fields from "outside" the system." [end excerpt]

Since eight men were identified, I tend to think that they were taking turns with one another as they praised the LORD, reiterated all that He had done for His people and confessed their sins. It reads as though they came prepared with this statement of confession and commitment.

**Nehemiah 9:7 Thou *art* the LORD the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham;**

**Nehemiah 9:8 And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give *it*, I say, to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou *art* righteous:**

They continued by declaring how the LORD had chosen Abram out of the Ur of the Chaldees and given him the name of Abraham, meaning father of a great multitude. They noted how the LORD had found Abraham's heart to be faithful to Him and promised to give to his seed the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites and the Girgashites. They praised Him for doing as He had promised in accordance with His righteousness.

We as Christians can also rejoice in knowing that in His foreknowledge God chose us before the foundation of the world to be part of His family.

*Romans 8:29 "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."*

*Ephesians 1:3-6 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."*

**Nehemiah 9:9 And didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heardest their cry by the Red sea;**

**Nehemiah 9:10 And shewedst signs and wonders upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land: for thou knewest that they dealt proudly against them. So didst thou get thee a name, as *it is* this day.**

**Nehemiah 9:11 And thou didst divide the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land; and their persecutors thou threwest into the deeps, as a stone into the mighty waters.**

They continued by remembering how the LORD had seen the affliction of His people and heard them cry in fear by the Red Sea when they saw the armies of Egypt bearing down upon them. They remembered how the LORD had performed great wonders before Pharaoh and all the people of Egypt in retribution for how they had treated the people of Israel. Those wonders and miracles in Egypt had glorified the name of God as the news spread throughout

the nations. They remembered how the LORD had parted the Red Sea and allowed the people to cross on dry ground as they escaped the armies of Pharaoh that were eventually drowned in its depths as they pursued God's people across it.

**Nehemiah 9:12 Moreover thou leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar; and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way wherein they should go.**

**Nehemiah 9:13 Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments:**

**Nehemiah 9:14 And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant:**

**Nehemiah 9:15 And gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger, and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and promisedst them that they should go in to possess the land which thou hadst sworn to give them.**

The men continued to tell the story of how the LORD had led His people through the wilderness with a cloudy pillar by day and a pillar of fire by night. They remembered how He had descended upon Mount Sinai to speak with the people and give them directions as to how to live through His laws and commandments. They acknowledged that the LORD had established the Sabbath, and revealed His laws and commands through Moses. They remembered how He had given them manna from heaven to feed them and provided water from a rock to quench their thirst. Again, they reiterated His promise to give them the land as He had sworn to Abraham.

As Christians, we too are God's people on a pilgrimage through this world for whom the LORD has promised to supply every need if we will but have faith; He has also given us His word to show us how to live according to His will.

*Matthew 6:25–33 "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."*

*2 Timothy 3:15–17 "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which*

*are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."*

**Nehemiah 9:16 But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments,**

**Nehemiah 9:17 And refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but thou *art* a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not.**

The men then humbly admitted how their fathers had acted in pride and stubbornness by refusing to obey the LORD's commandments. They forgot about all the miracles the LORD had done for and among them and even appointed a leader to take them back to Egypt.

The men then broke into praise of the LORD for His willingness to pardon their sins and His wonderful attributes of grace, mercy, patience, kindness and faithfulness—in spite of the faithlessness of His people.

Oh how thankful I am for God's willingness to forgive my sins because of the sacrifice of His Son! How thankful I am for continuing evidence in my life of His grace, mercy, patience, kindness and faithfulness—even when my faith is weak!

**Nehemiah 9:18 Yea, when they had made them a molten calf, and said, This is thy God that brought thee up out of Egypt, and had wrought great provocations;**

**Nehemiah 9:19 Yet thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to shew them light, and the way wherein they should go.**

**Nehemiah 9:20 Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst.**

**Nehemiah 9:21 Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing; their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not.**

They regretfully remembered how they had made a molten calf, declaring it to be their God that had brought them out of Egypt with such great miracles. They acknowledged that in His great mercy, the LORD had not forsaken them in the wilderness. His presence remained in the form of the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night to lead them and light their way.

They note how the LORD instructed them through His Spirit (through Moses I presume is the reference). Again, they remembered how He had fed the people with manna from heaven and provided water for their thirst. In other words, He

provided for both their spiritual and physical needs. In fact, for 40 years the LORD sustained His people as they wandered in the wilderness. They never lack a thing they needed; their clothes never wore out; their feet never swelled.

