

Nehemiah 13 Commentary

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**NEHEMIAH UNDER CONSTRUCTION:
JUST A FEW NOTES NOW.
WILL FINISH IF THE LORD WILLS**

Nehemiah 13:1 On that day they read aloud from the book of Moses in the hearing of the people; and there was found written in it that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God,

- that day (KJV): Some suppose that the events recorded in these verses took place several years after those related in the preceding chapter, while Nehemiah was absent at the Persian court; but the introductory language, on that day, seems rather to imply that they occurred immediately, or at least about that time.

- they read (KJV): Heb. there was read, Ne 8:3-8⁺ Ne 9:3⁺ De 31:11,12⁺ 2Ki 23:2⁺ Isa 34:16⁺ Lu 4:16-19⁺ Lu 10:26⁺ Ac 13:15⁺ Ac 15:21⁺
- audience (KJV): Heb. ears
- the Ammonite (KJV): Ne 13:23⁺ De 23:3-5⁺ Isa 15:1-16:14 Jer 48:1-47 Eze 25:1-11 Am 2:1-3
- Moabite (KJV): Ne 2:10,19⁺ Ne 4:3⁺ Ps 83:7-9 Jer 49:1-6 Am 1:13-15

On that day they read aloud from the book of Moses in the hearing of the people; and there was found written in it that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God

Bob Utley - "they read aloud from the book of Moses" The VERB (BDB 894, KB 1128) is a *Niphal* PERFECT. Whether this is an informal reading like Neh. 8:1-8⁺ or a specifically called for reading like Deut. 31:11⁺ the Feast of Tabernacles, is uncertain (cf. Neh. 8:4⁺; Neh 9:3⁺). These two post-exilic books are characterized by a reverence and desire for the word of God. They hear it and they respond in repentance and faith. The trend is set! They are becoming people of the book! At this point the book was about a thousand years old (i.e., depending on the date of the Exodus), but it was still relevant and crucial for their relationship with YHWH. Cultures change but revelation does not! ■ **"there was found written in it that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God"** This is a direct reference to Deut. 23:3-6⁺, which shows that the Mosaic law was available and well known. This sounds so racist to us, but two things must be noted. (1) These people had to restore a pure people unaffected by Canaanite or pagan culture and myths. (2) Ruth, David's ancestor, was from Moab and she is in the line of the Messiah, as is Rachel the Canaanite prostitute! ■ **"the assembly of God"** This is the only place in the OT where the word for assembly, *Qahal* (BDB 874), and the word *Elohim* (BDB 43) are placed together. This term *Qahal* is what the translators of the Septuagint replace with *ecclesia*, which is the early church's self-chosen title. This shows they were identifying themselves with the Old Testament people of God.

Ryrie - Vs. 13:1-3 See note on Deut. 23:3-6⁺ for this restriction on the Ammonite and Moabite. all foreigners included the heathen who attached themselves to the Jews by marriage, commerce, or religious observances. See note on Ex. 12:38⁺.

Steven Cole - The Problem of Permissiveness (Nehemiah 13:1-31⁺)

The second law of thermodynamics states that in a closed system, things move toward the maximum state of entropy, or disorder. That physical law has a parallel in the spiritual realm: Even among God's people, unless we are constantly fighting against it, things tend toward the maximum state of spiritual entropy. We live in a spiritually and morally permissive society. Unless we constantly wage war against the flesh, we tend to become more and more like the spiritual degeneracy that surrounds us.

Last week I received an email that listed some statistics about American pastors, sent out by Bill Bright and the Global Pastors Network. It stated that each month, 1,500 pastors leave the ministry due to moral failure, spiritual burnout, or contention in their churches. Fifty percent of pastors' marriages will end in divorce. Seventy percent of pastors constantly fight depression. Almost 40 percent report that they have had an extra-marital affair since beginning their ministry. Even if the truth were only *half* those numbers, is it any wonder that the American church is not making a more significant impact on our nation!

The changes in our cultural morals since my childhood are staggering! The TV shows I grew up with were "Leave it to Beaver" and "Ozzie and Harriet." Even though Ozzie and Harriet were married in real life, they slept in separate beds on the show.

Now, explicit sexual references and scenes are commonplace. An article in the *Arizona Daily Sun* [2/5/03] reported that while sex is more common on TV, at least it is more "honest," meaning that there were more references to safe sex! It said that among the top 20 shows among teenagers, 20 percent included implied or depicted intercourse and 83 percent had some sexual content. Among primetime shows, seven out of 10 have sexual content. If we think that this cultural degeneracy has not damaged the church, we're blind! The supreme cultural value of tolerance toward everyone and everything has permeated the church.

But the slide into moral permissiveness is not a recent problem. Nehemiah faced it. He had taken leave from his position as cupbearer to King Artaxerxes to go to Jerusalem, where he led the people to rebuild the walls in record time. Once the walls were up, God used Nehemiah and Ezra to lead the people in spiritual renewal. In chapter 10, the people signed a spiritual covenant, agreeing to obey God's law as it applied both personally and to their corporate worship. The climax of the book is the dedication celebration in chapter 12, where the people "rejoiced because God had given them great joy" (Neh 12:43⁺). It would have been nice if the book ended there: "And they all lived happily ever after."

But real life isn't like that. After 12 years as governor, Nehemiah had returned to Persia. We don't know how long he was there, but during his absence, spiritual permissiveness and decline set in. The time references in chapter 13 are ambiguous, so it is not clear whether the reforms of Neh 13:1-3⁺ took place on the day of the dedication of the wall, or at another time. But the reforms were short-lived. Spiritual compromise snuck in through the spiritual leadership. When Nehemiah returned, he found that permissiveness was rampant in the very areas the people had covenanted to stand against just a few years before!

A lesser man may have said, "I give up! It's useless to try to reform these people!" But Nehemiah strongly confronted the perpetual problem of permissiveness. His example teaches us that...

To deal with spiritual permissiveness, we must be aware of the problem areas and we must strongly confront them.

1. To deal with spiritual permissiveness, we must be aware of the problem areas.

Why hadn't others in Israel dealt with these problems? Ezra may have died by now (in Neh 13:13⁺, Zadok is called *the* scribe, perhaps indicating that Ezra no longer held that post). Perhaps the other leaders just didn't see the problems to the degree that Nehemiah did. Often missionaries who have been gone from the United States for a few years are shocked at the moral decline here when they return, whereas those of us who live in it are like the proverbial frog in the kettle. We may sense that the water is getting hot, but not enough to jump out before it cooks us!

Before the moral slide had set in, the people had listened to the reading of Scripture, which made them aware of God's standards for holiness for His people (Neh 13:1-3⁺). In Deuteronomy 23:3-5⁺, God declared that no Ammonite or Moabite should enter the assembly of Israel because of the way those nations had treated Israel when they were in the wilderness.

You may think, "That's not very loving or fair! That's penalizing people for what their ancestors did." Frankly, I don't know how those who deny God's sovereign election of some to salvation deal with such verses. But the Bible clearly teaches that God owes sinners nothing. He would be perfectly just and fair to send everyone straight to hell. But He has chosen to pour out His love and grace on an elect people, whom He sovereignly chose from all others on this earth (Deut. 7:1-8⁺).

The reason He did not want Israel accepting these foreigners into their midst was that they would corrupt Israel from following the Lord alone. The insidious counsel of Balaam (Neh 13:2⁺) was for the king of Moab to get his people to intermarry with Israel, and pretty soon Israel would be just like the Moabites, following their gods. The same thing happened with King Solomon, whose foreign wives led him into idolatry (Neh 13:26⁺). I should point out that repentant Moabites, like Ruth, were not only accepted into Israel, but even included in the genealogy of David and Jesus Christ. But those who would not give up their foreign gods would only serve to pollute Israel spiritually. They had to be excluded.

