NEHEMIAH AND THE CHURCH IN TRANSITION

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Introduction

Nehemiah was a Jewish prophet who led the third and final group of Jewish returnees to Jerusalem after the Babylonian exile. Despite great opposition from political leaders of the surrounding provinces of the Persian Empire, he inspired the Jews to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem and, with help from the prophet Ezra, to restore the observance of the Law of Moses.

A present-day movement, which is sweeping thousands of Protestant churches (and Catholic churches, as much as the church hierarchy allows) in the Free World, claims to be based on and to have parallels with Nehemiah’s program of physical reconstruction and spiritual restoration. Churches that are involved in this movement are commonly called “Purpose-Driven Churches” (named after Pastor Rick Warren’s books, *The Purpose Driven Life* and *The Purpose Driven Church*); for brevity’s sake we will refer to them as PDC’s. PDC’s are churches that have restructured their governing structures, programs, and styles of worship to resemble those of Pastor Rick Warren’s Saddleback Community Church in Lake Forest (Orange County), California, Bill Hybels’ Willow Creek Church near Chicago, Illinois, or similar megachurches. These claimed parallels will be examined in depth in this essay, to see if they are really as the PDC leaders say, or if these "parallels" are actually divergences from Nehemiah’s’ program.

Historical background

Return from exile

There were three waves of deportations of Jews to Babylon after Nebuchadnezzar conquered them. These deportations happened in 606 BC, 597 BC, and 586 BC. There were three waves of Jews who returned from Babylon, the first being led by Zerubbabel in 538 BC, the second led by Ezra in 457 BC, and the third by Nehemiah in 444 BC. Construction of the temple was started in 536 BC, discontinued in 534 BC, resumed in 520 BC, and completed in 515 BC.

Artaxerxes I, who ruled the Persian Empire from 464 BC to 423 BC, was the stepson of Esther, who is the central topic of the next book in the Old Testament. He gave the decree in the twentieth year of his reign, as mentioned in Nehemiah 2:2, to give the Jews permission to rebuild Jerusalem and its wall, starting the prophecy of Daniel concerning the 70 weeks (Daniel 9:25-27), including 69 weeks of years that ended with Jesus’ publicly showing himself to be Messiah when he rode into Jerusalem. The wall around
Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC, and it was almost rebuilt after 464 BC, when Artaxerxes began his reign (Ezra 3:6 – 23). Political opposition led to the wall’s second destruction, leaving it in the state of ruin that Nehemiah finds upon his arrival at Jerusalem.

**Restoration of Jewish worship and heritage**

After the wall around Jerusalem is rebuilt in an astonishing 52 days, the people press Ezra to read from the Book of the Law in Moses, translating it from Hebrew to Aramaic. His reading of the Law makes the Jews aware of their own violation of the Law through ignorance and neglect, and they enthusiastically join Nehemiah, Ezra, and the other political and spiritual leaders to recommit themselves to observance of the Law of Moses. Among other things, they restore the Feast of Tabernacles and the tithes to the Levites, and separate themselves from the pagan peoples with whom some had intermarried. After Nehemiah is recalled to Artaxerxes’ throne in Judah, the leaders and the people begin to violate the Law to which they recommitted themselves, but Nehemiah returns and “cleans house” again.

**Nehemiah the Prophet**

His name, *nehemyah*, means “comfort of Jehovah”. He inspired the Jews whom he led from Babylon, and the Jews who arrived in Judah in two earlier waves of returns from Babylon, to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem. With the help of the prophet Ezra, he also leads in the spiritual as well as the physical restoration of the Jewish people. Malachi also was a prophet who ministered to the Jews at this time.

**Nehemiah the Author**

Nehemiah obviously wrote the book as a narrative. He tells of what happens and of his emotions as these things happen. He also tells in detail the actions he takes to meet the challenge of the Jews’ physical and spiritual restoration. He tells of his sadness, which he cannot hide, from Artaxerxes I upon hearing of the news about Jerusalem’s condition. He candidly tells of his anger when confronted with usury and marriages to pagans. He tells of his tireless dedication to the rebuilding of the wall, and his unselfish sense of duty in ruling Judah. He makes several prayers to God to remember him and his good deeds.

**Nehemiah’s Role in Babylon**

Xerxes, Artaxerxes’ father, was killed in his own bedchamber by a courtier. The dangers associated with royal status at the time included the possibility of poisoning, and Esther may have arranged for Nehemiah to be Artaxerxes’ wine taster. Nehemiah gained the trust of and easy access to Artaxerxes in this way. He heard from his brothers, including Hananiah, about the condition of Jerusalem, motivating him to act and to gain permission from Artaxerxes to restore Jerusalem. Nehemiah gathers a large group of Jews to travel from Babylon to Judah.
Nehemiah’s Role in Judah

Nehemiah was appointed by Artaxerxes to be governor of Jerusalem and the surrounding area of Judah in 444 BC, and was governor until 432 BC. He was recalled to Artaxerxes’ palace in Susa that year, but returned to Jerusalem. The governors of the neighboring provinces, Sanballat (verse 2:19) of Samaria, and Tobiah of what is now Trans-Jordan, were opposed to Nehemiah out of fear of political rivalry. Geshem, leader of tribes of Arabs from northeastern Egypt through the southern Holy Land to northern Arabia, opposed Nehemiah because he had a stake in the spice trade which he feared that Nehemiah would disrupt. Bigvai replaced Nehemiah as governor of Judah by 410 BC. Sanballat and Jehohanan (verses 6:18, 12:23), are mentioned in the Elephantine Papyri.

A present-day program (the purpose-driven, seeker-sensitive, church growth movement) claimed by its leaders to be based on the Book of Nehemiah

There is a movement today that had its seeds in Pastor Bill Hybels’ Willow Creek Church, John Wimbers’ Vineyard Ministries, and Fuller Seminary, which quickly involved many thousands of churches around the world, and which is in the process of profoundly altering the style and structure of Protestantism, including the Evangelical sector. This movement is commonly called “purpose-driven” (named after Pastor Rick Warren’s books, *The Purpose Driven Life* and *The Purpose Driven Church*), “seeker sensitive” (Bill Hybels), and the “church growth movement” (John Wimber and Eddie Gibbs). This movement has apparently invigorated many churches, but caused controversy and even church splits before 1985.

In the mid-1970’s, a recent college graduate called Bill Hybels visited a dynamic youth ministry at South Park Church in Park Ridge, Illinois, and noticed that ministry’s use of contemporary music, drama, and Bible teaching considered to be relevant to young people. Hybels was so impressed that he started his own church on October 12, 1975, using the style that he was so impressed with in his visit to that youth ministry.

John Wimber, a founder and lecturer of the Fuller Church Growth Institute, teamed with C. Peter Wagner to form the Church Growth Movement. In 1978, Wimber formed the Vineyard Christian Fellowship Ministries International. Eddie Gibbs, senior professor of church growth at Fuller Seminary, has been in its faculty since 1984, and is very active in the “church growth movement”.

The goals of the present-day church growth movement are to expand church membership, and organize them to gain temporal influence in the world as well as spiritual influence. This is best expressed by Pastor Rick Warren’s P.E.A.C.E. program, which is global in scope. P.E.A.C.E. stands for the five concepts in Warren’s international program:

Plant churches, Equip leaders, Assist the poor, Care for the sick, and Educate the next generation.
Many of its leaders believe, like the Dominionists\(^1\) and Reconstructionists\(^2\), that they will take the world, change it to a “Christian” (by their definition) image, then invite Jesus to return. The church growth movement, however, is not as hard-nosed in their goal of implementing Old Testament Law as the other groups, but its global ambitions are the same.