**Nehemiah 9:22 Moreover thou gavest them kingdoms and nations, and didst divide them into corners: so they possessed the land of Sihon, and the land of the king of Heshbon, and the land of Og king of Bashan.**

**Nehemiah 9:23 Their children also multipliedst thou as the stars of heaven, and broughtest them into the land, concerning which thou hadst promised to their fathers, that they should go in to possess *it*.**

**Nehemiah 9:24 So the children went in and possessed the land, and thou subduedst before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gavest them into their hands, with their kings, and the people of the land, that they might do with them as they would.**

**Nehemiah 9:25 And they took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards, and oliveyards, and fruit trees in abundance: so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness.**

The men went on to detail how the LORD had given His people the lands of Sihon (king of the Amorites), the land of Heshbon (also an Amorite city) and the land of Og the giant king of Bashan.

The men went on to note how the LORD had multiplied the people of Israel as the stars of heaven and given them possession of the land as He had promised their fathers (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob). They acknowledged that it was the LORD that had subdued the inhabitants of Canaan before the armies of Israel to deal with as they would. They had taken possession of strong cities, a fertile land, houses full of goods, working wells, vineyards, olive yards and fruit trees in abundance. The people were able to eat all they wanted and more and rejoice in God's goodness to them.

**Nehemiah 9:26 Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to thee, and they wrought great provocations.**

**Nehemiah 9:27 Therefore thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou heardest *them* from heaven; and according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies.**

Sadly, they went on to remember how the people had become disobedient once again and rebelled against the LORD. They disregarded His law and killed the prophets that He sent to confront them with their sin, hoping to bring them to repentance. They provoked the LORD in many ways to the point that He gave them over to their enemies. Finally, in their time of trouble they cried out to the LORD; and He heard them and provided men to deliver them from their enemies.

How blessed we are as Christians to know that we have been declared righteous

in Jesus and that God's ears are always open to our cries.

*Psalms 34:15 "The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry."*

**Nehemiah 9:28 But after they had rest, they did evil again before thee: therefore leftest thou them in the hand of their enemies, so that they had the dominion over them: yet when they returned, and cried unto thee, thou heardest *them* from heaven; and many times didst thou deliver them according to thy mercies;**

**Nehemiah 9:29 And testifiedst against them, that thou mightest bring them again unto thy law: yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto thy commandments, but sinned against thy judgments, (which if a man do, he shall live in them;) and withdrew the shoulder, and hardened their neck, and would not hear.**

**Nehemiah 9:30 Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy spirit in thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the people of the lands.**

**Nehemiah 9:31 Nevertheless for thy great mercies' sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou *art* a gracious and merciful God.**

Shamefully, the men went on to remember how after a time of rest, the people would once again rebel against the LORD, causing Him to again have to judge them and deliver them to their enemies. Yet again, when they finally cried out to the LORD, He provided another deliverer. This cycle happened many times (as recorded in the book of Judges). More often than not, the people refused to listen to God's prophets and repent of their sin. Instead, they continued in their sin and suffered the consequences.

They went on to note how patient the LORD had been with His people, how faithful He had been to send prophets to confront them in the power of the Holy Spirit. The people of Israel refused to listen, so the LORD had to give them over into the hands of the heathen nations.

In spite of all they did to bring shame upon His name, they remembered how the LORD in His great mercy did not utterly destroy them or forsake them due to his graciousness and mercy.

**Nehemiah 9:32 Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble seem little before thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day.**

**Nehemiah 9:33 Howbeit thou *art* just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly:**

**Nehemiah 9:34 Neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments and thy testimonies, wherewith thou didst testify against them.**

**Nehemiah 9:35 For they have not served thee in their kingdom, and in thy**

**great goodness that thou gavest them, and in the large and fat land which thou gavest before them, neither turned they from their wicked works.**

The men once again address God as “our God,” a declaration that they wanted to serve Him in obedience. They addressed Him as the great, mighty and awesome God who keeps His covenants with mercy. They asked God not to look lightly upon all that His people had suffered because of their sin, beginning with attacks from the kings of Assyria that eventually took captive the people of the northern kingdom. They admitted that they deserved His righteous judgment because they had acted so wickedly. They sadly admitted that their kings, princes, priests and forefathers had not obeyed God’s law and had disregarded His commandments. They had disregarded the testimony of His prophets. They had refused to serve Him even though He had given them so much—a kingdom and a fruitful land. They refused to give up their wicked ways.

**Nehemiah 9:36 Behold, we *are* servants this day, and *for* the land that thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold, we *are* servants in it:**

**Nehemiah 9:37 And it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins: also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we *are* in great distress.**

**Nehemiah 9:38 And because of all this we make a sure *covenant*, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal *unto* it.**

The men now grieved at the fact that they were currently servants in the land that the LORD had given their fathers. They had to give much of what they produced to the kings that ruled over them. They had nothing of their own; the kings they served took whatever they wanted and caused them to serve however they wanted. This prayer is a cry to God in light of their distress.

Because of all this, they wanted to renew their covenant with the LORD and confirm it in writing. The leading men, Levites and priests would add their seal to the written document, affirming it on behalf of the people.