

Emmaus Chapter 6 – Mike Baran

Grasping God's Word – Chapter 6

Assignment 6-1

The Practice of Slavery in New Testament Times

Slavery and the attitude towards slaves was different among Jews as compared to Gentiles. Jewish slaves were subject to the Sabbath-year release from slavery and the onus fell upon Jewish communities everywhere to ransom their nationals that were being held in slavery to Gentiles. Therefore, no fundamental division into bond and free was recognized within the Jewish communities. At the same time, the whole Jewish nation was seen to be the servants of God.

By contrast, Greek slavery was justified by the assumption of a natural order of slaves. Since only the citizen class were considered to be human, slaves were looked upon as being merely chattels. Domestic and public slavery were the most widespread forms. In the former case slaves were purchased and employed as a mark of wealth. Where only one or two were owned, they worked beside their master at the same occupation. At Athens they were indistinguishable in the street from free, and the familiarity of slaves towards their owners was a stock theme of comedy. At Rome the great houses employed scores of slaves for sheer luxury. Their work was highly specialized. In the case of public slaves, their status conferred a good deal of independence and respect. They performed all sorts of duties in the absence of a civil service, including even police services in some cases. Professions such as medicine or education were commonly filled by slaves.

The main sources of slavery were: (1) birth, depending on the law of the particular state concerning the various degrees of servile parentage; (2) the widespread practice of exposing unwanted children, who were then available for the use of anyone who cared to rear them; (3) the sale of one's own children into slavery; (4) voluntary slavery as a solution to problems such as debt; (5) penal slavery; (6) kidnapping and piracy; (7) the traffic across the Roman frontier.

The release from slavery could readily be arranged at any time if the owner wished. In Rome it was most commonly performed by testament, and limits had to be placed on the generosity of owners to prevent the too rapid dilution of the citizen body with persons of foreign extraction. In Greek states two common forms were a type of self-purchase, in which the legal ownership technically passing to a god, a freedom from slavery in return for a contract of service which simply meant that the slave continued in the same employment though legally free.

The condition of slavery was everywhere being steadily mitigated in New Testament times. Although slaves had no legal personality, owners recognized that they worked better the more their condition approximated to freedom, and the owning of property and contracting of marriage were normally allowed. Cruelty was condemned by the growing sentiment of common humanity, and in some cases legally controlled. In Greek states emancipated slaves became resident aliens of their former master's city, while at Rome they automatically became citizens. Consequently, the vast flow of slaves into Italy, especially during the last two centuries before Christ, had the effect of internationalizing the Roman republic, anticipating the government's own policy of steadily broadening membership.

Outside of Palestine where the churches were often established on a household basis, the membership included both masters and servants. Slavery was one of the human divisions that became meaningless in the new community in Christ (1 Cor 7:22; Gal 3:28). This seemingly led to a desire for emancipation (1 Cor 7:20) and perhaps even to the active encouragement of it by some (1 Tim 6:3-5). Paul was not opposed to the freeing of slaves if the opportunity was offered (1 Cor 7:21), but deliberately refrained from putting pressure on owners, even where personal

sentiment might have led him to do so (Philemon 8, 14). Not only was there the practical reason for not laying the church open to criticism (1 Tim 6:1-2), but also because all human stations are allotted by God (1 Cor 7:20). Slaves should therefore aim to please God by their service (Eph 6:5-8; Col 3:22). The fraternal bond with a believing master should be an added reason for serving him well (1 Tim 6:2). A master, on the other hand, might well let the fraternal sentiment prevail (Philemon 16), and certainly must treat his slaves with restraint (Eph 6:9) and strict equity.

The fact that household slavery, which is the only kind referred in the New Testament, was generally governed by feelings of goodwill and affection, is implied by its figurative use in the "household of God" (Eph 2:19). Thus, whether in practice or by analogy, the apostles clearly branded the institution as part of the order that was passing away. In the last resort the fraternity of the sons of God would see all its members free of their bonds.

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Assignment 6-2

The Book of Haggai

Authorship and Background: This book is the work of the prophet Haggai about whom almost nothing is known except his name. The period covered by his life cannot be fixed with accuracy. He may possibly have been a boy at the time of the exile into Babylonian captivity, in which case he may have seen the Temple of Solomon before its destruction by the conquering Babylonians. Some think he was born during the time of captivity. He returned with the remnant after the exile and, with his contemporary Zechariah, laboured towards the common goal of securing the rebuilding of the Temple. He wrote the four discourses which make up his prophecy during a four-month period in the year 520 BC. The rebuilding of the Temple was his general theme.