So sometime during Nehemiah's absence, the reading of Scripture had led to obedience. But then Satan wormed his way in by introducing spiritual permissiveness in four areas. Keep in mind that it was Nehemiah's knowledge of Scripture that enabled him to see these deviations. *The only way that we will detect spiritual permissiveness in ourselves and in our church is by being steeped in God's Word.*

(1) THERE WAS THEOLOGICAL PERMISSIVENESS BECAUSE OF WRONG RELATIONSHIPS (Neh 13:4-9⁺).

The temple contained some storage rooms that were used for the grain offerings, the utensils, and the tithes of the people (Neh 13:5⁺). While Nehemiah was gone, Eliashib the high priest had cleared out one large room and one or more smaller rooms (Neh 13:5, 9⁺) so that Tobiah *the Ammonite* could set up an apartment there! Tobiah was a mocker who strongly opposed Nehemiah's earlier efforts to rebuild the wall (Neh 2:10, 19⁺; Neh 4:3, 7-8⁺). He had many connections with the Jews and had persuaded them that he was a good man. But meanwhile he had sent threatening letters to Nehemiah (Neh 6:17-19⁺). But here he is, setting up a personal residence in the temple!

What's going on here? Why would the high priest allow such a thing? There were probably several factors. One was that the high priest and Tobiah were related, probably through marriage (Neh 13:4⁺). Another factor was that Tobiah had a Jewish name (which meant, "God is good"). So he wasn't *totally* Ammonite! Just partially! It's always more difficult to draw the line against a "good" person who is just mixed up on some things than against an outwardly wicked person who is spouting obvious blasphemy.

It's tough to side with a strict commandment of God's Word, such as excluding all Ammonites from the assembly of Israel, when your relative is an Ammonite, especially when he seems to be part Jewish! Let me put that in more modern terms. It's tough to insist that the Roman Catholic way of salvation is not God's way when you have Catholic relatives and friends. After all, we have so much in common! Why not focus on the areas where we agree, rather than the areas where we disagree? Theological permissiveness creeps in through the door of relationships with those who are partly right but partly very much wrong.

Dr. Howard Hendricks told us during my fourth year in seminary that the two factors that would most determine where we would be in ten years were the books we read and the friends we kept. Wrong friendships can seriously damage us spiritually. Paul told Timothy concerning those who hold to a form of godliness, but deny its power, "Avoid such men as these" (2 Tim. 3:5⁺). By the way, teach your children the danger of wrong friendships and the importance of choosing friends who want to follow Jesus Christ.

(2) THERE WAS FINANCIAL PERMISSIVENESS (Neh 13:10-14+).

This problem was connected to the first problem. Spiritual problems seldom occur in isolation! Because the high priest had moved Tobiah into the temple, there were not enough storerooms for the tithes. So the priests had not required the people to bring in their tithes, and as a result, the Levites had to go to work in the fields to support their families, thus neglecting their temple duties.

While we are not under the law of the tithe, but rather are to give as the Lord has prospered us (1 Cor. 16:2), the principle holds true: Spiritual permissiveness invariably has a negative effect on our giving. The prophet Malachi was ministering at this time. He confronted the people for robbing God by not bringing their tithes into the storehouse (Mal. 3:8-10+).

(3) THERE WAS PERMISSIVENESS IN THE USE OF TIME (Neh 13:15-22+).

Even though the people had agreed in their covenant with God to keep the Sabbath holy (10:31), they quickly fell into doing business on that day, even in Jerusalem (13:15). Some merchants from Tyre, who had no scruples about the Sabbath, were doing a brisk business selling imported fish and merchandise in the city on that day. No doubt the Jews had excuses (they would have called them “reasons”) for violating the Sabbath. “If I don’t tread my grapes that day, they will rot!” “Everyone else is doing business then. I can’t compete if I close up shop!” “All those imported fish will just rot and go to waste if we don’t buy them! It wouldn’t be right, to waste all that good food.”

Again, we are not under the strict Sabbath laws of Israel. But like these religious Jews, it is easy to make up excuses for why we put business and our pursuit of pleasure ahead of worship. “I’d like to spend time alone with God every day, but I’ve got to work long hours. When I get home, I’m exhausted and need some down time in front of the tube to relax.” “I’d like to go to church more often, but Sunday is my only day to sack in, eat a leisurely breakfast, and read the paper.” Spiritual permissiveness always affects how we spend our time.

(4) THERE WAS PERMISSIVENESS IN THEIR HOMES (Neh 13:23-29+).

Ezra had corrected this problem just a few years before, but here it was again! Nehemiah discovered that some of the Jews had married foreign women, and their children didn’t even speak Hebrew, which meant that they couldn’t understand the Scriptures. We need to understand that marrying an unbeliever will not only affect us. It also has a negative impact on our children. They will grow up speaking the language of Ashdod, and not understanding the things of God.

There is no more vulnerable area of your life than that of the emotional attachments that you form with the opposite sex. Satan never comes along and says to a Christian young person, “Wouldn’t you like to marry this nice young girl from Ashdod? She will lead your children and you astray from the Lord. Your children will be half-pagan and your grandchildren will be completely pagan.” Rather, he says, “Your parents are too strict. They follow God’s laws and insist that you follow them too. But you’re missing out! Look at how much fun this sexy babe from Ashdod would be! You don’t have to marry her. Just go out and enjoy yourself for a change!” And before he knows it, the sexy babe from Ashdod has him compromising his morals, while at the same time she promises that she will follow his God after they get married.

Moral permissiveness always begins like an innocent trickle through the dam, but it subtly widens until the dam suddenly gives way. At that point, the damage is serious and widespread. How did Nehemiah confront this permissiveness?

2. To deal with spiritual permissiveness, we must strongly confront problem areas.

Some criticize Nehemiah for not being more tactful and polite, but when God’s people are being poisoned by permissiveness, politeness may not be best. If I saw you about to drink what I knew to be deadly poison, you wouldn’t want me politely to smile and think to myself, “I wouldn’t drink that, but I don’t want to impose my views on him. Each person has a right to his own opinions.” You’d want me to shout, “Wait! That will kill you!” And if need be, you’d want me forcibly to knock it from your hand.

That’s what Nehemiah did. He didn’t worry about being polite or about what people would think of him. I’m sure that he made many enemies by what he did here, but I’m also sure that he was God’s friend. Many no doubt grumbled about what an unloving, harsh man he was. But Nehemiah describes what he did with the Hebrew word *hesed* (13:14, translated “loyal deeds”), which is the word used in Neh 13:22+ (and throughout the OT) for God’s loyal love for His people. It is far more loving rudely to knock the poison out of a person’s hand than it is to smile politely and watch him drink it. In each of these situations, Nehemiah dealt with the problem head on. There are four aspects to what he did:

(1) HE DISCOVERED THE PROBLEM.

You may say, "That's a no-brainer!" But if it was so obvious, why hadn't other leaders in Israel perceived what was wrong and dealt with it? Nehemiah saw what others did not see. As I said earlier, the reason he saw it was that he compared what he saw with what he knew from Scripture.

Look at Neh 13:7⁺: "I came to Jerusalem and *learned* about the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah" Nehemiah didn't refer to it as a creative, alternative use for the temple storerooms! He called it *evil*. That wasn't a popular word to apply to the high priest, but Nehemiah didn't tone it down. In Neh 13:10⁺, it says that he *discovered* the fact that the Levites had not received the tithes. In Neh 13:15⁺, he *saw* the violation of the Sabbath. In 13:23, he also *saw* that the Jews had married foreign women. In every case, he observed what was happening, compared it to God's unbending standards in Scripture, and then took action.

(2) HE GOT UPSET.

Note Neh 13:8-9: He was *very displeased* about Tobiah's temple apartment. In Neh 13:11⁺, he *reprimanded* the officials. It doesn't take much imagination to picture him asking in a raised voice why the house of God was forsaken. In Neh 13:17-18⁺, he again *reprimanded* them for their Sabbath violations, and it's clear that he was upset. The classic is in 13:25, where he got so upset that he *contended* with them, *cursed* them (not profanity, but he pronounced a curse against them), *struck* some of them, and *pulled out their hair*, probably from their beards! Whoa! Derek Kidner (*Ezra & Nehemiah, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries* [IVP], p. 131) says,

Nehemiah's explosion was as characteristic as Ezra's *implosion* had been. Both were powerfully effective, and both were to find some parallel in our Lord's encounters with evil. The shock treatment by Nehemiah was devastating in the same manner as the assault on the moneychangers, and the display of grief by Ezra (Ezra 9:3ff.; 10:1ff.) was as moving, in its way, as the lament over Jerusalem.