The methods used by the present-day church growth movement are not Biblical, but are humanistic and business-oriented. Using marketing techniques and business management style of church governance, the leaders of this movement seek to attract “seekers” (non-Christians) into the churches by making the churches’ style and manner of worship, and most definitely the sermons, appear non-threatening to these “seekers.” The people are then enrolled in classes (usually patterned after college courses, including the numbers 101, 201, 301, and 401) to identify their human talents (thinly veiled as “finding their spiritual gifts”) in order to find where they would best fit into the new order. The churches involved in this movement also get involved in partnerships with business and government entities. In so doing, this movement makes churches more like business ventures than places of worship.

A survey of the Book of Nehemiah follows, with present-day applications pertaining to the characteristics and methods used in the current church growth movement. This movement claims that its basis for transitioning churches to their model can be found in the Book of Nehemiah. This claim, best expressed in the eight-step program of Church Transitions Inc.\(^3\), an affiliate of Rick Warren’s Saddleback Church, must be examined using the Book of Nehemiah.

A Summary of the Verses for each Chapter in the Book of Nehemiah, with present-day applications with regards to the purpose-driven, seeker-sensitive, church growth movement.

**Chapters 1 – 7: Reconstruction of the Wall around Jerusalem**
- Chapters 1 – 2: Nehemiah makes Plans to Rebuild the Wall
- Chapters 3 – 7: Nehemiah leads the Rebuilding of the Wall.

**Chapters 8 – 13: Spiritual Restoration of the Jewish People**
- Chapters 8 – 10: Nehemiah and Ezra lead in Recommitment to the Law of Moses

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1 Dominionists are a group of people who believe that man’s dominion over the Earth, lost to Satan at the Fall, was restored by Christ to the Church, who must take dominion over the Earth so Christ can return.
2 Reconstructionists, often called Christian Reconstructionists, are a group of Dominionists who want to impose Old Testament Law, via a system called theonomy, on the United States and the world. Notable Reconstructionists include R. J. Rushdoony and Gary North. They have their own think tank called the Chalcedon Institute.
3 Church Transition, Inc., is headed by Dan Southerland, pastor of Flamingo Road Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, [www.churchtransitions.com](http://www.churchtransitions.com).
Chapter 1:
Summary of verses:

Verse 1:
During the month of Chisleu (November – December), Nehemiah was in the palace of Artaxerxes I, king of the Persian Empire. This was the 20th year of the king’s reign (467 BC). This king’s reign was from 464 BC until 423 BC.

Verse 2:
Nehemiah asks fellow Jews, who include his brother Hananiah, about the condition of those Jews who left the Babylonian Captivity and who are in the area of Jerusalem.

Verse 3:
Their answer was that the Jews are a despised and persecuted people, the wall that surrounds Jerusalem is in ruins, and the gates were made useless by fire.

Verses 4 – 11:
Nehemiah feels sad and prays to God.
  Verse 5: Nehemiah’s knowledge that God keeps His covenant with the obedient.
  Verses 6 – 7: Nehemiah’s admission to Israel’s sins.
  Verse 11: Nehemiah was the wine taster for the king, so he can easily gain the king’s attention.

Note of interest: Nehemiah, in his prayer, uses the word “servant” several times:
  Verse 6: “servant”, “servants”.
  Verse 7: “servant”.
  Verse 8: “servant”.
  Verse 10: “servants”.
  Verse 11: “servant, servants, and servant”.

Nehemiah contrasted with PDC’s

Unlike the Jews in verse 3, American Christians are not openly persecuted, with no comparison to that faced by Christians in Communist and Islamic nations. They generally lead comfortable lives, and until recently, the “wall” between what is the sacred realm of the churches (symbolized by Jerusalem) and what is the secular realm in the world outside the churches (symbolized by all that is outside of Jerusalem) was standing. There was a clear distinction between the “Christian culture” and the “secular culture”, but George S. Barna and other researchers say that this wall is breaking down. The churches built more than 25 years ago often have a distinctive appearance and architecture from that of secular buildings. Again, this is breaking down as the recent

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4 George S. Barna heads the Barna Group, Ltd., a Christian research group who does frequent polls of American Christians. Their website is www.barna.org.
megachurches start to look more like business parks. Still, for the most part, the wall between the sacred and secular is standing…so far.

Unlike Nehemiah’s prayer in verses 4 – 11, American Christians are largely smug and self-assured, and many have become so apostate that they do not even realize their spiritual bankruptcy. They largely fit the description of the Laodicean Church in Revelation 3: 14 – 22. George S. Barna, a reputable evangelical Christian pollster, finds that American Christians live not much differently than everyone else⁵. Many American Christians have no concept of servanthood, and expect the government and the rest of the people to cater to their whims. This is best expressed in Dominionism, Kingdom Now⁶, Reconstructionism, and British Israelite⁷ theologies, which I believe will become more prominent as many American Christian leaders decide that the Lord is not coming for a long time (some Reconstructionists believe that Jesus may not come back for up to 34,000 more years). This may be a fulfillment of Jesus’ parable about the evil servant described in Matthew 24: 48-51, to be elaborated further in the conclusion of this essay:

But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 24:48-51, King James Version).

External threats as militant Islam or internal ones such as cultural decay can also fuel this attitude. Remember, many American Christians view themselves as the spiritual heirs of the Reformation in their ancestral countries of Europe, looking back to the Puritans or (in some cases) the Calvinists, and see themselves as “God’s Redeemer Nation.”

Unlike the risky, subservient role that Nehemiah had with his king in verse 11, the organized American Christian Establishment has become close to the government in order to eventually take it over, even though much of what this Establishment (made up largely of Evangelical Protestants, with traditional Catholics and conservative mainline Protestants as their junior partners) pushed through in terms of legislation is justified and has a strong moral outlook. **I write this as a political conservative, mind you. I am certainly no left-winger or socialist.**

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⁵ For a complete list of surveys, see his website [www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org)

⁶ A group of Reconstructionists who believe that Christians can build a Kingdom of God on this earth in this age.

⁷ British Israelitism is the belief that the ten lost tribes of Israel migrated into Europe and then into the British Isles. White supremacist groups such as “Christian Identity” have this concept as their core idea, as did Herbert W. Armstrong’s Worldwide Church of God. The late Dr. Gene Scott of University Cathedral in Los Angeles dabbled in this idea.
Chapter 2

Summary of verses:

Verse 1:
During the month of Nisan (March – April), in the 20th year of Artaxerxes’ reign. Nehemiah was wine tasting for the king. After Nehemiah gave the wine to the king, the king told Nehemiah that this was the first time that he looked to be sad in the royal presence.

Verse 2:
The king knows that Nehemiah is in a sad mood.

Verses 3 – 8:
Nehemiah requests of the king that he be given leave to go to Jerusalem to rebuild the wall and the gate, and that he be given safe passage (with the documents to assure this) by the governors of the provinces he must cross, and for supplies for rebuilding the palace, wall, and his ancestors’ house in Jerusalem.

Verses 9 – 11:
Nehemiah travels to Jerusalem. Sanballat the Horonite (governor of Samaria), and his servant Tobiah the Ammonite (governor of Trans-Jordan), both from peoples who profited from the fact that the Jews had been in exile, learn about Nehemiah’s plans and do not like it at all. Their motives were to prevent rivalry to their political power in the area of Jerusalem and Judah.

Verses 12 – 16:
At nighttime, Nehemiah sneaks off from where he was lodging, and does a personal inspection of the ruined wall, gates, and palace.

Verses 17 – 18:
Nehemiah announces to the group of Jewish returnees that he wants the wall to be rebuilt.

Verses 19 – 20:
Sanballat and Tobiah, now joined by Geshem the (chief of the confederacy of) Arabian (tribal groups), ridicule the idea of rebuilding the wall. Nehemiah tells these three that they have no business in Jerusalem’s affairs.

