

# Nehemiah 13

Fear God

- **After 100 years Israel is back!** Jerusalem and the Temple are back...
- City and Wall of Jerusalem Rededicated

## Time of Purification/Rejoicing

### I. Recalibration and Reforms

**1** On that day they read from the **Book of Moses** in the hearing of the people, and in it was found written that no **Ammonite or Moabite** should ever come into the assembly of God, **<sup>2</sup> because they had not met** the children of Israel with bread and water, **but hired Balaam** against them to curse them. However, our God **turned the curse into a blessing.**

- **Law:** Remove the Ammonite/Moabite from Assembly of God
- **Ammon and Moab:**
  1. Children from incestuous relation Lot/daughters
  2. Later perpetual enemies of Israel beginning when Israel left Egypt

Ammon/Moab did not bless Israel but *tried to* curse them on way to Promised Land  
**He who blesses Israel will be blessed/He who curses Israel will be cursed** [Gen. 12:3]

- **Today US on right side of equation:**

**December 21, 2017 Fox News Headline:** Trump, Haley warnings ignored as UN condemns moving American Embassy to Jerusalem. The 128 member states of the General Assembly voted to condemn Trump's move, with just seven other states joining the U.S. and Israel in voting against the resolution. There were 35 abstentions.

- Moab hired Balaam to curse Israel **but he was unable...thus**
- **Ammon/Moab** will not be part of the assembly of God's people

An Israelite became a part of God's covenant by birth; but an Ammonite or Moabite could not. They had to become a part of the covenant by choice - by joining with God's covenant people and leaving their own people. [Guzik]

- David's great grandmother Ruth was Moabite. Ruth chose to join God's people

**<sup>3</sup> So it was, when they had heard the Law, that they separated all the mixed multitude from Israel.**

- **Removed all Ammonites/Moabites;** i.e. those who would curse God's people
- Logistically Awkward/Inconvenient...yet essential for future **health of the body**

**4** Now before this Eliashib the priest, having authority over the storerooms of the house of our God, was **allied with Tobiah.**

- **High Priest:** Related to Tobiah through the marriage
- Tobiah [an Ammonite] enemy of God and His people

## High Priest having a cuddle with enemy of God

**Deuteronomy 22:10** "You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together.

- **Ox is clean/Donkey is unclean.** Unequally yoked
- Touching unclean...makes clean unclean

## High Priest looking good but stinking up the place...unclean

**Matthew 23:27** "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. 28 Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. [Doesn't matter what others think about you but what you know and what God knows]

- **Evil company corrupts good habits...**

5 And [Eliashib the priest] had prepared for [Tobiah] a large room, where **previously** they had stored the grain offerings, the frankincense, the articles, the tithes of grain, the new wine and oil, which were commanded to be given to the Levites and singers and gatekeepers, and the offerings for the priests.

- **Eliashib the Priest** [High v28]
  1. Prepares a LARGE room
  2. Took out the things of God
  3. Let Tobiah live there?

6 But during all this I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I had returned to the king.

- **Nehemiah gone for 2-12 years:** When the cat's away the mice will play?

**6b...**Then after certain days I **obtained leave from the king**, 7 and I came to Jerusalem and discovered the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, in preparing a room for him in the courts of the house of God.

- **Evil is attributed to Eliashib:** Should have known better
  1. Related to Tobiah through disobedience
  2. Intimidated because of Tobiah and his status
  3. Swayed by Tobiah to blatantly disobey his creator

**Conclusion: Tobiah was more of an influence in his life...than God. Selah**

- **No fear of God...**

**Proverbs 8:13** [Wisdom speaking] The **fear of the Lord is to hate evil**; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate.

**No one**, absolutely **no one** should be more of an influence in our lives than **Jesus Christ**

Not husband, wife, kids, mother, father, boss, commander...no one

- Fear of man/lack of discipline led to an enemy lodged/comforted in house of God
- **Warning from Paul:** Enemies will rise both from within and without [Acts 20:30]

8 And it grieved me bitterly; therefore I threw all the household goods of Tobiah out of the room. 9 Then I commanded them to cleanse the rooms; and I brought back into them the articles of the house of God, with the grain offering and the frankincense.

- **Grieved Bitterly:** Made me burn [firebrand] w/bitterness
  1. **I through his stuff in the street**
  2. I commanded those who permitted it to cleanse the room
  3. I put the room back in order
    - Offerings for workers
    - Incense for Sacrifice

**Nehemiah had the chambers fumigated.** JV McGee

Nehemiah is much like Jesus when He cleansed the temple from those who profaned it. Both Jesus and Nehemiah had the wisdom to not confuse love with being "nice" - and the wisdom to know when to take bold action. [Guzik]

10 I also realized that the portions for the Levites had not been given them; for each of the Levites and the singers who did the work had gone back to his field.