We need to be careful with righteous anger, in that we can easily excuse sinful anger as being righteous. But when we see sins or false teachings that are damaging God's people, it is *wrong not to be angry!* To be complacent in the face of such evil is *not* to be like Jesus.

(3) HE TOOK STRONG, UNMISTAKABLE ACTION.

Nehemiah didn't just say, "It makes me mad to see how Israel is drifting from the Lord!" and go back to his newspaper. He met the problems head on! He personally threw Tobiah's household goods out of the storerooms. Then he had them cleanse the rooms and put the grain offerings back in there. Imagine how Tobiah must have reacted when he came home, wondered what that pile of furniture was doing outside, and then opened his door and saw his apartment filled to the ceiling with grain! I wish I could have seen the expression on his face!

With regard to the tithes, Nehemiah not only reprimanded the officials (Neh 13:11-13⁺). He also restored them to their posts and appointed faithful men to oversee the collection and distribution of the tithes. Concerning the Sabbath problem, he commanded that the doors be shut and locked on the Sabbath (Neh 13:19-22⁺). Then he stationed men there to enforce it. When the merchants from Tyre camped outside the gates, he warned them to leave or else he would use force against them. And he commanded the Levites to purify themselves and to stand as gatekeepers.

With regard to the mixed marriages, he not only strongly contended with those who were guilty, but when he found out that one of the grandsons of the high priest had married a daughter of Sanballat, he drove the young man away (Neh 13:28⁺)! I think that means that he chased him out of town, so that he couldn't defile the priesthood by succeeding his grandfather in the office. Kidner (p. 132) says of the word "chased," "glorious word!"

Before we confront anyone in sin, we need to check the flesh and make sure that our motives are pure before God. Sometimes a more gentle approach will be more effective. But we often err by thinking that gentleness means being nice. Jesus was gentle when he pronounced woes on the Pharisees and called them hypocrites, blind guides, and whitewashed tombs (Matthew 23⁺). Paul was filled with the Spirit when he told Elymas the magician he was full of all deceit and fraud, called him a son of the devil and an enemy of all righteousness, and struck him blind (Acts 13:9-11⁺). Sometimes sin demands a strong, direct confrontation.

(4) HE WAS ACCOUNTABLE TO GOD AND AWARE OF HIS PRESENCE IN EVERY SITUATION.

Four times Nehemiah utters brief prayers (Neh 13:14, 22, 29, 31⁺). He wasn't taking this strong action against permissiveness for his own sake. He was doing it for God's sake. Kidner (p. 130) says of these prayers,

Nehemiah's private self is completely of a piece with his public one: singleminded, utterly frank, and godly through and through. ... [His plea to be remembered] springs from love, not self-love, as his tireless zeal for God has testified. ... Further, the plea springs

from humility, not self-importance, for it is an appeal for help. ... Nehemiah is committing himself and his cause (*cf.* Neh 13:29+) to the only safe hands.

I think that he shot up these brief prayers for God to remember him and his enemies because he was under severe attack. You don't do what Nehemiah did here without incurring the wrath of those whose comfortable lifestyles you upset. But Nehemiah wasn't a typical politician, trying to placate both sides and work a compromise. He wasn't trying to win a popularity contest. He was seeking to please God by calling God's people back to holy living.

Nehemiah's God-ward focus is essential if we want to confront the permissiveness of our times with the right spirit. If we lose it, we can easily become self-righteous moral crusaders who look down on those who are blinded by sin. Living with an awareness of God's presence and that we must answer to Him will give us the courage to stand alone, if need be, and confront out of love.

Conclusion

It's easy to see the faults of others but to be blind to our own permissiveness. I encourage you to begin with yourself. As you read God's Word, ask yourself where *you* may have slipped into the ways of our godless culture. After you deal with yourself, I encourage husbands and fathers to give godly leadership and correction when needed to your families. When the other pastors and I warn of spiritual dangers, rather than getting angry and leaving the church, stop and prayerfully consider whether what we say is in line with God's Word.

Spiritual permissiveness is a perpetual problem. Like Nehemiah, we must detect it by God's Word and strongly confront it if we want to hear our Lord's "Well done!" when we stand before Him.

Discussion Questions

1. To what extent should we shelter ourselves and our kids from the world as opposed to seeing how corrupt it is?
2. How much theological variance should we tolerate? Where do we biblically draw lines of separation?
3. How do we know when to be restrained and gentle and when to be bold and even emotional in confronting someone in sin?
4. What distinguishes righteous anger from sinful anger? How can we guard ourselves against justifying sinful anger as being righteous?

Brian Bell - Nehemiah 13+

1. Intro: Smoldering Hearts

1. Last Chapter – *Worship on the wall*. They dedicated the wall, but more importantly they had dedicated themselves.
 1. And now, the walls stood strong, but their *spiritual walls* had quickly crumbled.
 1. Like **Humpty Dumpty**, they didn't have a **wall issue**, but a **falling issue**.
 2. They quickly fell into sin, and "none of the kings horses & none of the kings men...could put the Israelites back together again...but *God uses Nehemiah*."
 2. What's harder to build than a **wall**?...A **man**.
2. *General William Booth*, founder of the Salvation Army, once said to a group of new officers, "*I want you young men always to bear in mind that it is the nature of a fire **to go out**; you must keep it stirred and fed and the ashes removed.*"
 1. Nehemiah is just returning to Jerusalem after about a year of being on a trip back to Persia. Only to find the fires of devotion had **gone out** in Jerusalem.
 2. So, he seeks to remove the ashes, & to *start, stir, & feed* the flame once again.
3. Trivia: What biblical man of the OT *hits people & pulls out their hair*? *stand by*

2. MOSES' 2-EDGED SWORD (Neh 13:1-3+)

1. (Neh 13:1+) What did they discover when they read the book of Moses? No, Ammonite & Moabite in Assembly
2. (Neh 13:3+) How did they respond? (they *Read-Heard-Responded*)
3. (Neh 13:2+) Our God turned the **curse** into a **blessing**.
 1. God still does this. *What man meant for evil God meant for Good. All things work together for good.*
4. Well this was *the good news*, Now we need to step back (see Neh 13:4+ *before this i.e.* Neh 13:1-3+) & let's hear what was happening *while* Nehemiah was away on a business trip.
 1. Here now are **3 vigorous corrections** for **3 foolish abuses**...