Nehemiah contrasted with PDC’s

Unlike the scene in verses 9 – 11, Pastor Dan Southerland of Church Transitions, Inc., an affiliate of Saddleback Church, wrote a book titled Transitioning, Leading Your Church Through Change. In Chapter 6, “Dealing with Opposition”, he referred to those who oppose his church transition program, in which the churches lose their distinctiveness (or “wall”) from the secular world, as “Sanballats” who oppose God’s will (page 115).
Unlike the scene in verses 19 – 20, Warren and his seeker-sensitive, “church transition” followers use tactics of ridicule and scorn upon those godly people who oppose the tearing down of the wall between the sacred and the secular realms in their churches, and marginalize and even expel those church members who oppose the “church transition” program. The wall around Jerusalem was to keep outsiders out, only to be let into the city on Jewish terms. Warren and his disciples want the sacred/secular wall around the churches to be torn down, with the churches flooded with unbelieving “seekers’, whom the church members must entertain on the terms of the so-called “seekers”

Chapter 3
Summary of verses:

Verses 1 – 32:
Under Nehemiah’s leadership, the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem begins. It is a cooperative effort by representatives of the many towns and villages in Judah, who are assigned specific parts of the wall to rebuild. A huge number of men are involved in this huge task. The list of sections of the wall starts from the Sheep Gate on the northeast corner and goes counterclockwise around the city’s perimeter.

Verses 1 – 7:
The northern section of the wall is rebuilt.

Verses 8 – 13:
The western section of the wall is rebuilt.

Verse 14:
The southern section of the wall is rebuilt.

Verses 15 – 32:
The eastern section of the wall is rebuilt.

Nehemiah contrasted with PDC’s

In the process of Warren’s “church transition” program for the targeted churches, at first only a select few church members (pastors, elders, deacons, key leaders, etc.), are chosen to plan and implement the tearing down of the “wall” between the sacred realm of the church and the secular realm of the outside world by removing the elements in the church that are associated with sacredness. The congregation is never involved in decision-making and participation in steps 1, 2, and 3, until the plan is publicly revealed in step 4 of Dan Southerland’s (Church Transitions, Inc.) 8-step transition program.
Chapter 4
Summary of verses:

Verses 1 – 3:
Sanballat is angered at the news of building the wall, and spoke to the Horonites and the army of Samaria about this. Tobiah the Ammonite assures Sanballat that the Jews’ wall can be bought down by even a fox (in Hebrew, the word for fox can also mean jackal. As a non-Biblical side note, the Japanese word for fox,kitsune, can refer to a legendary trickster. I suppose Tobiah meant using psychological warfare)

Verses 4 – 6:
Nehemiah’s prayer to God against Sanballat and his allies. The Jews are determined to build the wall.

Verses 7 – 8:
Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabians, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites learn that the wall around Jerusalem was erected and the breaches in the wall began to be stopped. These groups of people align themselves against Jerusalem.

Verse 9:
Nehemiah and other Jews pray to God, and set a 24-hour per day watch.

Verses 10 – 12:
Judah observes that the wall workers are tired and there is still much rubbish to clear up, and that the enemies plan to sneak up on the Jews to kill them. This news was confirmed to Judah ten times by Jews who live near the enemies’ lands, whose messengers told these Jews of their plans.

Verse 13:
Nehemiah arranges for the people to arm themselves and to guard the wall.

Verse 14:
Nehemiah reassures the people that God supports them.

Verse 15:
The enemies find that the Jews had been forewarned, and that their plan of sneaky ambush had failed. The Jews return to work on the wall.

Verses 16 – 18:
The servants of Nehemiah and the wall builders were armed as they worked on the wall.

Verses 19 – 20:
Nehemiah finds that the Jews are too thinly spread out on the wall, making it difficult to defend the wall and city. He gives the people a strategy to group together if a warning trumpet is sounded.
Verse 21:
The Jews continue to work on the wall, with half of them being armed at any given time. They worked into the evening as long as there was some light left at dusk, and when the stars began to appear.

Verse 22:
The wall workers were told by Nehemiah to spend the nights in Jerusalem for added security.

Verse 23:
Nehemiah and his fellows had to be on such a state of alertness that they only removed their clothes for washing, because they had to be ready for action at any time. They could not afford to be “caught with their pants down.”

Nehemiah contrasted with PDC’s

Unlike the scene in verse 1, Southerland calls those who oppose tearing down the “wall” between the sacred and secular realms as “Sanballats”.

As in verse 3, psychological warfare and other cunning means are encouraged by Saddleback and other “church transition” consultants to deal with those who would oppose the tearing down of the sacred/secular wall in their churches.

Unlike Nehemiah’s prayer about Sanballat and his allies, Warren states that “all forces of hell” would go against his “church transition” plan. He therefore associates some godly church people with demons.

Unlike verse 9, where Nehemiah and the Jews have to be on watch for hostile outsiders, those church leaders who follow Rick Warren’s recipe for “church transition” keep watch inside their churches for dissent as the sacred/secular wall is being torn down (“transitioned” out) and either ignore or encourage infiltration by outsiders into their churches.

Unlike verse 23, where Nehemiah and his followers had to be on alert at all times for action from those outside of Jerusalem, the consultants from Saddleback Church and Church Transitions, Inc., train those leaders involved in “church transition” to be ready at all times for action from those inside the church.

Chapter 5
Summary of verses:

Verse 1:
Nehemiah receives complaints from the people.
Verse 2:
People complain that they are forced to harvest their own grain to feed their many children.

Verse 3:
Some people complain that, because of the shortage of food, people have mortgaged their properties so they can buy food.

Verse 4:
Some people complained that they have used their properties as collateral to be able to pay their taxes.

Verse 5:
Some people complain because their properties had been foreclosed because of debt, and have no means to free their children, whom they sold into bondage because of indebtedness.

Verses 6 – 7:
Nehemiah confronts the leaders about usury.

Verses 8 – 9:
Nehemiah confronts the people about usury.

Verses 10 – 13:
Nehemiah tells the leaders, priests, and people to end the practice of usury, and to restore to the indebted people their properties. The leaders, priests, and people do as they are ordered.

Verse 14:
Nehemiah is governor of Judah from the 20th year to the 32nd year of the reign of Artaxerxes (467 B.C. to 455 BC). He did not use for himself the taxes from the people that normally would provide the salary of a governor.

Verse 15:
Nehemiah noticed that former governors and their servants taxed the people, but he did not do so because out of respect for the Lord.

Verse 16:
Nehemiah purchased no land for himself. He and his servants made rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem their first priority.
Verse 17:
Nehemiah had to be a good host for 150 Jews and friendly non-Jews who were his regular guests.

Verse 18:
Nehemiah lists in detail what foods he and his guests ate, but he emphasizes that he did not tax the people for the food.

Verse 19:
Nehemiah prays for God’s favor.

Nehemiah contrasted with PDC’s

Reminiscent of the complaints brought to Nehemiah in verses 1 – 5, seeker-sensitive pastors and church leaders have used the money donated by church members, inheritances and estates donated by church members now deceased, tithes, and other resources to finance their “transition” program, including exorbitant building projects which indebt the churches for up to 30 years.

Unlike verses 6 – 13, where Nehemiah is responsive to the people’s complaints, those who complain too much about seeker-sensitive financial escapades often find themselves to be what Rick Warren calls “blessed subtractions”, that is, they are expelled from their churches.

Unlike verse 16, which shows Nehemiah’s restraint from using taxes to purchase his own land, consultants aligned with Saddleback Church and Church Transitions, Inc, have convinced pastors to purchase land and construct megachurch buildings, promising that “If you build it, they (the “seekers”) shall come.” The churches are therefore placed up to 30 years in debt, forcing them to water down their sermons to a “seeker-sensitive”, lowest common denominator level, with aggressive marketing strategies, to get as many people as possible into the church in the hopes of generating enough revenue to pay the debt.

