



March 8 – 14, 2021

Life Group Study – The Book of Nehemiah

Title: Chapter 13

Scriptures: Nehemiah 13:1-31

Introduction – Time passes between chapters 12 and 13 of Nehemiah. In the 32nd year of Artaxerxes reign, Nehemiah returned to serve the king after serving as governor over Israel for 12 years. During his absence moral decay and abuses take root in the nation. The amount of time that Nehemiah was away is not clearly stated. A general expression, ‘at the end of days’ is used to state how long he was gone and this expression can indicate a year or a number of years. When Nehemiah returned, there were several things he had to set right again.

Read Nehemiah 13:1-5 and supporting scriptures

1. In Nehemiah’s Absence – Nehemiah 13:1-5; Deuteronomy 23:3-6
 - a. On an occasion when the law of God was read publicly, it was found that Ammonites and Moabites were prohibited from coming into the assembly of the Lord, which meant they were not to settle among or intermarry with God’s people.
 - i. ³No Ammonite or Moabite or any of their descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD, not even in the tenth generation. ⁴For they did not come to meet you with bread and water on your way when you came out of Egypt, and they hired Balaam son of Beor from Pethor in Aram Naharaim to pronounce a curse on you. ⁵However, the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam but turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD your God loves you. ⁶Do not seek a treaty of friendship with them as long as you live.
 - b. Having heard this, they immediately excluded from the assembly all people of foreign descent. Although Israel demonstrated a desire to obey God’s word at times, at other times they allowed error and disobedience to creep back into their lives.
 - c. Eliashib, the high priest, was an example of the disobedience that was happening, and he abused his power as high priest as well.
 - i. Eliashib was “closely associated” with Tobiah both through marriage and friendship.
 - ii. Eliashib repurposed rooms in the temple court used to store the tithes and offerings meant for the Levites and other temple workers into a grand chamber where Tobiah could lodge when he came to Jerusalem to conduct business.



Read Nehemiah 13:6-31 and supporting scriptures

2. Nehemiah's Final Reforms – Nehemiah 13:6-31; Ezra 9:10-12

- a. Restored Order and Support to the house of God - Nehemiah threw Tobiah's belongings out of the rooms of the temple court, had the rooms purified and the equipment and offerings restored. He then rebuked the officials for allowing the house of God to be neglected, and all of Judah again brought the tithes for the Levites and temple servants to the storerooms.
- b. Revived Sanctification of the Sabbath – The people of Judah, as well as outsiders who lived among them, were working, buying, and selling on the Sabbath. He rebuked the officials reminding them that Sabbath breaking was one of the sins for which God had brought judgement on their ancestors. He then ordered the gates closed before, and to remain closed until after, the Sabbath and threatened the merchants who hung about outside the gates with violence if they continued.
- c. Required a Renewed Oath not to Intermarry – Nehemiah found that many of the Jews had married wives from Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab.
 - i. Ezra 9:10-12: ¹⁰ “But now, our God, what can we say after this? For we have forsaken the commands ¹¹ you gave through your servants the prophets when you said: ‘The land you are entering to possess is a land polluted by the corruption of its peoples. By their detestable practices they have filled it with their impurity from one end to the other. ¹² Therefore, do not give your daughters in marriage to their sons or take their daughters for your sons. Do not seek a treaty of friendship with them at any time, that you may be strong and eat the good things of the land and leave it to your children as an everlasting inheritance.’
 - ii. The marriages produced offspring who couldn't speak Hebrew and, thus, would not be able to learn the law effectively, participate in worship or pass on Jewish traditions to the next generation.
 - iii. Of all the offenses, this one seemed to upset Nehemiah the most, as he not only rebuked the people, but called curses down on them, and even beat some of the men and pulled out their hair.
 - iv. Nehemiah purified the priests and Levites of everything foreign and assigned them duties.
- d. Remember Them, Remember Me – Nehemiah prays, putting it all in God's hands. He prays, Remember them, O my God! Perhaps with the thought, ‘Lord, convince and convert them; put them in mind of what they should be and do...’ Or, ‘Remember them to reckon with them for their sin; remember it against them.’ If we take it so, this prayer is a prophecy that God would remember it against them. Those that defile the priesthood despise God, and shall be lightly esteemed. He prays, Remember me, O my God! The best



services done to the public have sometimes been forgotten by those for whom they were done (Eccl. 9:15); therefore, Nehemiah refers it to God to recompense him,... and [trusts God that] he shall be well paid. This may well be the summary of [all] our petitions; we need no more to make us happy than this: Remember me, O my God! for good. (Matthew Henry Commentary (Complete); Nehemiah 13)