3. GOD'S HOUSE (Neh 13:4-14+)

1. HOUSE CLEANING (Neh 13:4-9+) [Problem]
 1. (Neh 13:5+) Tobiah turned God's house into a *Storage Unit* for his stuff.

1. What **sinful attitudes** or **actions** have you allowed in your life? What **sin** have you brought into the church? (Neh 13:7+) Have you given up a *chamber in your heart* to any Tobiah?...Are all good questions to ask yourself.
2. (Neh 13:6+) When the cats away the mice play.
3. It was during this time that **Malachi** wrote his prophetic book.
 1. He indicted the priests & people for their sinful defection.
 1. Book Overview: Polluted offerings (ch.1); Corrupt priests (2); Fidelity to marriage & God's heart on divorce (2); Prophecy of John the Baptist coming (3); Tithes (3); The day of the Lord & the coming of Elijah before the end (4).
4. (Neh 13:8+) Nehemiah's response was very similar to Jesus' *some 400 years later*, When Jesus did what? *The Cleansing of the Temple*
5. The work of a spiritual leader is never finished...for the enemy never quits.
2. HOUSE FORSAKEN (Neh 13:10-14+) [Solution]
 1. (Neh 13:10+) What turn of events forced the Levites to become field laborers again?
 1. In many churches the pastor often has to take a 2nd job in order to feed his family. What are the advantages & disadvantages of such an arrangement?
 1. I think the key is having them doing what they've been **gifted** to do & **asked by God** to do.
 2. (Neh 13:13+) Nehemiah's leadership style was, if it's working, have the hands off approach; but if it isn't working, you need to give more oversight.
 3. (Neh 13:14+) Remember me – A **refrain** after each section of rebuke. (Neh 13:22,31+; also Neh 13:29+)
 1. When one appeals to God to **remember** there is no implication He can *forget*. *Instead the phrase is a request that God might respond in an appropriate fashion.*(i.e. reward him)
4. **GOD'S SABBATH (Neh 13:15-22+)**
 1. WORK 7 DAYS (Neh 13:15-18+) [Problem]
 1. The Sabbath day was transformed into a market day.
 2. ONE DAY OFF (Neh 13:19-22+) [Solution]
 1. Maybe having a **Sabbath rest** means to take a day off & not be a workaholic, don't work 1 day a week.
 2. *And to make special time for the Lord on a day of worship.*
5. **GOD'S MARRIAGES (Neh 13:23-31+)**
 1. UNEQUALLY YOKED (23,24) [Problem]
 1. (23) Ammon & Moab came from an *incestuous relationship* between **Lot** & his **daughters**. Gen.19+
 2. Ezra dealt with this 20 yrs ago. *How sad when children expose the inconsistencies of their parents... & follow hard after them.*
 2. CLEANSED (Neh 13:25-31+) [Solution]
 1. (Neh 13:25+) Nehemiah adds strong **acts** to strong **words**. *Here we see a fiery nature to Nehemiah.*
 1. He threw the household goods of Tobiah out of the Temple (Neh 13:8+). He rebukes officials (Neh 13:11+). He confronts violators (Neh 13:17,18+). And even assaults the most guilty (Neh 13:25+).
 2. Why so strong? (See Neh 10:29,30, 39b+)...*They had covenanted! ch.12*
 3. *Sometimes radical holiness requires radical measures.*
 2. So, is this how we should handle situations like this? *go all Ninja on them*
 1. Ezra gave us another way by being appalled (showing his expression of grief) & then watching God change their hearts. Read Ezra 9:3,4.
 2. We aren't to *overlook* sins of others for sure. But we need to seek God's guidance in every situation on how best to respond. [Then if it takes a little hair removal...go for it...but maybe it's *your hair*? start there!]
 3. (Neh 13:26+) How should the example of **Solomon** have discouraged them from marrying foreign wives?
 1. Note: Solomon had wealth, peace & prosperity. And was beloved of God. But even he could fall to this.
 4. (Neh 13:28,29+) Does God hold ministers to a higher standard?
 1. See also Malachi 2:7-9+.
 2. Slide15 Its interesting **Josephus** said, *this expelled priest's name was Manasseh. That he went to his father-in-law Sanballat, & he built for him a temple on Mount Gerazim like that at Jerusalem. And this was the origin & rivalry between the Jews & the Samaritans.*
 3. Jn 4:20+ *women at well* Our fathers worshiped on this mountain (Gerazim), and you Jews say that in Jerusalem (Moriah) is the place where one ought to worship.
 3. (Neh 13:31+) This was very similar to what **the faithful sinner** & **the dying thief** said, Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom. & God, be merciful to me a sinner.
 1. To be **remembered** by Jesus Christ is enough reward for any of us.
 4. Slide16 Booth said, I want you young men always to bear in mind that it is the nature of a fire to **go out**; you must keep

it stirred & fed & the ashes removed.

1. "1" being a *dying ember*, "10" being *white-hot*...What is your *spiritual temperature* right now?
2. It is our nature to spiritually *go out*. [not salvation wise, but sanctification wise]
3. Ask: How can we prepare ourselves for a lifetime of glowing with a *Perpetual Hot flame*?
5. **Wrap Up: Nehemiah** was a layman who *loved his God, Gods people & the Temple*
 1. He is a good example to follow in his devotion to: *his duty, his leadership, his discipline, his planning and doing his work, his dedication to the Word, his maintaining high standards, his ability to take a stand for what was right, & his dependence on prayer*.
6. The end of the OT Historical books ends on a note of *uncertainty*. [then **400 yrs**, a **Prophetic laryngitis** now sets in, known as the **Intertestamental period**]
 1. If the people could so easily slip back into sin with Nehemiah's short trip, what will happen centuries down the line???
 2. Will they be ready to receive the Messiah when He comes?
 3. Read Malachi 4:5,6⁺. Seems odd that the OT ends with a curse. It would ring in their ears...until the *Peace Child* comes. [no wonder Zacharias & Anna were so glad to meet the baby]
7. End:
 1. Let's be like Nehemiah: *plan, think, manage, create, motivate, but above all PRAY!* For w/o our *conscious dependence on God's power & wisdom*, we may build **our** own little kingdom...but we'll miss the joy of building **His**. (Swindoll; pg.21)

Matthew Henry - Nehemiah turns out the mixed multitude - Neh 13:1-9⁺. Israel was a peculiar people, and not to mingle with the nations. See the benefit of publicly reading the word of God; when it is duly attended to, it discovers to us sin and duty, good and evil, and shows wherein we have erred. We profit, when we are thus wrought upon to separate from evil. Those that would drive sin out of their hearts, the living temples, must throw out its household stuff, and all the provision made for it; and take away all the things that are the food and fuel of lust; this is really to mortify it. When sin is cast out of the heart by repentance, let the blood of Christ be applied to it by faith, then let it be furnished with the graces of God's Spirit, for every good work.

Nehemiah 13:2 because they did not meet the sons of Israel with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them. However, our God turned the curse into a blessing.

- Because (KJV): Mt 25:40⁺
- hired Balaam (KJV): Nu 22:3-6⁺ Jos 24:9,10⁺
- our God (KJV): Nu 23:8-11,18⁺ Nu 24:5-10⁺ De 23:5⁺ Ps 109:28 Mic 6:5⁺

because they did not meet the sons of Israel with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them. However, our God turned the curse into a blessing

Bob Utley - "Balaam" The account of Moab and Ammon's (who were relatives of the Jews, cf. Gen. 19:30-38⁺) treachery is found in Num. 22:3-11⁺. Balaam seems to be a spokesperson for God (cf. Num. 22:8-13,18,20⁺; Num 23:4-5,12,16⁺; Num 24:1-2⁺). He honored God, but sought his own personal interest. This whole account is a strange and bizarre event! (1) God's prophet hurts Israel (2) God says "go," but is angry when he does (3) a talking donkey (4) Israel's sudden turn to fertility worship ■ **"However, our God turned the curse into a blessing"** This is a major theological affirmation and worldview. This has been the history of mankind from Genesis 3⁺. This role reversal concept is so clearly seen in Abraham, Gen. 15:12-21⁺, Joseph, Gen. 45:1-15, Moses, Exod. 2⁺

Believer's Study Bible - Cf. Num. 22:5, 22⁺, notes; 24:10; Deut. 23:3-5⁺.

Nehemiah 13:3 So when they heard the law, they excluded all foreigners from Israel.

- when they (KJV): Ps 19:7-11⁺ Ps 119:9,11⁺ Pr 6:23⁺ Ro 3:20⁺
- that they (KJV): Ne 9:2⁺ Ne 10:28⁺ Ezr 10:11 Jas 1:27⁺
- the mixed (KJV): Ex 12:38⁺ Nu 11:4⁺

So when they heard the law, they excluded all foreigners from Israel.

Henry Morris - God had always called for Israel to be a people separated unto Himself and without ties to heathen nations living

among them (cf. Lev. 20:24⁺; Deut. 14:2⁺; Ezra 6:21; Ezra 9:1, 2; Ps. 135:4; 2 Cor. 6:14, 17⁺; 1 Pet. 2:9⁺).