From 605 BC Judah was under the dominion of Babylon. Her rebellion finally led to the destruction of the Temple and the burning of the city of Jerusalem. Seventy years of captivity ensued. Then, under an edict of King Cyrus of Persia, a remnant of some forty thousand returned to the land of Judah. Led by Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest, they began the rebuilding of the city. The foundation of the Temple was laid right away, but the work was thereafter delayed for fifteen years due to the machinations of hostile neighbours. King Darius I ascended the Persian throne in 521 BC and was favourable to the Jews. The preaching and encouragement of Haggai and Zechariah resulted in the work on the Temple being resumed in 520 BC. It was finished in 516 BC.

Characteristics: Haggai acts as a goad for God. He urges upon the people the task of rebuilding the Temple. He rebukes the people for their indolence and spurs them on to finish the work. There are lofty flights of oratory. His style appears somewhat dull and unimaginative. He speaks plainly and directly, briefly and to the point. His words give no clue to his person. He shrouds himself in his work as a prophet of God, as an intermediary bearing a letter. He is one of the few prophets who has the privilege of seeing his dreams fulfilled. In his day the Temple is finished.

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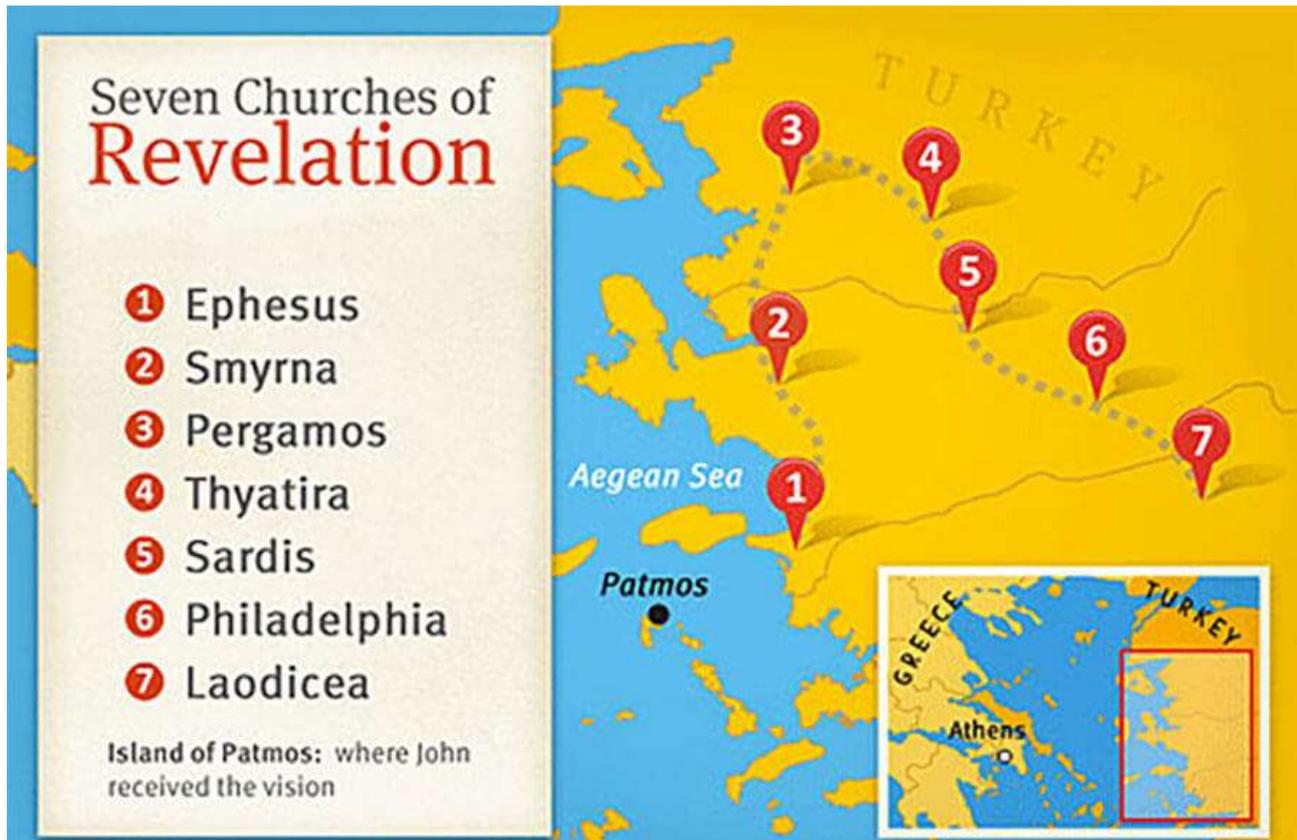
1. The call to rebuild the Temple (1:1-15): Haggai accuses the Jews of building their own homes and neglecting the Temple. God has not blessed them. The path of obedience is to rebuild the Temple. God will help and they will be blessed.
2. Comfort and hope (2:1-9): Haggai assures Zerubbabel and Joshua that God is present and that His Spirit is among them. He will shake the nations and fill His house with His glory. The latter splendour shall be greater than the former.
3. Holiness versus uncleanness and God's blessing (2:10-19): The Word of the Lord comes to Haggai. Holy flesh in the skirt of the garment will not make other things holy when touched; but an unclean person by touching the same things can make them unholy. God's people are unclean, so their works are unclean. God has withheld His blessing because of disobedience, and the earth does not yield its fruit. If the people will be obedient then immediate blessing will follow.
4. Zerubbabel, the servant of God (2:20-23): The Word of the LORD comes the second time. God says to Zerubbabel that he will shake the heavens and earth; he will overthrow the foreign masters; horses and riders will go down. God will make Zerubbabel like a signet ring, for Zerubbabel is God's servant.