Chapter 6
Summary of verses:

Verses 1 – 4:
By the time the wall around Jerusalem is built, and all of the breaches are sealed, except that the doors have yet to be installed into the gates, Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian seek four times to lure Nehemiah into a trap outside Jerusalem, in the plain of Ono, which in chapter 11, verse 35 is described as the valley of craftsmen. Their craftiness is thwarted four times because Nehemiah tells them four times that he is too busy to meet them.

Verses 5 – 9:
Sanballat’s servant gives Nehemiah a letter concerning a rumor among the surrounding peoples that Nehemiah plans to become a king and take Judah out of the Persian Empire, and that Gashmu (Geshem the Arabian) and others will report this to Artaxerxes I. Nehemiah recognizes this as a false letter and rebukes the letter’s authors.

**Verses 10 – 14:**
Nehemiah visits Shemaiah, who tries to convince him to meet with him inside the Temple because people are intent on harming Nehemiah, but Nehemiah is too faithful to God to disobey him in doing this. Nehemiah was only a layman and could not enter the Sanctuary. God told Nehemiah that Tobiah and Sanballat hired Shemaiah to lure him into sin by improperly using the Temple, in an attempt to ruin Nehemiah’s reputation. Nehemiah knows that Noadiah, a female “prophet” and other “prophets” are also in the plot against him.

**Verse 15:**
The wall around Jerusalem was completed in 52 days’ time, in the 25th day of the month of Elul (September-October)

**Verse 16:**
The Jews’ enemies are discouraged because they know God supported the construction of the wall.

**Verses 17 – 19:**
The nobles of Judah had intensive communication with Tobiah because they have a contract with him, because of Tobiah’s position by marriage. His son, Jehohanan, was married to the daughter of Meshullam, who helped to rebuild the wall (Chapter 3, Verses 4 and 30). The nobles promote Tobiah’s image and repeat Nehemiah’s words to him. Tobiah then sent intimidating messages to Nehemiah.

**Nehemiah contrasted with PDC’s**

Like verses 1 – 4, which tell of the efforts of Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem to lure Nehemiah outside Jerusalem, seeker-sensitive promoters will try to argue with opponents using secular terminology and a business management frame of mind, outside of Biblical terminology. They will argue that the demographic situation in the churches is dire, and they will argue from an economic standpoint, especially if the topic is the pastors’ salaries.

Reminiscent of verses 5 – 9, seeker-sensitive supporters within their individual churches will take counsel by the pro-Saddleback consultants to act against the authority of their denominations, weakening the denominational hierarchies and effectively taking the individual churches outside the authority of the denominations, making the individual churches in affiliation with their denominations in name only. This is sometimes even ignored or encouraged by denominational leaders, who themselves may have been sold on the “church growth” philosophy.
Like verses 10 – 14, which tells of the scheme of Shemiaiah the “prophet” to lure Nehemiah into the Temple, seeker-sensitive supporters will, using Biblical language and frame of reference, convince pastors and other godly people that the “transition” plans are good and are in God’s will. Some of the so-called “prophets” in the churches who seek to convince the pastors and godly people towards the seeker-sensitive way are under the influence of or in contract with the pro-Saddleback consultants.

Unlike verse 15, which tells of the wall of Jerusalem being completed in 52 days, seeker-sensitive church leaders seek to tear down the “wall” between the sacred realm and the secular realm in their churches, by renovating the churches to look like secular entertainment centers, in a short amount of time as they implement Step 5 (“Implementing the Vision”) of Church Transitions Inc.’s eight-step transition program.

Unlike verse 16, where the enemies of the Jews are dismayed because they know Israel’s God supports the building of the wall, the godly people of today’s churches are dismayed because they know that the seeker-sensitive removal of the “wall” between the sacred and secular realms in their churches are NOT supported by God.

Like verses 17 – 19, which show the communication between Tobiah and his allies among the nobles of Judah, many present-day church pastors, leaders, elders, and deacons, whose churches are undergoing “transition”, are in frequent contact with pro-Saddleback consultants, seeking advice on how to intimidate opponents and respond to new situations. Much of the consultants’ “advice” is given in the form of books (such as the *Purpose-Driven Church*), tapes, and seminars sponsored by Saddleback, Willow Creek Church, and other seeker-sensitive organizations.

Chapter 7

Summary of verses:

Verse 1:
Nehemiah sets up the doors of the city gate, and appoints porters, singers, and Levites (priests).

Verse 2:
Nehemiah gives his brother Hanani, and ruler of the palace Hananiah, charge over Jerusalem.

Verses 3 – 4:
Nehemiah tells the two men that the doors of the gates are to be shut until the afternoon, and then to appoint watchmen over Jerusalem, because the city is still under-populated and the houses not yet built.

Verse 5:
Nehemiah is told by God to make a census according to the people’s genealogy, which was found in a newly discovered document.
Verse 6:
Introduction of a list of Jews whose ancestors were exiled into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar, and who returned to Jerusalem and Judah.

Verse 7:
List of leaders, including Nehemiah, who led the Jews back to Jerusalem.

Verses 8 – 60:
List of people who are legitimately part of Israel by proof in genealogy. The most notable groups are in:
  Verse 39: The priests.
  Verse 43: The Levites.
  Verse 44: The singers.
  Verse 45: The porters.
  Verse 46: The Nethinim, who are the assistants of the Levites.
  Verse 47: The children of Solomon’s servants.
  Verse 60: Total of 392 Nethinim and children of Solomon’s servants.

Verses 61 – 62:
List of those of unproven genealogy. Tobiah and his family are among them.

Verses 63 – 64:
List of priests of unproven genealogy. These were removed from the priesthood.

Verse 65:
The Tirshatha, a group of Persian governors of Judah, told these defrocked priests of uncertain genealogy not to eat of the most holy things until the High Priest with the Urim and the Thummin (symbolic objects on the High priest’s breastplate) can discern them.

Verse 66:
There are 42,360 people in the congregation.

Verse 67:
There are 7,337 servants, and 245 singers.

Verse 68:
There are 736 horses and 245 mules.

Verse 69:
There are 435 camels and 6,720 donkeys.

Verses 70 – 72:
Donations are made to finance the work on the wall of Jerusalem:
  Verses 70: From the Tirshatha: 1,000 drams of gold, 50 basins, 530 priests’ garments.
Verse 71: From the chiefs of the fathers: 20,000 drams of gold, and 2,200 pounds of silver.
Verse 72: From others: 20,000 drams of gold, 2,000 pounds silver, and 67 priests’ garments.

Verse 73:
The priests and the people settle into their ancestors’ cities by the seventh month (October – November).

Nehemiah contrasted with PDC’s

Unlike verse 3, where Nehemiah tells Hanani and Hananiah to shut the doors of the gates at certain times of the day, seeker-sensitive promoters tell the churches that the new way is to be “seeker-sensitive” and not to have barriers to filter out questionable “seekers”.

Unlike Verse 4, where Nehemiah tells the Jews to keep watches over Jerusalem because it is under-populated, the seeker-sensitive promoters first tell the churches’ pastors and leaders that their churches are under-populated and can use a lot more people, then tell them to not be so stringent as to who gets to be in the churches.

Unlike Verses 61 – 65, where those of unproven genealogy are marginalized seeker-sensitive churches in Step 6 (“Dealing with Opposition”) of the 8-step “transition” use membership rolls to purge those who are “not with the program” and people not discerned for their salvation status are added in large numbers to the church attendance and membership rolls. Some of these people can even become church pastors or leaders, if the seeker-sensitive trend lasts long enough into the future.