Nehemiah 13:4 Now prior to this, Eliashib the priest, who was appointed over the chambers of the house of our God, being related to Tobiah,

- Eliashib (KJV): Ne 13:7⁺ Ne 12:10⁺
- having the oversight of (KJV): Heb. being set over, Ne 12:44⁺
- allied (KJV): Ne 13:28⁺ Ne 6:17,18⁺

Now prior to this, Eliashib the priest, who was appointed over the chambers of the house of our God, being related to Tobiah,

Bob Utley - "**Eliashib the priest**" He will become the High Priest (cf. Neh. 3:1⁺). The books of Ezra and Nehemiah are not in chronological order. Themes and patterns from the past, that moderns do not understand, mold the outline of these books. Events seem out of place to us who are accustomed to sequential, cause and effect, history. Their way of doing history was not bad, but different (selective and theological), as are the Gospels. ■ "**over the chambers of the house of our God**" There were many storage rooms in the temple, some along the sides of the main shrine and others in the gates (cf. Neh. 12:44⁺). These rooms were to store the tithes of the Levites (cf. Neh. 13:5⁺) and the necessities of the cultus rituals. They also housed the money sent from Persia. In this case they converted one of the large rooms into a personal residence for Tobiah (cf. Neh. 13:5⁺). ■ "**Tobiah**" Tobiah (BDB 375, "YHWH is my good") was an Ammonite who opposed Nehemiah (cf. Neh. 2:10,19⁺; Neh 4:3,17⁺; Neh 6:1,12,14,19⁺; Neh 13:4,7,8⁺). As Ezra and Nehemiah resisted the inroads of foreigners in Israel's life, it was inevitable that foreigners of influence and ambition would have places of leadership in Nehemiah's absence and would be hostile to the return to a Mosaic law which excluded them (cf. Neh. 13:3⁺), but not all, as Neh. 13:4-9⁺ make plain.

Henry Morris - before this. "Before this" probably refers to the considerable length of time it must have taken to accomplish the annulment of all the mixed marriages after the renewed covenant. Nehemiah had to go back to Babylon after serving some twelve years in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 13:6⁺) and, while he was away, many people had already broken the promises of their covenant.

Tobiah. Tobiah was an Ammonite (Nehemiah 2:10⁺) and an inveterate enemy of the Israelites. It is amazing that Eliashib, the chief priest, would actually give Tobiah a residence in the temple chamber where the tithes and offerings of the people were supposed to be stored. Nehemiah cast Tobiah out as soon as he heard of it.

Ryrie - 13:4-6 Tobiah. An Ammonite (2:19) to whom Eliashib had turned over a large room (where titles and materials had been stored) in the court of the Temple during Nehemiah's absence from Jerusalem. king of Babylon. Artaxerxes, who was probably in Babylon at that time, since it was an administrative center of the Persian Empire.

Nehemiah 13:5 had prepared a large room for him, where formerly they put the grain offerings, the frankincense, the utensils and the tithes of grain, wine and oil prescribed for the Levites, the singers and the gatekeepers, and the contributions for the priests.

- a great (KJV): Ne 10:38⁺ Ne 12:44⁺ 2Ch 34:11⁺
- which was commanded to be given to the (KJV): Heb. the commandment of the, Nu 18:21-24⁺

had prepared a large room for him, where formerly they put the grain offerings, the frankincense, the utensils and the tithes of grain, wine and oil prescribed for the Levites, the singers and the gatekeepers, and the contributions for the priests.

Bob Utley - "**grain offerings**" This was a special flour used to make the cakes for the daily offering. ■ "**frankincense**" This (BDB 526 l) was a white tree resin from southern Arabia used in the incense which was placed daily in the Holy Place (cf. Exod. 30:34⁺). ■ "**the contributions for the priests**" The Jews tithed to the Levites (cf. Neh. 10:38⁺); the Levites tithed to the priests (cf. Neh. 10:38⁺).

Nehemiah 13:6 But during all this time I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I had gone to the king. After some time, however, I asked leave from the king,

- But (KJV): Ex 32:1+ 2Ch 24:17,18+ Mt 13:25+
- was (KJV): Nehemiah came to Jerusalem in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, and remained there till the thirty-second, being twelve years; then returned to Babylon; and probably, after about a year, got leave to revisit his brethren, and found matters as here stated.
- the two (KJV): Ne 2:1+ Ne 5:14+
- after certain days (KJV): Heb. at the end of days, Ne 2:5,6+
- obtained I (KJV): or, I earnestly requested

But during all this time I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I had gone to the king. After some time, however, I asked leave from the king

Bob Utley - Nehemiah served as governor from 445 to 433 B.C. At that time he returned to the court of Artaxerxes I where he stayed for an indefinite period of time. It was long enough for the Jews to relapse from his reform efforts. Artaxerxes is called king of Babylon. This seems unusual to us because he was king of Persia and yet, Cyrus, Cambyses, and Darius I are also referred to as the king of Babylon.

Believer's Study Bible - The phrase "all this" refers to the activities of Tobiah and Eliashib (vv. 4, 5), which occurred sometime after 433 B.C. (see book note). Tobiah's "room" (v. 5) probably served as a base of operations. When Nehemiah returned as governor "after certain days," he took decisive action. During this period Nehemiah also had to deal with unfaithfulness in the tithe (vv. 10-13), desecration of the Sabbath (vv. 15-22), and intermarriage (vv. 23-28). Ironically, the people had pledged themselves to obedience in each of these specific areas during the covenant ceremony (10:28-39). Note that Nehemiah offered a prayer after each action.

Nehemiah 13:7 and I came to Jerusalem and learned about the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, by preparing a room for him in the courts of the house of God.

- understood (KJV): Ezr 9:1 1Co 1:11+
- in preparing (KJV): Ne 13:1,5+ La 1:10 Mt 21:12,13+ Ac 21:28,29+

and I came to Jerusalem and learned about the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, by preparing a room for him in the courts of the house of God.

Bob Utley - "in the courts of the house of God" Exactly what court this refers to is uncertain, but it was unlawful for anyone but Levites to be in this temple area.

Ryrie - 13:7-9 When Nehemiah returned and discovered, to his horror, what Eliashib had done, he threw Tobiah's belongings out and ceremonially cleansed the room.

Nehemiah 13:8 It was very displeasing to me, so I threw all of Tobiah's household goods out of the room.

- it grieved (KJV): Ezr 9:3,4 Ezr 10:1 Ps 69:9
- I cast (KJV): Mk 11:15-17+ Joh 2:13-17+

It was very displeasing to me, so I threw all of Tobiah's household goods out of the room.

Bob Utley - Nehemiah was not a gentle man as was Ezra. His anger was both personal and religious. To him God's house was being violated by an evil man.

Nehemiah 13:9 Then I gave an order and they cleansed the rooms; and I returned there the utensils of the house of God with the grain offerings and the frankincense.

- they cleansed (KJV): Ne 12:45+ 2Ch 29:5,15-19+

Then I gave an order and they cleansed the rooms; and I returned there the utensils of the house of God with the grain

Matthew Henry - Nehemiah's reform in the house of God - Neh 13:10-14⁺. If a sacred character will not keep men from setting an evil example, it must not shelter any one from deserved blame and punishment. The Levites had been wronged; their portions had not been given them. They were gone to get livelihoods for themselves and their families, for their profession would not maintain them. A maintenance not sufficient, makes a poor ministry. The work is neglected, because the workmen are. Nehemiah laid the fault upon the rulers. Both ministers and people, who forsake religion and the services of it, and magistrates, who do not what they can to keep them to it, will have much to answer for. He delayed not to bring the Levites to their places again, and that just payment should be made. Nehemiah on every occasion looked up to God, and committed himself and all his affairs to Him. It pleased him to think that he had been of use to revive and support religion in his country. He here refers to God, not in pride, but with a humble appeal concerning his honest intention in what he had done. He prays, "Remember me;" not, Reward me. "Wipe not out my good deeds;" not, Publish them, or record them. Yet he was rewarded, and his good deeds recorded. God does more than we are able to ask.

Nehemiah 13:10 I also discovered that the portions of the Levites had not been given them, so that the Levites and the singers who performed the service had gone away, each to his own field.

