

Nehemiah Chapter 13

- Nehemiah left Babylon and led the people in Jerusalem for 12 years (**5:14**), then as he had promised Artaxerxes, he returned to Babylon to report back and was probably gone for about a year. When he came back he found that the priesthood and leaders had compromised in a number of things. Seemingly they were only passionate and devoted as long as Nehemiah was in their presence.

Judges 2:10-12 “¹⁰And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which He had done for Israel. ¹¹And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim: ¹²And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers,...

V: 1-2 “*On that day...*” Possibly referring to Nehemiah 8 when they read from the law distinctly and gave the understanding, or it could be upon Nehemiah’s return.

Nehemiah 10:28-29 “²⁸And the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the porters, the singers, the Nethinims, and all they that had separated themselves from the people of the lands unto the law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, every one having knowledge, and having understanding; ²⁹They clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God’s law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord, and His judgments and His statutes.”

By going back to their old ways they proved God’s word to be true:

Isaiah 53:6 “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way...”

- They had promised to separate from the people of the land, but they had not kept that promise. As soon as soon as Nehemiah the shepherd left, the other leaders led the sheep in the wrong direction.
- At that time they realized that they had compromised regarding the Ammonites & Moabites in their midst. **Deuteronomy 23:3-4** (Not part of the congregation for ever.)
- They, like us had come to a point of conflict between the Word of God and the practicality of our lives. As we come to these realizations, amongst other things it is a test of our faith, a test of the authority of the Word of God in our lives. Who’s will shall be done, His or ours?
- **Is God’s Word authoritative in our lives? Moral relativism / situational ethics / situational Christianity?**

Colossians 3:16 “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

Matthew 22:37 “Jesus said unto him, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”

- The litmus of our love for Jesus has always been in relation to our obedience to His word; the authority of scripture in our lives.

John 14:15 “If ye love Me, keep My commandments.”

Job declared:

Job 23:12 “Neither have I gone back from the commandment of His lips; I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.”

- Do you think God’s Word was authoritative in Job’s life?

Jesus said:

John 4:34 “... My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work.”

V: 3 Having an understanding of God’s Word they took the necessary actions - they didn’t spiritualize their way around it or water it down, they simply did in a very literal way what God’s Word said. (3rd time.)

1 John 3:18 “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.”

- This had to have been difficult and inconvenient in different ways.
- The bottom line is that we have to love God more, we have to fear Him more, we have to be more committed to Him than any other person or thing.

Matthew 10:37-38 “³⁷He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁸And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me is not worthy of Me.”

- The real test of these types of commitments is over time, the long run - it’s measured in years.

V: 4-9 We’re introduced to Tobiah at the beginning of this book along with Sanballat and the other enemies of Israel as they oppose the rebuilding of the walls, we also learn that he is an Ammonite, one of the perennial enemies of God’s people.

- While Nehemiah is gone, Eliashib the treasonable high priest invites the enemy into the Temple / Church.
- We've seen the tactics of the enemy in this book, and if the enemy can't defeat God's children one way, then he'll try it another way, always trying to get in and to rob, kill, and destroy.

Ephesians 4:27 "Neither give place to the Devil."

- Eliashib, the high priest had allied himself with Tobiah in resisting Nehemiah & Ezra, actually he was resisting God, and one of the proofs of his treasonable behavior is the fact that he brought an enemy of God into the Temple courts and established him there - all of which was contrary to the Law.

James 4:4 "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."

- The nation and people know God has called them to be separate from the Ammonites and Moabites yet it's the high priest and some of the leaders, the princes that are stiff necked, stubborn, and disobedient. They need to be spanked!
- We're called to the same thing; we're in the world but not of the world, not separated physically but certainly in our hearts.

2 Corinthians 6:14-18 "¹⁴Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? ¹⁵And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? ¹⁶And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the Temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ¹⁷Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, ¹⁸And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

- There are those times when Nehemiah prays and seeks the Lord. This is an example of Nehemiah not praying, but simply doing what God's Word says, casting off the works of darkness.
- The things that defiled were removed, and the things that glorified God were brought in - that's how our lives should be ordered. Removing those things that displease God, and adopting those things that please Him.

Ephesians 4:21-24 “²¹If so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: ²²That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; ²³And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; ²⁴And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

- Nehemiah set things strait.

V: 10-13 Back in **Nehemiah Ch. 10:39** the children of Israel had promised to bring forth the tithes and to support the house of God, the Levites, and the priesthood - which they stopped doing as soon as Nehemiah was gone.