- Levites/Singers not provided for
- Back working fields

**1 Timothy 5:17** Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. 18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "**The laborer is worthy of his wages.**"

- **Here honor given to dishonorable...** Temple workers not getting provisions...

11 So I contended with the rulers, and said, "Why is the house of God forsaken?" And I gathered them together and set them in their place.

- **Contended:** To strive both with words/physically
  1. Gathered them together/Sat them down
  2. **Rebuked:** Lit. to chop wood...

**Nehemiah 10:39** ...and we will not forsake the house of our God.

**Why is the House of God Forsaken?**

- **Nehemiah sets things right...**

12 Then all Judah brought the tithes of the grain and the new wine and the oil to the storehouse. 13 And I appointed as treasurers over the storehouse Shelemiah the priest and Zadok the scribe, and of the Levites, Pedaiah; and next to them was Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah; for they were considered faithful, and their task was to distribute to their brethren.

- **Reformation:**

1. All Judah resumes tithing
2. Faithful men appointed making sure Levites, Priests, Singers taken care of

**Nehemiah saying/doing hard things...Disciplining/Rebuking**

14 Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and do not wipe out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for its services!

- Remember how hard this was for me [nobody really likes conflict]
- Forgive me if my attitude was not always correct

**Psalm 103:13** As a father pities his children, So the Lord pities those who fear Him. 14 For **He knows our frame** [lit. what we are made of]; He remembers that we are dust.

**Genesis 3:19** "...For dust you are, And to dust you shall return."

**Psalm 78:38** [God] being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, And did not destroy them. Yes, many a time He turned His anger away, And did not stir up all His wrath; 39 For **He remembered that they were but flesh**, A breath that passes away and does not come again.

**I'm only human...not a good excuse for regenerate...**

**1 Corinthians 3:3** ...for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like **mere men?**

- **Lord...Remember how hard this was for me**
- Forgive me if my attitude was not always correct 99.9%? **Did I do it in Love?**

15 In those days I saw people in Judah treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and loading donkeys with wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I warned them about the day on which they were selling provisions. 16 Men of Tyre dwelt there also, who brought in fish and all kinds of goods, and sold them on the Sabbath to the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem.

- **Nehemiah appalled coming back...**

1. Tobiah's in the Lords house being cuddled
2. Temple workers not taken care of
3. People now breaking Sabbath [Old Covenant requirement]
4. Foreigners are pushing into Jerusalem on Sabbath

17 Then I **contended with the nobles** of Judah, and said to them, "What evil thing is this that you do, by which you profane the Sabbath day? 18 Did not your fathers do thus, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Yet you bring added wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath."

- Nobles promoted working of Sabbath
- **Evil thing: This is why we were exiled...**
  1. Idolatry
  2. **Not keeping Sabbath**

God had commanded Israel to observe a Sabbath for the land, allowing it to rest every seven years (Exodus 23:10-11). The people of Judah had denied the land its Sabbaths over a period of some 490 years, meaning that they "owed" the land 70 Sabbaths, and to fulfill seventy years God took the years back during the Babylonian exile. [2 Chron. 36:20-21]

19 So it was, at the gates of Jerusalem, as it began to be dark before the Sabbath, that I commanded the gates to be shut, and charged that they must not be opened till after the Sabbath. Then I posted some of my servants at the gates, so that no burdens would be brought in on the Sabbath day.

- **Nehemiah waits at the Gates Friday night:**
  1. Shut the gates till Sabbath is over
  2. Post men to see no tables/bazaars set up inside

20 Now the merchants and sellers of all kinds of wares lodged outside Jerusalem once or twice.

- Foreigners waiting to come in and do business on first and second Sabbath

21 Then I warned them, and said to them, "Why do you spend the night around the wall? **If you do so again, I will lay hands on you!**" From that time on they came no more on the Sabbath.

- **Nehemiah's reforms: "I will lay hands of you!"**

Revival will always lead to reformation [Change] [JV McGee]  
Change is not always pleasant..

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**John 2:15** When [Jesus] had made a whip of cords, He drove [money changers]... out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. 16 And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" 17 Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up."