Unlike Verses 70 – 72, where huge sums of precious metals and priests’ garments are donated by Jews to finance the building of the wall between Jerusalem and the outside world, exorbitant tithes and donations are used to tear down the distinctions between the sacred realm and the secular realm by making the churches over to be what commentator Paul Proctor calls “tax-free amusement parks”.

Chapter 8
Summary of verses:

Verse 1:
The people stood near the water gate, telling Ezra to bring the book of the Law of Moses. Depending on how the Exodus from Egypt is dated, the book is 800 to 1,000 years old.

Verses 2 – 3:
Ezra reads aloud the Law of Moses for several hours, on the first day of the seventh month (October – November).

Verse 4:
Ezra used a pulpit, with several notables around him to add to the gravity of the setting.
Verses 5 – 6:
The opening of ceremonies for Ezra’s sermon is very formal.

Verses 7 – 8:
Ezra and some aides read the Law of Moses aloud, and with the Levites’ help, the people comprehend the Law of Moses. They translated the Hebrew text that was written in the Book of the Law to Aramaic, a commonly spoken language in the Middle East at the time.

Verses 9 – 12:
The Jews realize the depth of their ignorance of the Law of Moses, realize how guilty of sin they really are before God, and begin to weep. Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Levites insist that this is really a joyous day because the Jews’ heritage was restored to them.

Verses 13 – 17:
Ezra, the leaders, and the priests rediscover the Feast of Sukkot (Feast of Booths) while reading the Law of Moses. Of course, the Jews quickly go set up their tents. This practice of dwelling in tents made of branches and leaves had not been done with such enthusiasm since the days of Joshua the son of Nun. They did dwell in tents after the dedication of Solomon’s Temple (2 Chronicles 7: 8 – 10), and after the return of the exiles (Ezra 3:4), but they did not do so with as much enthusiasm as this time.

Verse 18:
The Jews kept the feast of Sukkot for seven days. On the eighth day, they reassembled.

Nehemiah contrasted with PDC’s

Unlike verse 1, where the Jews had such reverence for old documents and traditions that they demanded that Ezra read to them the Law of Moses, churches in “transition” to being seeker-sensitive churches dispose of old hymnals, works by theologians and Christian writers as recently as a generation ago, piano and organ music, choirs, the exterior and interior crosses, texturally accurate translations of the Hebrew and Greek scriptural texts, and ultimately the denomination’s statement of faith and history becomes irrelevant. Anything considered “churchy” is removed. In place of “old things” are those things that are “new”, such as Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase of the Bible “The Message”, new multimedia and carnal music, skits, and feel-good sermons. They emphasize that this is “a new way of doing church”.

Unlike Verses 2 – 3, where the reading by Ezra can be compared to the Lincoln-Douglas debate of 1858, which was several hours in duration; contemporary sermons last 30 minutes. seeker-sensitive churches have motivational or ego-gratifying lectures that can hardly be called sermons.

Unlike Verse 4, where Ezra had a pulpit, many seeker-sensitive churches do away with the pulpit itself. Wood pulpits are especially targeted for removal.
Unlike Verses 5 – 6, in which the opening of the sermon is very formal, seeker-sensitive sermons are very informal so as not to be threatening to the “seekers”.

Unlike Verses 9 – 12, in which the Jews realize the magnitude of their ignorance and violation of the Law of Moses, followed by intense remorse and weeping, seeker-sensitive sermons are intended to gratify the egocentrism and narcissism of people, and are never negative. The seeker-sensitive sermons never deal with the issues of sin and the need for repentance and redemption. The concept of “dying to the self” is replaced by “fulfilling the self”. These are “feel-good” sermons with Scriptures taken out of context and mixed with pop psychology.

Chapter 9
Summary of verses:

Verse 1:
On the twenty-fourth day of the seventh month, the Jews form a huge assembly with fasting, sackcloth, and earth upon them in a massive show of remorse and repentance. (A non-Biblical side note: Americans should have done this on September 12, 2001).

Verse 2:
The Jews separate themselves from everyone else, confessed their own sins and their ancestors’ sins. The Jews had the Law of Moses and a history of contact with God, so they are the one people on Earth who “should have known better” not to sin at all! Naturally, they feel guiltier than any heathen could.

Verse 3:
The Jews studied the Law of Moses and confessed their sins to God.

Verse 4 – 5:
The start of the priests’ prayer.

Verse 6:
Prayer praising the power and sovereignty of God as expressed by His creation.

Verses 7 – 8:
Prayer remembering God’s covenant with Abraham.

Verses 9 – 21:
Prayer recounting the Exodus.

**Verses 9 – 12:**
Judgement on and escape from Egypt.
Verses 13 – 15:
God’s provision of laws for the Hebrews was mentioned first, then provision for their “felt needs” with manna and water was mentioned. God’s agenda is placed over the “felt needs” of the people.

Verses 16 – 20:
God provided the Hebrews with mercies and the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, and provided them with manna and water, even though they provoked Him by trying to get a leader to return them to captivity in Egypt and by worshipping the golden calf.

Verse 21:
For forty years, God suspended the Second Law of Thermodynamics so that the Hebrews did not wear out their clothing and sandals!

Verses 22 – 25:
God favored the Hebrews by having Joshua lead the conquest of Canaan.

Verses 26 – 27:
The Hebrews later became disobedient and killed prophets who told them they were on the wrong path.

Verses 28 – 31:
The Hebrews’ cycle of rebellion, defeat by enemies, repentance, and restoration was repeated again and again. (This reminds us of our walk with the Lord).

Verses 32 – 35:
The priests admit to God their sins and the people’s sinful and disobedient nature. They admit that God was always and is always right, and that they were in the wrong.

Verse 36:
Admission by the priests of their servant role and the people’s servant role to God.

Verse 37:
Admission that the use of God’s land benefited Israel’s enemies also, because of the Hebrews’ sins.

Verse 38:
The priests announce to God that they make a sure covenant and put it in writing. The covenant is to be a reaffirmation of their ancestors’ commitment to the Law of Moses, which is also called the Mosaic Covenant.

Nehemiah contrasted with PDC’s

Unlike Verses 13 – 15, when God’s agenda in providing the Hebrews with the Law of Moses and other edicts was mentioned first, then His provision for the Hebrews’ “felt needs” was mentioned second, seeker-sensitive churches first tend to the “felt needs” of
“seekers”, such as ego-gratifying sermons, entertainment, and social services, to bring them into church attendance, in the hopes of getting them converted and assimilating them into the congregation later.

Unlike Verses 26 – 27, where prophets who warned the errant Hebrews to repent were killed physically, seeker-sensitive church leaders put those of “prophet personality” who tell them they are wrong through the living death of ostracism, ridicule, slander, and final expulsion from the churches. These prophet-equivalents, the most spiritually mature and discerning individuals in the churches, become what Rick Warren calls “blessed subtractions.” (Note, the Bible is full of text showing how prophets have always been marginalized, or worse!!!)

Unlike Verses 32 – 35, where the priests admit to God the sinful nature of themselves and of the people, many American Christians tend to think of their leaders and of themselves as “God’s Redeemer Nation”, and therefore would admit to no wrongdoing in their individual or collective and ancestral sins, whether it was committed against certain peoples within the United States or elsewhere. After all, the reasoning goes, “the ends justify the means” in “redeeming” the world. This is the result of the widespread acceptance of the philosophy of Pragmatism as explained by William James, who said the truth is that which works. Rick Warren uses the phrase “whatever it takes!”

Unlike Verse 38, where the priests decide to reaffirm their commitment to the Law of Moses, given to the Hebrews by God, in signing of the covenant, Rick Warren encouraged thousands of churches to make their members sign vaguely worded non-disclosure agreements called “Membership Covenants”, which are entirely man-made documents that church members make with the church and its leaders, and which is NOT a reaffirmation to their commitment to Christ and His new covenant, which is written in people’s hearts. Some seeker-sensitive churches have gone so far as to post these “membership covenants” on their websites. The seeker-sensitive “Membership Covenants” are a violation of Matthew 5:33-37, in which Jesus said:

Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God’s throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. (Matthew 5:33 – 37, King James Version).