- the portions (KJV): Ne 10:37⁺ Ne 12:47⁺ Mal 1:6-14⁺ Mal 3:8⁺ 1Ti 5:17,18⁺
- to his field (KJV): Nu 35:2⁺

I also discovered that the portions of the Levites had not been given them, so that the Levites and the singers who performed the service had gone away, each to his own field

Bob Utley - Not only was Tobiah allowed to reside in the temple precincts, but the Levites had not been distributed their allotted portions (cf. Num. 18:21-32⁺; Neh. 10:37⁺). ■ **"each to his own field"** The Levites were allowed a small portion of land next to the Levitical cities (cf. Numbers 35⁺ and Joshua 21⁺) to supplement what they received from the people (cf. Num. 35:4⁺; Jos. 21:3⁺).

Ryrie - Nehemiah discovered that, in spite of the oath the people had taken, the Levites (and presumably also the priests) had not been receiving their tithes. As a result, they had to work in the fields. To rectify this, he appointed four reliable treasurers over the storehouses (v. 13).

Nehemiah 13:11 So I reprimanded the officials and said, "Why is the house of God forsaken?" Then I gathered them together and restored them to their posts.

- contended (KJV): Ne 13:17,25⁺ Ne 5:6-13⁺ Job 31:34 Pr 28:4
- Why is the house (KJV): Ne 10:39⁺ 1Sa 2:17⁺ Mal 3:8-11⁺
- place (KJV): Heb. standing

So I reprimanded the officials and said, "Why is the house of God forsaken?" Then I gathered them together and restored them to their posts

Bob Utley - **reprimanded** - This Hebrew VERB (BDB 936, KB 1224, *Qa*/IMPERFECT) means "a dispute," "a controversy," or "a legal court case." It is used in Neh. 5:7⁺; Neh 13:11, 17, 25⁺. It shows the seriousness of these violations. ■ **"Then I gathered them and restored them to their posts"** "Them" must refer to the Levites who had left the temple service to farm their own small plots of land (cf. Neh. 13:10⁺).

Nehemiah 13:12 All Judah then brought the tithe of the grain, wine and oil into the storehouses.

- brought (KJV): Ne 10:37-39⁺ Ne 12:44⁺ Lev 27:30⁺ Nu 18:20-26⁺ De 14:22⁺
- treasuries (KJV): or, storehouses, Mal 3:10⁺

All Judah then brought the tithe of the grain, wine and oil into the storehouses.

Nehemiah 13:13 In charge of the storehouses I appointed Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and Pedaiah of the Levites, and in addition to them was Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah; for they were considered reliable, and it was their task to distribute to their kinsmen.

- I made (KJV): Ne 12:44⁺ 2Ch 31:12-15⁺
- Shelemiah (KJV): Ne 3:30⁺
- Pedaiah (KJV): Ne 8:4⁺
- next to them (KJV): Heb. at their hand
- Zaccur (KJV): Ne 10:12⁺
- Mattaniah (KJV): Ne 11:22⁺ Ne 12:35⁺
- counted (KJV): Ne 7:2⁺ 2Ki 12:15⁺ 2Ki 22:7⁺ Lu 12:42⁺ Lu 16:10-12⁺ Ac 6:3⁺ 1Co 4:2⁺ 1Ti 1:12⁺ 1Ti 3:10⁺
- their office (KJV): Heb. it was upon them
- to distribute (KJV): Ac 4:35⁺ Ac 6:1⁺

In charge of the storehouses I appointed Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and Pedaiah of the Levites, and in addition to them was Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah; for they were considered reliable, and it was their task to distribute to their kinsmen.

Bob Utley - "in charge of the storehouse I appointed" This verse has been used by some to say that Ezra came after Nehemiah because in Ezra 8:33 there were already four treasurers appointed. We know so little about this period that this cannot be used as evidence for a theory of the historical relationship between Nehemiah and Ezra. Ezra and Nehemiah are mentioned together in Neh. 12:26,36,38⁺. The VERB and NOUN are from the same root (BDB 69), which means "treasure," "treasury," or "store," "storehouse." Edwin Yamauchi, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 362, tries to catch the word play by "I made treasurers over the treasuries." **"they were considered reliable"** The key term (BDB 52) is "faithful," which becomes the term "amen."

Nehemiah 13:14 Remember me for this, O my God, and do not blot out my loyal deeds which I have performed for the house of my God and its services.

- Remember me (KJV): Ne 13:22,31⁺ Ne 5:19⁺ Ps 122:6-9 Heb 6:10⁺ Rev 3:5⁺
- wipe not (KJV): If thou wert strict to mark what is done amiss, even my good deeds must be wiped out: but, Lord, remember me in thy mercy, and let my upright conduct be acceptable to Thee! By some, Nehemiah has been thought to deal too much with God on the principle of merit. That he wished God to remember him for good is sufficiently evident, and who does not wish the same? But that he expected heaven for his good deeds does not appear; for it is perfectly clear that he expected nothing from God but through the greatness of his mercy. Ne 13:22⁺
- good deeds (KJV): Heb. kindnesses
- house (KJV): 1Ch 29:3⁺ 2Ch 24:16⁺ 2Ch 31:20,21⁺ Ezr 7:20,24,27 Ps 122:6-9
- offices (KJV): or, observations

Remember me for this, O my God, and do not blot out my loyal deeds which I have performed for the house of my God and its services

Bob Utley - "Remember me for this, O my God" The VERB (BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) is used in the sense of supplication, not command. Nehemiah's devotion to YHWH can be clearly seen in his numerous prayers throughout the book (e.g., Neh. 5:19⁺; Neh 13:22,31⁺). His leadership skills were derived from his intimate faith in YHWH. ■ **"loyal deeds"** Here Nehemiah uses the term *hesed* to describe his own acts (cf. 2 Chr. 32:32⁺, where it applies to Hezekiah's acts). However, in Neh. 13:22⁺ he uses the term *hesed* to describe God's loyal covenant acts.

Henry Morris - good deeds. Note that Nehemiah was not claiming his good deeds as merit toward salvation but praying that God would not forget all he had done in light of the seeming repudiation of some reforms by the people.

Nehemiah 13:15 In those days I saw in Judah some who were treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sacks of grain and loading them on donkeys, as well as wine, grapes, figs and all kinds of loads, and they brought them into Jerusalem on the sabbath day. So I admonished them on the day they sold food.

- treading wine (KJV): Ex 20:8-11⁺ Ex 34:21⁺ Ex 35:2⁺ Isa 58:13 Eze 20:13
- burdens (KJV): Ne 10:31⁺ Nu 15:32-36⁺ Jer 17:21,22,24,27
- I testified (KJV): Ne 13:21⁺ Ne 9:29⁺ De 8:19⁺ 2Ch 24:19⁺ Ps 50:7 Jer 42:19 Mic 6:3⁺ Ac 2:40⁺ Ac 20:21⁺ Ga 5:3⁺ Eph 4:17⁺ 1Th 4:6⁺ Rev 22:18,19⁺

In those days I saw in Judah some who were treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sacks of grain and loading them on donkeys, as well as wine, grapes, figs and all kinds of loads, and they brought them into Jerusalem on the sabbath day. So I admonished them on the day they sold food

Bob Utley - on the sabbath" From Exod. 31:14⁺ and Jer. 17:19-27, we see the seriousness of the Sabbath-breaking practices which originally were part of the apathy and idolatry that caused the exile! In this short space of Nehemiah's return to the Persian court, the offensives against God's law had reappeared. In the past it was non-Jews who sold produce on the Sabbath (cf. Neh. 10:31⁺; Neh 11:16⁺), but now it was the Jews themselves! They flaunted it, even in Jerusalem (cf. Neh. 13:16⁺). See [Sabbath \(OT\)](#).

Ryrie - 13:15-22 Also in violation of the covenant (10:30-31), some Jews were preparing and transporting wares on the Sabbath (v. 15) and Phoenician traders were actually selling on the Sabbath (v. 16).