Assignment 6-3

The Book of Revelation

The seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3 are:

1. Ephesus
2. Smyrna
3. Pergamum
4. Thyatira
5. Sardis
6. Philadelphia
7. Laodicea



Laodicea

Laodicea was a city in the Roman province of Asia in the west of what is now the nation of Turkey. It was founded by the Seleucid Antiochus II in the third-century BC, and called after his wife Laodice. Owing to its position, it was an extremely prosperous commercial centre, especially under Roman rule. For example, when it was destroyed by a disastrous earthquake in AD 60 it could afford to reject the proffered imperial subsidy. It lay on a very important cross-road; the main road across Asia Minor ran west to the ports of Miletus and Ephesus about 100 miles away, and east by an easy incline onto the central plateau and then towards Syria; and another road ran north to the provincial capital at Pergamum and south to the coast at Attaleia. It was therefore an important centre of banking and exchange. In addition, lying in the broad valley of the Lycus (a tributary of the Meander), the city was surrounded by fertile land. Its distinctive products included garments of glossy black wool, and medicinal tabloids or powders. Its site had one disadvantage: being entirely determined by the road-system, there was no permanent water supply near at hand. Water had to be piped to the city from hot springs some way off, and probably arrived lukewarm. The site was eventually abandoned and the modern town of Denizli grew up around the springs.

Lying on the natural route of innumerable travellers and traders, Laodicea was reached by the gospel at an early date, probably while Paul was living in Ephesus (Acts 19:10), and perhaps through Epaphras (Col 4:12-13). Although Paul mentions the church there, there is no record that he visited it. It is evident that the church maintained close connections with the communities in the neighbouring cities of Hierapolis and Colossae. The last of the letters to 'the seven churches of Asia' appears to contain many allusions to the character and circumstance of the city. For all its wealth, the city could produce neither the healing power of hot water, like its neighbour Hierapolis, nor the refreshing power of cold water to be found at Colossae; but merely lukewarm water, useful only as an emetic. The church was charged with a similar uselessness. Like the city, the church thought it had 'need of nothing', whereas in fact it needed 'gold', 'white raiment', and 'eye salve' more effective than its bankers, clothiers, and doctors could supply. Like citizens inhospitable to a traveller who offers them priceless goods, its members had closed their doors and left their real Provider outside (verse 20).

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Assignment 6-4

Jesus and the Samaritan Woman (John 4:1-39)

The Samaritan History

The northern House of Israel and its capital Samaria fell to Assyrian conquest around 722 BC. The leading citizens, along with some of the population, were all deported by Sargon to a variety of places in Syria, Assyria and Babylonia. According to the annals of Sargon he carried off some 27,290 captive Israelites. In place of the deported Israelites, Sargon, and later Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal, replaced the captive Israelites who had been removed from their homeland with a variety of foreign colonists from other parts of the Assyrian Empire, places such as Babylonia and Elam. The Israelites who were left formed the core of the new mixed community and, despite the introduction of various cults, continued in the worship of Yahweh even if this was in a somewhat syncretistic way.