Chapter 10
Summary of verses:

Verses 1 – 27:
The political and spiritual leaders of the Jews sign the covenant restoring their observance of the Law of Moses. Notable names include Nehemiah (Verse 1), but
Jeremiah (Verse 2), Obadiah (Verse 5), and Daniel (Verse 6) are not the same people as those prophets who lived earlier than Nehemiah.

Verse 28 – 29:
The rest of the Jewish population also enters into an oath to resume observing the Law of Moses.

Verse 30:
Prohibition on marriage with outsiders.

Verse 31:
Prohibition on commerce during the Sabbath.

Verses 32 – 33:
Restoration of the tax to finance the priests’ offerings to God.

Verse 34:
Restoration of the wood offering to God.

Verses 35 – 37:
Restoration of the bringing of the firstfruits.
  
Verse 35: This includes the firstfruits of land and of trees.
Verse 37: this includes firstfruits of dough, offerings, fruit, wine, oil, and tithes of ground to the Levites.

Verse 38:
A descendant of Aaron shall be with the Levites when the tithes are received, and the Levites take the tithes of that tithe to the house of God, into the treasury of the Temple.

Verse 39:
Offerings of grain, new wine, and oil are taken to the chambers, which contain the vessels and implements of the Sanctuary, for the priests, porters, and singers. The Jews commit to not neglecting the “house of our God”.

Nehemiah contrasted with PDC’s

Again, unlike Verses 1 – 29, where the priests and the people decide to reaffirm their commitment to the Law of Moses, given to the Hebrews by God, in signing of the covenant, the PDCs’ “Membership Covenants”, are entirely man-made documents that church members make with the church and its leaders, and are NOT reaffirmations to their commitment to Christ and His new covenant, which is written in people’s hearts. The seeker-sensitive “Membership Covenants” are a violation of Matthew 5:33-37, as referenced in the previous page.

Unlike Verse 30, where the Jews are not to marry the heathen, Rick Warren follows the agenda of the late business guru Peter Drucker, his mentor, in promoting a “mixed
marriage” between Church, State, and the Private Sector (Big Business) to create a totalitarian society based on the “Total Quality Management” model, which many seeker-sensitive churches are adopting by tracking and measuring the “spiritual progress” of church members. I suppose that seeker-sensitive churches have no problems with marriages between believers and non-believers, so long as the church attendance numbers is increased.

Unlike Verse 31, where the prohibition of commerce on the Sabbath is restored, Rick Warren encourages the marketing of his books, tapes, and other materials in the churches on Sundays! The very use of the language in seeker-sensitive churches is in the style of marketing and business management. He has a parishioner called Rupert Murdoch, who is a prominent media businessman and the owner of the FOX News network, which had several promotional interviews with Rick Warren. Rick Warren, Saddleback Church, and the corporate world are closely intertwined.

Unlike Verse 39, where the Jews commit themselves not to neglect the house of God, the seeker-sensitive church leaders like to remodel their church Sanctuaries to look completely secular and devoid of reminders of God’s presence. The pews, hymnals, and even the crosses (in the Sanctuary and on the outside of the building) are often removed.

Chapter 11
Summary of verses:

Verse 1:
The rulers of the Jews dwelt in Jerusalem. Lots were cast among the people to ensure that one out of ten people live in Jerusalem.

Verse 2:
Those that volunteered out of a sense of duty to dwell in Jerusalem were considered to be blessed.

Verse 3:
Introduction of a list of people who resided in Jerusalem and who resided in Jewish settlements outside the city.

Verse 4:
Start of the list of those who lived in Jerusalem. Representatives of the tribes of Judah (Verses 4 – 6), and Benjamin (Verses 7 – 9) were there (the other ten tribes who had been removed by the Assyrians in 721 BC were until very recently considered “lost.” DNA evidence found remnants of the lost ten tribes in surprising places, disappointing the British Israelite crowd, but that is another topic). The list of names of those in Jerusalem is careful to establish genealogy.

Verse 5:
Continuation of list of those of the tribe of Judah in Jerusalem, with genealogies.
Verse 6:
468 men are listed of the Perez family who lives in Jerusalem.

Verses 7 – 9:
List of sons of the tribe of Benjamin in Jerusalem, with genealogies.

Verses 7 – 8: List of Benjaminite men.
Verse 9: Joel was their overseer, and Judah was his aide-de-camp.

Verses 10 – 14:
List of priests in Jerusalem:

Verse 11: Seraiah (with genealogy) was administrator of the Temple.
Verse 12: 822 men did the Temple work, specifically naming Adaiah and his genealogy.
Verse 13: 242 of Adaiah’s relatives, chief of the fathers, specifically naming Amashai, with genealogy.
Verse 14: Zabdiel, son of one of the great men, oversees a group of valorous relatives, numbering 128.

Verses 15 – 18:
List of Levites in Jerusalem:

Verse 15: Shemaiah, with genealogy.
Verse 16: Shabbethai and Jozabad were the chief Levites, who did the business made outside the Temple, but connected to it.
Verse 17: Mattaniah (with genealogy), was the principal person to begin prayers of thanksgiving. Bakbukiah was his second, and Abda, with his genealogy, was mentioned.

Verse 19:
172 porters kept the gates.

Verse 20:
It is noted that other Jews, priests, and Levites were in the towns of their ancestors.

Verse 21:
The Nethinim lived in Ophel, with Ziha and Gispa being their rulers.

Verse 22:
Uzzi (with genealogy) was overseer of the Levites in Jerusalem. The sons of Asaph who were singers were given charge over the Temple business.

Verse 23:
The king commanded daily provisions for the singers in Jerusalem, perhaps because he remembered that Darius I might have paid a royal stipend in exchange for prayers for the well being of him and his sons.
Verse 24:
Pethahiah (with genealogy) helped the king in all matters concerning the people.

Verses 25 – 30:
Distribution of the rest of the tribe of Judah, from Beersheba to the valley of Hinnom. No Judean coins of this period have been found outside of this area.

Verses 31 – 35:
Distribution of the rest of the tribe of Benjamin. Verse 35 mentions Lod and Ono, which are in the area of present-day Tel Aviv. Ono, in the Valley of the Craftsmen, was formerly the center of the Philistine iron trade.

Verse 36:
The Levites had lands in the areas of Judah and Benjamin, which was the area from Beersheba in the Negev area, to Jerusalem and the surrounding areas, to the area of present-day Tel Aviv.

Nehemiah contrasted with PDC’s

Unlike Verses 1 – 2, where the Jews drew lots to find out who gets to live in Jerusalem, seeker-sensitive churches select their elite via an elaborate set of courses (101, 201, 301, and 401), “leadership” classes, and evaluation of “spiritual gifts” by the S.H.A.P.E. (Spiritual gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality, and Experience) program and other forms of humanist, psychoanalytical means to determine people’s places in their “new way of doing church”. God is completely left out of the selection process. The Levitical priesthood was hereditary, and is now being revived in Israel by careful use of genealogy, and perhaps DNA sampling will soon follow. The seeker-sensitive leadership selection process is, so far, not hereditary, but those churches who may do so in the future will probably ignore the succession pattern set by Melchezidik.

Chapter 12
Summary of verses:

Verses 1 – 7:
List of priests and Levites from the first wave of returnees that went to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel and Jeshua.

   Verse 1: Jeremiah and Ezra (not the contemporary Ezra, but the Ezra who led a group of Jewish returnees in 457 BC) are on the list.