- Nehemiah has this zeal!
- **Great leaders are meek not weak:** Not afraid to "lay hands on" troublemakers

22 And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should go and guard the gates, to sanctify the Sabbath day.

- **Nehemiah commands Levites**

1. Cleanse yourselves
2. Sanctify/Set apart the day
3. Guard the gates...

- **Now defiled w/love of money/greed;** i.e. all kinds of evil

**1 Timothy 6:9** ...those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. **10** For the love of money is a root of **all kinds of evil**

**Nehemiah saying/doing hard things...Disciplining/Rebuking/Warning**

**22b...**Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of Your mercy!

- Why did I leave Persia?
- Spare me according to your mercy: Forgive any motive that is not of You

**23 In those days** I also saw Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. **24** And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and could not speak the language of Judah, but spoke according to the language of one or the other people.

- **In those days when I returned:**

1. I saw people breaking the Sabbath
2. I saw men who intermarriage with non-believers

**Nehemiah 10** *We would not give our daughters as wives to the peoples of the land...we would not buy it from them on the Sabbath*

- **Promise keepers?**

This makes a point vividly clear: the law - that is, rules, vows, promises, covenants, and the such, are all ultimately powerless to stop sin. Only the grace of God, alive and flowing in our lives, can give us the power to truly overcome sin. [Guzik]

- **Important:** The law [trying keep] cannot save, sanctify or glorify but only condemn

**Romans 8:3** [Law cannot save nor sanctify]...what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.

If we could be saved by our own promises, by our own commitment to Jesus, then His death would have been noble, but unnecessary. We aren't saved by some vow we make, or some leaf we turn over, but by trusting in who Jesus is, and what He has done to save us. [Guzik]

25 So I contended with them and cursed them, struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, "You shall not give your daughters as wives to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons or yourselves. 26 Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? Yet among many nations there was no king like him, who was beloved of his God; and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless pagan women caused even him to sin. 27 Should we then hear of your doing all this great evil, transgressing against our God by marrying pagan women?"

- Cursed them/Struck them
- Pulled out beards/ Rebuked them:
  1. You promised to keep the Sabbath
  2. You promised not to intermarry with pagans
  3. Solomon did this and lost the Kingdom
- **Contending with those in sin:** Uncomfortable necessity. Not for faint hearted
  1. **Matthew 18**            1, 2, then the church
  2. **Titus 3**                Warn a divisive person twice then goodbye
  3. **1 Corinthians 5**      Remove the unrepentant self-proclaimed believer...

28 And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was a son-in-law of **Sanballat the Horonite**; therefore I drove him from me.

High priest related to Sanballat through marriage  
What a tangled web we weave!

- **Sanballat**
  1. Irritated that someone came do good to Israel
  2. Laughed at/despised those building of wall
  3. Furious/indignant and mocked Jews
  4. Anger issues/Plotted to kill Nehemiah

**Sometimes removal of cancer is the only way to a healthy church**

- Removes relative of Sanballat and cleanses the Priesthood

29 Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites.

- **Now....remember THEM:** Defiled priesthood/Defiled Levites

30 Thus I cleansed [Priests/Levites] of everything pagan. I also assigned duties to the priests and the Levites, each to his service, 31 and to bringing the wood offering and the firstfruits at appointed times.

- Cleansed Priests/Levites

- Instructed Priest/Levites
- Directed Priests/Levites

**31b...Remember me, O my God, for good!** [We too will Nehemiah]

- **2 Chronicles 29:** Hezekiah cleanses Temple
  1. Hezekiah opens doors of Temple and sees it trashed
  2. Repairs the doors, Throws out all garbage accumulated in Temple
  3. **8 Days to get rid of the junk**

**Nehemiah 13: 22** ...I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should go and guard the gates....

1. Cleanse yourself
2. Guard your gates

**Proverbs 4:23** [Read] **Keep [guard] your heart** with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life. 24 **Put away from you a deceitful mouth**, And put perverse lips far from you. 25 **Let your eyes look straight ahead**, And your eyelids look right before you. 26 **Ponder the path of your feet**, And let all your ways be established. 27 Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil.

- **Guard your heart:** What you listen to with your ears

**Romans 10:17** So then **faith comes by hearing**, and hearing by the word of God.

- **Watch your mouth:** What you say with your mouth

**Proverbs 18:21** **Death and life** are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit.

- **Fix your eyes:** What you focus on with your eyes

**Mathew 6:22** "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness.

**Hebrews 12:1** ...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith

- **Walk the walk:** Where you are going with your feet

**1 John 1:7** ...if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

- We are the Temple of the Lord: Get rid of junk

**2 Chronicles 29:27** Then Hezekiah commanded them to offer the burnt offering on the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the **song of the Lord also began**, with the trumpets and with the instruments of David king of Israel.

- Only when the Burn Sacrifice was offered did the song of the Lord begin!



Jesus said of us trying to keep the law. "You can't...I did...and it is finished"  
**It's never about trying harder...it's about getting closer to Jesus**