In the early Persian period, when the Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem, they immediately met with opposition from the rulers in Samaria when they tried to rebuild Jerusalem and its Temple. With the arrival of Ezra and Nehemiah the tension grew deeper. The new zeal for the purity of the returned Jewish community clashed with the mixed ancestry of the Samaritans. Ezra forced the separation between the new Jewish community and any Samaritan spouses and when the high priest's grandson married Sanballat's daughter, Nehemiah expelled him. The final breach between Jews and Samaritans occurred around 200 BC when Ben-Sira wrote *Ecclesiasticus* (*The Wisdom of Jesus the son of Sirach*). At the time of the Maccabean revolt, the Samaritans bowed before the power of Antiochus IV (Epiphanes), and their temple on Mt. Gerizim was dedicated to Zeus Xenios. In around 128 BC the Hasmonean Hyrcanus (high priest and ruler in Judea) captured the Samaritan city of Shechem and destroyed the Gerizim temple. In 63 BC the Roman General Pompey detached Samaria and annexed it to the new province of Syria. The city of Samaria became a favourite seat of Herod the Great, and he renamed it Sebaste in honour of Augustus. In AD 6 Judea and Samaria were united in a third-class province under Syria, the procurator's seat being in Caesarea. During this period the friction between Jews and Samaritans was sharpened by several incidents. Between AD 6 and 9 Samaritans scattered bones in the Jerusalem Temple during a certain Passover. In AD 52 Samaritans massacred a group of Galilean pilgrims at En-gannim. This led to a dispute before Emperor Claudius in which the decision was given in favour of the Jews.

There are still some 800 Samaritans living today in Israel near Mt Gerizim in Nablus and Holon. The Samaritan religious creed has six articles: Belief in one God, in Moses the prophet, in the Law, in Mt Gerizim as the place appointed by God for sacrifices, in the day of judgment and recompense, and in the return of Moses as Taheb, or restorer (something akin to the Messiah). Their belief in the resurrection is problematical. The Jews regarded the Samaritans as schismatics rather than Gentiles. The main contentious issue was Mt Gerizim as the Samaritan cultic centre.

The apostle John tells how Jesus spent two days in Shechem, where many believed on him.

Jesus and the Samaritan Woman (John 4:1-39)

1. Jesus went to Shechem which was in Samaritan territory where he met a Samaritan woman at a well (v.5).
2. Jews generally avoided having any dealings with Samaritans whom they understood to be schismatics because of their varying beliefs and their attachment to Mt Gerizim as a cultic centre. The Samaritan woman was, therefore, amazed that Jesus spoke with her and asked her for a drink of water from the well (v.9).

3. The woman confirmed that, historically, the Samaritans worshipped at Mt Gerizim rather than in Jerusalem where Jews worshiped (v.20).
4. The woman thought that Jesus was a prophet because he knew that she had had five husbands in the past and was now living with a sixth man (v.19). The Samaritans only considered the Pentateuch to be canonical and did not hold to the Prophets or the Writings that are included in the Jewish Tanakh, consequently the Samaritan woman may have thought of Jesus as being the returning prophet Moses, their “Taheb.”

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Assignment 6-5

The Book of Nehemiah

1. **How much time passed between the month of Kislev in Nehemiah 1:1 and the month of Nisan in Nehemiah 2:1?**

From 1 Kislev to 1 Nisan (Aviv) would be 4 or 5 months, depending on whether there was a 12 or 13 month year.

2. **Where is Susa (Nehemiah 1:1)?**

Susa (Shushan) is located in south-western Persia (Iran). The ancient city of Susa adjoins the modern Iranian city of Shush, located some 60km from the western border with Iraq.

3. **For which empire did Susa serve as one of three royal cities?**

Cyrus built Pasargadae as his palace-city and it would appear that Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, may also have ruled from Pasargadae. Susa (Shushan) appears to have been the capital of the Persian Empire when Darius the Great began to rule. However, it is said that Darius then began to build Persepolis as his new royal capital in 515 BC. This was located some 50km downstream from Pasargadae. Persepolis was completed during the reign of Xerxes I and is said to have been the jewel in the Achaemenid crown. It was the royal city of Artaxerxes I and the Persian kings that followed Artaxerxes I, although it is also said that Artaxerxes I later rebuilt the palace in Susa, the one that had been occupied by Darius I. The name "Persepolis" is derived from the word "Parsa" which means "City of the Persians."

4. **What other biblical character lived in Susa?**

In the Book of Esther we are told that the Persian king was Ahasuerus, whom history records as Xerxes I. The story of Queen Esther is said to be based in Susa, which would then make it the royal capital of Xerxes I until the new capital at Persepolis was completed.