Verses 8 – 9:
List of Levites from the first wave of returnees that went to Jerusalem.

   Verse 8: Jeshua is on list; Mattaniah supervised the thanksgiving.
   Verse 9: The two sections of the choir stood opposite each other.
Verses 10 – 11:
Descendants of Jeshua, from father to son: Joiakim, Eliashib (probably a different person from the one who helped build the wall in Chapter 3, Verses 1, 20-21, Chapter 13, Verse 28), Joiada, Jonathan, Jaddua.

Verses 12 – 21:
Names of sons of the priests in the following generation.
   Verse 12: Joiakim, son of Jeshua; Hananiah, son of Jeremiah. Meshullam, son of Ezra
   Verse 13: Meshullam, son of Ezra
   Verses 14 – 21: Names of other priests of the generation of Joiakim.

Verse 22:
Levites and priests recorded from Eliashib to Jaddua, at the time of Darius (either Darius II Nothus, 423 – 404 BC; or Darius III Codomannus, 336 – 331 BC) king of Persia.

Verse 23:
Levite genealogy recorded in the book of Chronicles (the temple chronicle), to the days of Johanan, son of Eliashib.

Verse 24:
List of Levites involved in thanksgiving.

Verse 25:
List of Levites who were porters keeping the ward at the threshold of the gates.

Verse 26:
The time of the above list is set in the days of Joiakim and back to the days of Nehemiah and Ezra.

Verse 27:
Levites gather in Jerusalem.

Verses 28 – 29:
The sons of the singers gathered from their towns and villages that surrounded Jerusalem.

Verse 30:
Self-purification of the priests and the Levites, then the people, gates, and wall were purified by the priests and Levites.

Verses 31 – 37: First group of the princes of Judah to go along one side of the wall to give thanks to the Lord.
   Verses 31 – 34: The first group of Judah’s princes and thanksgivers go along the right side of the wall to the dung gate, includes Ezra and Jeremiah. They go from the west side near the Valley Gate and along the south side, and north again along the east side.
Verses 35 – 37: The priests’ sons go with the first group, to the water gate.

Verses 38 – 43:
Second group of people dedicated the other parts of the wall. They go from the west side near the Valley Gate and along the north side, and south again along the east side, to meet with Ezra’s group at the water gate.
   Verse 38: Nehemiah goes with them.
   Verses 41 – 42: List of priests in the second group.
   Verse 43: Sacrifices made, the sound of joy can be heard outside of the city.

Verses 44 – 46:
Provisions for the Temple staff.
   Verse 44: Treasures, offerings, firstfruits, tithes gathered for priests and Levites.
   Verse 45: Singers and porters kept the ward of God and the ward of purification.
   Verse 46: In the days of King David and Asaph, there used to be singers. The use of singers was restored, and the old songs of praise and thanksgiving from the days of King David and Asaph were restored.

Verse 47:
The provisions for the porters and singers were given in the days of Zerubbabel and Nehemiah. The holy things were sacrificed to the Levites, and the Levites sanctified them to the sons of Aaron.

Nehemiah contrasted with PDC’s

Unlike Verses 30 – 43, where the wall around Jerusalem was rededicated with great joy, seeker-sensitive churches prefer to leave their old, small church buildings in favor of buying land to construct huge megachurch buildings, which do not architecturally resemble traditional churches. In the midst of “transition”, churches shun that which is old.

Unlike Verse 46, where the use of singers was restored, and the songs of thanksgiving and praise were restored although they were over 500 years old, seeker-sensitive church leaders end the use of church choirs and old hymnals. Again, in the midst of “transition”, churches shun that which is old.

Chapter 13
Summary of verses:

Verses 1 – 3: Nehemiah versus the Ammonites and Moabites.
   Verses 1 – 2: The Jews learn in the Book of Moses that there should forever be no Ammonites and Moabites in the congregation, because they refused to help Israel, but instead sent Balaam against them.
   Verse 3: The Jews separated these people away from them.
Verses 4 – 9: Nehemiah versus Eliashib and Tobiah.
   Verses 4 – 5: Eliashib the priest, supervising the chamber of the temple, was friends with Tobiah and let him live in the chamber where the tithes and offerings were previously stored, but which were removed to make way for Tobiah.
   Verses 6 – 7: Nehemiah was back with Artaxerxes I at this time, the 32nd year of his reign., and he returned and found out about Eliashib and Tobiah.
   Verses 8 – 9: Nehemiah evicts Tobiah’s items, cleanses the chamber, and restores it for the return of the tithes and offerings.

Verses 10 – 14: Nehemiah versus the Tithe-Skippers.
   Verse 10: Nehemiah finds that the Levites and singers were not given provisions, so they had to grow their own food.
   Verses 11 – 13: Nehemiah confronts the rulers, then has the provisions restored to the Levites and singers after he appoints trusted people to oversee the treasuries.
   Verse 14: Nehemiah’s prayer to God to remember him.

Verses 15 – 22: Nehemiah versus the Sabbath Traders.
   Verses 15 – 16: Nehemiah finds commerce in Jerusalem and Judah on the Sabbath.
   Verses 17 – 18: Nehemiah confronts the rulers about trade during the Sabbath.
   Verse 19: Nehemiah shuts the city gates at dusk before the Sabbath.
   Verses 20 – 21: The merchants lodge outside of Jerusalem during the Sabbath, and Nehemiah scares them away.
   Verse 22: Nehemiah tells the Levites to keep the gates. Nehemiah’s prayer to God to remember him.

Verses 23 – 31: Nehemiah versus the Heathen-Lovers.
   Verses 23 – 24: Nehemiah finds Jews married to Ashdodites, Ammonites, Moabites, with their children losing the use of the Hebrew language.
   Verses 25 – 27: Nehemiah curses, beats, and kills these Jews and lectures them on how such marriages caused Solomon’s downfall.
   Verse 28: A son of Joiada, who is grandson of Eliashib, was married to Sanballat’s daughter! This went against the regulation in Leviticus 21:14, where the high priest was not to marry a foreigner. Nehemiah chased him away.
   Verse 29: Nehemiah’s prayer to God to remember those who defiled the priesthood.
   Verses 30 – 31: Nehemiah removes all strangers from the priesthood, appointed the wards of the priests and Levites for duties and offerings and firstfruits. Nehemiah’s prayer to God to remember him.

Nehemiah contrasted with PDC’s

Unlike Verse 3, where the Jews separate from themselves their hereditary enemies, seeker-sensitive churches deliberately inflate church attendance numbers by drawing in
unbelievers ("unchurched" or "seekers’ as they are called) whose own agendas may not be in the best interest of the churches.

Unlike Verse 4 – 5, where Tobiah, who initially opposed the building of the wall around Jerusalem, was given use of the chamber by Eliashib, seeker-sensitive church leaders revoke the memberships of those who opposed the tearing down of the wall between the sacred realm inside the churches and the secular realm outside.

Unlike Verse 10, where provisions were withheld from the Levites and the singers, seeker-sensitive churches may impose a tithe on covenanted members to finance the new debts that their megachurch building projects generated.

Unlike Verses 17 – 22, where Nehemiah bans commerce during the Sabbath, seeker-sensitive churches arrange for the sale of their books, tapes, and other products to church members to be done on Sundays, and promote movies, fundraisers, and other secular activities during “contemporary” church services.

Like Verses 23 – 24, where the children of Jewish-pagan marriages drop the use of the Hebrew language, seeker-sensitive churches drop the use of “churchy” vocabulary after their marriages to business and government, and replace it with the use of humanist, corporate and business management language. The late Peter Drucker promoted the merging of Church, State, and Business into the “ultimate mixed marriage”, which will in time culminate in the end-time antichrist Babylon the Great system in the Book of Revelation. If one visits the Internet sites of seeker-sensitive churches, it can easily be said that the language of these churches has been altered. Below is a list of key words to look for in determining if a church is seeker-sensitive or is undergoing a seeker-sensitive “transition”. Although encountering these words once or twice on a church website does not mean that it is seeker-sensitive, the casual use of many such words in the website indicates that the church may be seeker-sensitive.