Matthew Henry - Sabbath-breaking restrained - Neh 13:15-22⁺. The keeping holy the Lord's day forms an important object for their attention who would promote true godliness. Religion never prospers while sabbaths are trodden under foot. No wonder there was a general decay of religion, and corruption of manners among the Jews, when they forsook the sanctuary and profaned the sabbath. Those little consider what an evil they do, who profane the sabbath. We must answer for the sins others are led to commit by our example. Nehemiah charges it on them as an evil thing, for so it is, proceeding from contempt of God and our own souls. He shows that sabbath-breaking was one of the sins for which God had brought judgments upon them; and if they did not take warning, but returned to the same sins again, they had to expect further judgments. The courage, zeal, and prudence of Nehemiah in this matter, are recorded for us to do likewise; and we have reason to think, that the cure he wrought was lasting. He felt and confessed himself a sinner, who could demand nothing from God as justice, when he thus cried unto him for mercy.

Nehemiah 13:16 Also men of Tyre were living there who imported fish and all kinds of merchandise, and sold them to the sons of Judah on the sabbath, even in Jerusalem.

- men of Tyre (KJV): Ex 23:12⁺ De 5:14⁺

Also men of Tyre were living there who imported fish and all kinds of merchandise, and sold them to the sons of Judah on the sabbath, even in Jerusalem.

Bob Utley - "Also the men of Tyre" See Ezekiel 27:12-36 and 28:16. These merchants coming on the Sabbath was first mentioned in Neh. 10:31⁺.

Nehemiah 13:17 Then I reprimanded the nobles of Judah and said to them, "What is this evil thing you are doing, by profaning the sabbath day?"

- I contended (KJV): Ne 13:11,25⁺ Ne 5:7⁺ Ps 82:1,2 Pr 28:4 Isa 1:10⁺ Jer 5:5 Jer 13:18 Jer 22:2-23⁺ Mic 3:1,9⁺

Then I reprimanded the nobles of Judah and said to them, "What is this evil thing you are doing, by profaning the sabbath day?"

Bob Utley - "profaning the sabbath day" This VERB (BDB 320 III, KB 319, *Piel* PERFECT) means "to pollute," "to defile." It is used often in connection with the Sabbath (cf. Exod. 31:14⁺; Isa. 56:2,6; Ezek. 20:13,16,21,24; Ezek 22:8; Ezek 23:38). The Mosaic covenant promised blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience (cf. Deuteronomy 27⁺-29). The first covenant depended on human performance, but the reality of Genesis 3⁺ doomed it from the start. It thereby forms the need for a new covenant based on YHWH's character and the Messiah's performance. These Jews should have known and done better: (1) the recent experience of the exile (2) the regular reading of the word of God (3) the godly leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah

Nehemiah 13:18 “Did not your fathers do the same, so that our God brought on us and on this city all this trouble? Yet you are adding to the wrath on Israel by profaning the sabbath.”

- Did not your (KJV): Ezr 9:13-15 Jer 17:21-23,27 Jer 44:9,22 Eze 23:8,26 Zec 1:4-6
- ye bring more (KJV): Lev 26:18,28+ Nu 32:14+ Jos 22:17,18+

Did not your fathers do the same, so that our God brought on us and on this city all this trouble? Yet you are adding to the wrath on Israel by profaning the sabbath.”

Bob Utley - YHWH's covenant with all of its blessings was also a great responsibility. Not only for the Israelites, but for the eternal redemptive purposes of God. The Israelites had reaped the consequences of disobedience time and time again (cf. Nehemiah 9+), but still each generation rebelled. Herein is the problem of the Mosaic covenant. It depended on human performance which was affected by the fall of Genesis 3+.

Nehemiah 13:19 It came about that just as it grew dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the sabbath, I commanded that the doors should be shut and that they should not open them until after the sabbath. Then I stationed some of my servants at the gates so that no load would enter on the sabbath day.

- began to be (KJV): Lev 23:22+
- I commanded (KJV): Ne 7:3+ Ex 31:14-17+ Jer 17:19-22

It came about that just as it grew dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the sabbath, I commanded that the doors should be shut and that they should not open them until after the sabbath. Then I stationed some of my servants at the gates so that no load would enter on the sabbath day.

Bob Utley - Nehemiah uses his official governmental authority to close the city on the Sabbath. Godly leadership can affect society.

Nehemiah 13:20 Once or twice the traders and merchants of every kind of merchandise spent the night outside Jerusalem.

Once or twice the traders and merchants of every kind of merchandise spent the night outside Jerusalem.

Bob Utley - "the traders and merchants of every kind of merchandise spent the night outside Jerusalem" The reason that Nehemiah would not allow this was because of the temptation for the citizens to walk outside and purchase goods on the Sabbath. Also, the visible reminder of their presence caused problems.

Nehemiah 13:21 Then I warned them and said to them, “Why do you spend the night in front of the wall? If you do so again, I will use force against you.” From that time on they did not come on the sabbath.

- I testified (KJV): Ne 13:15+
- about the wall (KJV): Heb. before the wall
- I will lay (KJV): Ezr 7:26 Ro 13:3,4+ 1Pe 2:14+

Then I warned them and said to them, “Why do you spend the night in front of the wall? If you do so again, I will use force against you.” From that time on they did not come on the sabbath.

Nehemiah 13:22 And I commanded the Levites that they should purify themselves and come as gatekeepers to sanctify the sabbath day. For this also remember me, O my God, and have compassion on me according to the greatness of Your lovingkindness.

- I commanded (KJV): Ne 7:64,65+ Ne 12:30+ 2Ki 23:4+ 1Ch 15:12-14+ 2Ch 29:4,5,24,27,30+ Isa 49:23+
- cleanse (KJV): Ne 12:10+

- sanctify (KJV): De 5:12⁺
- Remember (KJV): Ne 13:14,31⁺ Ne 5:19⁺ Ps 132:1-5 Isa 38:3⁺ 2Co 1:12⁺ 2Ti 4:7,8⁺
- spare me (KJV): Ps 25:6,7 Ps 51:1⁺ Ps 130:3,4,7 Ps 143:1,2
- greatness (KJV): or, multitude, Ps 5:7 Isa 55:7

And I commanded the Levites that they should purify themselves and come as gatekeepers to sanctify the sabbath day. For this also remember me, O my God, and have compassion on me according to the greatness of Your lovingkindness.

Bob Utley - "the Levites. . .as gatekeepers" The city as a whole was considered holy to Nehemiah, and he appointed Levites to guard the city gates (cf. Neh. 7:1⁺). ■ **"For this also remember me, O my God"** This is another of Nehemiah's prayers for God to remember his covenant deeds and leadership (e.g., Neh. 13:14,22,31⁺; Neh 5:19⁺). This is in contrast to Nehemiah's prayers for God to remember those who violated His covenant (cf. Neh. 6:14⁺; Neh 13:29⁺). The paradox of biblical faith is clearly seen in this verse. Nehemiah asked God to remember (BDB 209, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) his deeds, but he based the request on the covenant faithfulness (*hesed*, BDB 338) of God! God's relationship with fallen humanity is both relational and obedient (cf. Luke 6:46⁺).

Nehemiah 13:23 In those days I also saw that the Jews had married women from Ashdod, Ammon and Moab.

- married (KJV): Heb. made to dwell with them, Ne 10:30⁺ Ezr 9:2,11,12 Ezr 10:10,44 2Co 6:14⁺
- Ashdod (KJV): 1Sa 5:1⁺
- Ammon (KJV): Ne 13:1-3⁺

In those days I also saw that the Jews had married women from Ashdod, Ammon and Moab.

Bob Utley - "In those days I saw that the Jews had married women" There is some problem as to the relationship between Ezra 9 and 10 and Nehemiah 10⁺. We cannot answer all of the questions about this, but it is obvious that it was a recurring problem which was not solved by either leader. ■ **"Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab"** Not only were these pagan people, but they were enemies of the returning Jews. Their inclusion in the people of God was mandated by Moses (cf. Neh. 13:1⁺).

Henry Morris - married wives. Some of the Jews were actually marrying women of the Philistines, Ammonites and Moabites, and they were not even teaching their children to speak Hebrew (Nehemiah 12:24⁺).