5. **Did this character live before Nehemiah or after?**

Xerxes I (485-465 BC) followed Darius I (Darius the Great, for whom Nehemiah was a cup bearer) and so the story of Queen Esther is from a time following the age of Nehemiah, even though it would appear to have been before the age of Nehemiah on the basis of the erroneous biblical chronology that has Nehemiah coming to Jerusalem in the reign of Artaxerxes.

6. **Which empire did King Artaxerxes rule over, and when (Nehemiah 2:1)?**

King Artaxerxes I ruled over the Persian Empire. He ruled from 464-424 BC. However, in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah the name Artaxerxes is a mistake. In the book of Ezra the king who allowed Ezra to leave his captivity and return to Jerusalem was Cambyses (529-522 BC), the son of King Cyrus. However, in the book of Nehemiah, Nehemiah was actually a cup bearer for King Darius I (521-486 BC) – otherwise known to history as Darius the Great – and not to Artaxerxes. It was Darius who allowed Nehemiah a 12-year leave of absence to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls and gates of Jerusalem. The problem here of Bible chronology relates to at least two problematical scriptures: Ezra 6:14 and Nehemiah 1:1 (and related Nehemiah 2:1).

Ezra 6:14 tells us that Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes were the Persian kings who permitted the re-building of the Temple in Jerusalem. However, verse 15 tells us that the Temple was completed "in the sixth year of the reign of Darius" – in 516 BC. Clearly Artaxerxes had nothing to do with allowing the Temple to be rebuilt as it was completed some 50 years before Artaxerxes began to reign. Additionally, the name Cambyses is missing from this list, which results in an incomplete order of Persian kings who permitted the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem, namely: Cyrus, Cambyses and Darius I.

Nehemiah 1:1 refers to "the twentieth year" without telling us the relevance of that 20-

year period. It has been *assumed*, on the basis of Nehemiah 2:1, that this refers to the twentieth year of Artaxerxes' reign, although this cannot be correct given that Daniel's Seventy Weeks Prophecy tells us that Jerusalem was rebuilt, following the completion of its walls and gates, within 49 years (7 weeks of years) following the return of the Jews from Babylonian captivity (Daniel 9:25). Consequently, we need to understand this twentieth year to be the twentieth year since the return of the Jews to Jerusalem from Babylonian captivity. As such, the twentieth year would be around 517 BC which falls during the reign of Darius I and so supports the contention that the last of the Persian kings who supported the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its Temple was Darius I and not Artaxerxes.

The name Artaxerxes can also be shown to be erroneous when we consider the age of Ezra at the time of his return to Jerusalem. Ezra was a younger son of the pre-exilic high priest Seriah ("Jehovah has prevailed") who was executed by Nebuchadnezzar when Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed. Ezra's older brother Jehozadak ("Jehovah is righteous") became high priest in place of his father. This then means that Ezra was an uncle to Joshua ("Jehovah saves"),¹ the high priest at the time of the return to Jerusalem of the remnant Jews and so explains how it was that Ezra was instrumental in organizing and re-establishing the various religious practices in Jerusalem, including the sequential priestly services in the Temple. Such a chronology and Ezra's age at the time of his return to Jerusalem would have been impossible if Ezra came back in the days of Artaxerxes since he would probably have been in excess of about 130 years of age at that later time rather than in his 70's, as is more likely.

7. **What was a cupbearer's status in the royal court?**

Nehemiah was cupbearer to the Persian king Darius I. This was an obviously privileged position despite the fact that Nehemiah was a slave/servant who may have been a eunuch, since there is no mention of his wife at any time in his life. Historically, the cupbearer in some cases became a confidant and favourite of the king and so wielded political influence in that he may also have been an advisor to the king. This is evident with Nehemiah who enjoyed royal trust and favour and had access to the royal ear. Darius clearly enjoyed Nehemiah's company since he noticed and cared that Nehemiah was, at one time, sad in the king's presence. This care for Nehemiah resulted in the king allowing Nehemiah to fulfil his desire to travel to Jerusalem to arrange for the rebuilding of the walls and gates of Jerusalem. But not only did Darius allow Nehemiah to leave to arrange for these rebuilding works but he had Nehemiah agree to return after a 12-year period of absence to again serve Darius.

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¹ The three high-priestly names: Seriah (Seraiah), Jehozadak and Joshua (Jehoshua), have significant meanings in the context of Judah's punishment, exile and return. In each case we are told a story about who God (Jehovah) is, in that Jehovah prevailed over faithless Judah; he was righteous in punishing Judah with exile; and he then saved Judah from captivity after seventy years of exile.