Purpose, vision, changes, adjustments, target audience, relevant, dynamic, contemporary, mission, mission statement, restructuring, seekers, churched, unchurched, dialogue, relational, practical, transition, core values, connection, connect, felt needs.

Again, although encountering these words once or twice on a church website does not mean that it is seeker-sensitive, the casual use of many such words in the website indicates that the church may be seeker-sensitive.

Like Verse 28, where Sanballat attempts to gain influence over Eliashib via his daughter’s marriage to Eliashib’s grandson, who in turn was expelled by Nehemiah, it is possible that family members (by blood or marriage) of dissenters are also at high risk for being made “blessed subtractions” (expulsion) from seeker-sensitive churches, because of “guilt by association.”
Conclusion:

AND Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. (Leviticus 10: 1 – 2, King James Version).

Like these two sons of Aaron who used unauthorized hot coals in their ceremonial vessels believing that it was the pragmatic way to “get the job done”, many in the new generation of church leaders are using the same approach in “getting their ministry done” by using unauthorized and unscriptural methods and philosophies learned from humanist sources. The PDC leaders are offering another “strange fire” before the Lord by secularizing their humanist methods for church management and growth, the manner of worship by letting the “seekers” determine the style and form of worship, and the language by removing religious language in favor of business management language. These leaders’ efforts will prove to be disastrous because the Lord does not like being offered another “strange fire”.

And when they came to Nachon’s threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God. (2 Samuel 6: 6 – 7, King James Version).

The PDC leaders can be compared to Uzzah, who was well intentioned in reaching out to hold the Ark of the Covenant to prevent it from hitting the ground. Unfortunately for him, he still handled the Ark improperly and was killed by the Lord for it. The PDC leaders see the decline in church attendance by succeeding generations of Americans, and seek to use any pragmatic method to boost church attendance. These leaders, however, are touching the modern-day Ark, the Church, in an improper manner, and God holds these leaders accountable for their actions.

Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein. Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken. (Jeremiah 6: 16- 17, King James Version).

The PDC leaders seek to do away with old and true methods of church growth and Christian individual growth, such as evangelism, conviction of unbelievers of sin and their need of a Savior, discipleship of new believers, expositional Scripture preaching and study, and to do away with traditional trappings and language that are seen by them as too “churchy”. These leaders make their churches over to be little more than tax-free entertainment complexes that look like business parks and use the language of humanism and business management. These leaders do not listen to the modern-day “watchmen” who warn their churches that they are being misled. The “watchmen” quickly find themselves removed from church membership. The watchmen took their orders from
Ezekiel 33: 1 – 16, and did obey God, so it is not their fault if they are cast out of their churches and the seeker-sensitive leaders “transition” the churches into something new and strange.

Shortly before Jesus was betrayed by Judas, he prayed to God the Father a prayer for His disciples that included these words:

“I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.” (John 17:9, King James Version).

Christians are to give their priority on fulfilling the Great Commission, the fruits being regenerate people whose testimony has, is, and will “change the world.” The PDC leaders want to “put the cart before the horse” by “changing the world” by meeting “felt needs” at the same time as spreading their particular way of presenting the Gospel. This is using the concept of humanist New Ager Abraham Maslow’s “hierarchy of needs”8, in which the needs for food, clothing, shelter, etc., have to be met before spiritual issues are entertained, with the ultimate goal being “Self-Actualization”, and not self-denial as the Lord taught us. Christians are to have the “blessed hope” of being taken out of the world, either by rapture (translation) or through death.

The disciple and apostle James wrote in his epistle warning those professing Christians who would cozy up to the world, even with the noblest of intentions, while at the same time bringing the churches down to the level of the secular culture around them:

Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. (James 4:4, King James Version).

The apostle John wrote similar words in his first epistle:

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (1 John 2:15, King James Version).

The apostle John warns about those with a worldly agenda and spirit in this way:

They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. (1 John 4:5, King James Version).

Jesus spoke a parable about an evil servant whose heart was not set on his Lord’s return from a long journey. This servant decided to rule his lord’s estate his own way, perhaps professing noble intentions at first, but became so drunk with power that he abused his position and lorded it off over the other servants, only to face the wrath of the lord who was not expected by the evil servant to come back so soon:

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8 Maslow published a paper titled “A Theory of Human Motivation” in 1943, which said that the hierarchy of needs, from the bottom up, are physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization.
But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; (Matthew 24:48, King James Version).

Present-day application: Dominionists, Reconstructionists, Kingdom Now, and others who believe that Christ is not coming for many thousands of years. The PDC people are vulnerable to going the same way because they really do not want Christ coming back to interrupt their efforts to “change the world.”

And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; (Matthew 24:49, King James Version).

Present-day application: Like many other professing Christian movements that took ecclesiastical and/or political control over other Christians in previous centuries, (among the most famous being the Spanish Inquisition, Calvin’s Geneva, Oliver Cromwell’s England, and even 20th-Century examples as Dutch Reformed-Church influenced apartheid South Africa) Dominionists, Reconstructionists, Kingdom Now, and the PDC people are susceptible to persecute those Christians who do not agree with them, while losing their distinction with the secular world in their effort to be “relevant”.

The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, (Matthew 24:50, King James Version).

Present-day application: These people are so pre-occupied with “changing the world” to fit their image that they ignore or reject the significance of the prophetic warning signs of Christ’s return even as they are being fulfilled en masse.

And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 24:51, King James Version).

Present-day application: These people described above will have their hypocrisy exposed and be sent to eternal perdition!

The seeker-sensitive church growth movement claims to be based on and to have parallels to the political reforms (“cleaning house” in the local government) and spiritual restorations (such as the restoration of the Law and the Feast of Booths) brought about by Nehemiah’s ceaseless ministry to the Jewish people. However, as demonstrated by geometry and expert pilots in air shows, parallel lines can be tracks made by those going in opposite directions. Nehemiah’s program is reversed by the seeker-sensitive leaders because they tear down the wall between the sacred realm and the secular realm by secularizing the churches, because they dispose of old ways, traditions, (and church members) in favor of the new and unproven, because they bring about a “mixed marriage” of church, government, and business, and because they place emphasis on quantity over quality, and growth of the church collective over spiritual growth of the individual believers within. Despite the PDC leaders’ claims to the contrary, if individuals who are called “seekers” in these churches turn to Christ, it is a work of the
Holy Spirit, and not of the methods and programs used by the seeker-sensitive church leaders and pastors.

_The seeker-sensitive, purpose-driven, church growth movement is a movement made and supported by men, and not made and supported by the Lord. Caveat emptor! (Let the buyer beware!)_

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⁹ Paul Proctor of [www.newswithviews.com](http://www.newswithviews.com) is a fiery Baptist who left his church because it became taken over by the seeker-sensitive movement. He has many articles in his column about this movement.
Church Transitions, Inc.: [www.churchtransitions.com/index.htm](http://www.churchtransitions.com/index.htm) (the main page of Church Transitions, Inc., headed by Dan Southerland and an affiliate organization of Pastor Rick Warren’s Saddleback Community Church in Lake Forest, California), and [www.churchtransitions.com/about_cti.htm](http://www.churchtransitions.com/about_cti.htm) (Church Transitions’ leaders and their Eight Steps to change churches into Saddleback satellites).

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“Is Your Church Going Purpose Driven?”: on its webpage: [www.swrc.com](http://www.swrc.com) (a Southwest Radio Ministries pdf tract).


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