- Because the tithes and offerings had been neglected the Levites “fled” to their fields - to feed their families.
- This is connected to the previous subject of the high priest Eliashib allowing Tobiah the Ammonite to have the chamber in the Temple court where they had previously stored the meat offerings, the frankincense, the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, etc. which was to be given to the Levites.
- Because they had failed in this, the house of God had been forsaken.

Malachi 3:8 “Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me. But ye say, wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings.”

Proverbs 3:9 “⁹Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase.”

- When God’s people start to decline spiritually, one of the first places it shows up is in their giving.
- The biggest issue in this isn’t money, the biggest issue is that of the heart.

Jesus said:

Matthew 6:21 “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

- Nehemiah contended with them, he got in their face.

V: 14 Nehemiah didn’t pray at the first part, but he did at the end part, because he was truly seeking to honor the Lord, His Temple, and His name.

1 Corinthians 15:58 “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

V: 15-21 Nehemiah again addresses the issue of the Sabbath being profaned, another promise from **Nehemiah 10:31**.

- There had arisen a general disregard for the Sabbath day. Treading the wine presses, harvesting, engaging in commerce.
- Once again Nehemiah directly confronted those who were involved, he was willing to confront sin.

V: 22 Nehemiah had the Levites cleanse themselves then man the gates to ensure that they stayed closed on the Sabbath day - he created a physical barrier to sin - but like in the days of prohibition somebody was probably working on a ladder.

- Closing the gates is one way, but real change would only happen with a change in heart and a real commitment from the leadership and the people to honor God.
- Again we see Nehemiah's motivation, he is seeking to please the Lord.
- His request is based on God's goodness and mercy, not on anything that Nehemiah has done. "Spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy."

Ephesians 2:8-9 ⁸For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹Not of works, lest any man should boast."

- If I'm a child of God, my life is going to bring forth fruit. We can't look to the fruit as the basis of our salvation, but we can look to the works, the fruit as the genuineness of our faith. If a person doesn't have any works, then it would follow that they really don't have a genuine faith. A genuine faith in God will produce good fruit in your life and good works for the kingdom.

V: 23-28 This final section dealing again with another broken promise.

Nehemiah 10:30 "And that we would not give our daughters unto the people of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons."

- The children from these marriages were speaking in the tongues of their mothers, (1 year?) the Philistines, the Moabites, and Ammonites. How were they going to be able to read the Law, or obey it if they weren't conversant in Hebrew?
- God's people and the people of the world can be identified by their speech:

1 John 4:5-6 ⁵They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. ⁶We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error."

- They had taken wives of the various pagan cultures around them - and the priests and leaders were the worst offenders!

Deuteronomy 7:3-4 “³Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. ⁴For they will turn away thy son from following Me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you...”

- Ezra was grieved by these things but Nehemiah dealt with it violently and directly.

Jesus said:

Matthew 5:29-30 “²⁹And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. ³⁰And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.”

- How do we react to sin when we're aware of it?

Proverbs 8:13 “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil...”

- There are times when it's ok to be intolerant, particularly when it come to sin!
- Nehemiah chased the son of Eliashib away - wouldn't you liked to have seen that? I would. Nehemiah was a man of prayer, but he was also a no nonsense kind of guy.
- Eliashib had approved of this marriage, it couldn't have happened without his approval. This son or grandson was born into the priestly line of those that would minister in the Temple, a place of real privilege. Yet he threw it all away, because in so doing he disqualified himself from ministry.

Leviticus 21:14 Dictates very clearly who a priest can marry: “A widow, or a divorced woman, or profane, or an harlot, these shall he not take: but he shall take a virgin of his own people to wife.”

V: 26 Solomon is used here as a negative example, even the wisest man in the world, a man so beloved of God was not exempt from the Word of God. We / he was warned in **Deuteronomy 7** what would happen if they married foreign / non-believing women, and sadly Solomon was living proof to the truth of God's word.

V: 29-31 Nehemiah went through the priesthood and purified them, he made sure.

- Now he says not only remember me, but “remember them too Lord.”
- In other words, give them what they deserve. And God will!

Revelation 22:12 “And, behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”

- Nehemiah closes with a prayer: *“³¹Remember me, O my God, for good.”*

Romans 7:18 “For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.”

- Paraphrasing V: 19-23 The things I should do I don't, and the things I shouldn't do, I do.

Romans 7:24 “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

- The answer to that question is Jesus, and an abiding relationship with Him!