Ryrie - 13:23-25 The sin of mixed marriages had erupted again (see notes on Ezra 9:1-4 and 10:44), and the children of these marriages could not speak Hebrew. Nehemiah dealt firmly with the offenders. On pulling out the hair, see note on Isa. 50:4-9⁺.

Matthew Henry - The dismissal of strange wives - Neh 13:23-31⁺. If either parent be ungodly, corrupt nature will incline the children to take after that one; which is a strong reason why Christians should not be unequally yoked. In the education of children, great care should be taken about the government of their tongues; that they learn not the language of Ashdod, no impious or impure talk, no corrupt communication. Nehemiah showed the evil of these marriages. Some, more obstinate than the rest, he smote, that is, ordered them to be beaten by the officers according to the law, Deuteronomy 25:2,3⁺. Here are Nehemiah's prayers on this occasion He prays, "Remember them, O my God." Lord, convince and convert them; put them in mind of what they should be and do. The best services to the public have been forgotten by those for whom they were done, therefore Nehemiah refers himself to God, to recompense him. This may well be the summary of our petitions; we need no more to make us happy than this; Remember me, O my God, for good. We may humbly hope that the Lord will remember us and our services, although, after lives of unwearied activity and usefulness, we shall still see cause to abhor ourselves and repent in dust and ashes, and to cry out with Nehemiah, Spare me, O my God, according to the greatness of they mercy.

Nehemiah 13:24 As for their children, half spoke in the language of Ashdod, and none of them was able to speak the language of Judah, but the language of his own people.

- could not speak (KJV): Heb. they discerned not to speak
- each people (KJV): Heb. people and people, Zep 3:9⁺

As for their children, half spoke in the language of Ashdod, and none of them was able to speak the language of Judah, but the language of his own people

Bob Utley - "As for their children, half spoke in the language of Ashdod" The Hebrew idiom is difficult to translate. It is not

certain if they spoke a mixture of one language and the other or simply spoke the other, but it does show the major problem of these mixed marriages was that the education of the children was being done by their pagan mothers. This corrupted the purity of the monotheism of YHWH. These children could not read nor understand God's word. ■ **"the language of Judah"** This must refer to Hebrew (cf. 2 Chr. 32:18⁺). The other people groups in the Persian Province Beyond the River probably spoke a dialect of Aramaic (although it is possible they retained a working knowledge of the ancient tribal language) as did most Jews. The need for a knowledge of Hebrew (learned in synagogue school) was to be able to read and understand God's word.

Nehemiah 13:25 So I contended with them and cursed them and struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, "You shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor take of their daughters for your sons or for yourselves.

- I contended (KJV): Ne 13:11,17⁺ Pr 28:4
- cursed (KJV): or, reviled, Ne 5:13⁺ De 27:14-26⁺ Ps 15:4 Lu 11:45,46⁺
- smote (KJV): De 25:2,3⁺ Ezr 7:26
- plucked (KJV): Isa 50:6⁺
- made them (KJV): Ne 10:29,30⁺ De 6:13⁺ 2Ch 15:12-15⁺ Ezr 10:5
- Ye shall not (KJV): Ex 34:16⁺ De 7:3⁺

So I contended with them and cursed them and struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, "You shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor take of their daughters for your sons or for yourselves

Bob Utley - This shows the emotional intensity and the seriousness of their sin ("cursed" [BDB 886, KB 1103, *Piel* IMPERFECT]; "struck" [BDB 645, KB 697, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT]; "pulled out their hair" [BDB 595, KB 634, *Qal* IMPERFECT]; "made them swear" [BDB 989, KB 1396, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT]; also in Neh. 13:28⁺, "drove them away" [BDB 137, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT]). ■ **"I contended with them"** The VERB (BDB 936, KB 1224, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is used several times in this context (cf. Neh. 13:11,17,25⁺; and 5:7).

Believer's Study Bible - (vv. 25-29) The severity of Nehemiah's actions is explained by Israel's continuing to intermarry with the pagan nations, even after their covenant to remain a separate people (cf. ch. 10). Nehemiah actually dictated the words of the oath, having them repeat the penalty that if they intermarried with the heathen, the curse of God would fall upon them. He thus emphasized the disastrous results of such unions (v. 26). Nehemiah acted with particular severity toward "one of the sons of Joiada" because this marriage "defiled the priesthood" (v. 29) and violated the covenant between God and the Levites (cf. Mal. 2:4⁺).

Nehemiah 13:26 "Did not Solomon king of Israel sin regarding these things? Yet among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel; nevertheless the foreign women caused even him to sin.

- Did not Solomon (KJV): 1Ki 11:1-8⁺ Ec 7:26⁺
- yet among (KJV): 2Sa 12:24,25⁺ 1Ki 3:13⁺ 2Ch 1:12⁺ 2Ch 9:22⁺
- who was beloved (KJV): 2Sa 12:24⁺

Did not Solomon king of Israel sin regarding these things? Yet among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel; nevertheless the foreign women caused even him to sin

Ryrie - Foreign wives had proved to be Solomon's downfall (1 Kings 11:1-8⁺).

Bob Utley - See the tragic account in 1 Kings 11⁺.

Nehemiah 13:27 "Do we then hear about you that you have committed all this great evil by acting unfaithfully against our God by marrying foreign women?"

- Shall we then (KJV): 1Sa 30:24⁺
- to transgress (KJV): Ezr 10:2

Do we then hear about you that you have committed all this great evil by acting unfaithfully against our God by marrying

foreign women

Bob Utley - "by acting unfaithfully against our God" This term "unfaithfully" (BDB 591, KB 612, *Qa*/INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) is also used in Ezra 10:2,10 to describe Jews marrying pagan women. In Arabic this same root is used for treason, treachery, and betrayal. God is the victim! This term speaks of intimate, personal relationships (cf. Num. 5:11-31⁺, esp. Neh. 13:12,27⁺). This is the very VERB used to describe Moses' act of rebellion in striking the rock (cf. Num. 20:10-12⁺; Num 27:12-14⁺).

Nehemiah 13:28 Even one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was a son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite, so I drove him away from me.

- And one (KJV): Josephus relates, that this young man was named Manasseh; and that at his request, Sanballat and the Samaritans built their temple upon mount Gerizim, in opposition to that at Jerusalem, at which he officiated, in some measure, according to the Mosaic ritual.
- Joiada (KJV): Ne 12:10,22⁺
- Eliashib (KJV): Ne 3:1⁺
- son in law (KJV): Ne 13:4,5⁺ Ne 6:17-19⁺
- Sanballat (KJV): Ne 2:19⁺
- I chased (KJV): Ne 13:25⁺ Ps 101:8 Pr 20:8,26 Ro 13:3,4⁺

Even one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was a son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite, so I drove him away from me

Bob Utley - "Even one of the sons of Joiada" This shows that the family of the high priest was involved in these inter-racial marriages even to the point of marrying the daughter of Sanballat, the enemy of the people of God. Neh. 13:29⁺ records Nehemiah's prayer/curse!

Henry Morris - Sanballat. Sanballat was the main leader of the opposition to Nehemiah and the rebuilding of Jerusalem, yet Eliashib had allowed one of his grandsons to marry his daughter. Corrupting the institution of the priesthood in this way was even more blameworthy than the other inter-marriages. Josephus says that this apostate later became chief priest of the rival Samaritan temple built by Sanballat on Mount Gerizim, after being expelled by Nehemiah.

Ryrie - One of the younger sons of Joiada (Johanan was the oldest son, 12:11, 22) married a daughter of Sanballat. See note on 2:10. He deserved to be expelled, because the priestly line was not to be contaminated by intermarriage (Lev. 21:6-8, 14-15⁺).

Nehemiah 13:29 Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites.

- Remember (KJV): Ne 6:14⁺ Ps 59:5-13 2Ti 4:14⁺
- because they have defiled (KJV): Heb. for the defilings of, Lev 21:1-7⁺
- the covenant (KJV): Nu 16:9,10⁺ Nu 25:12,13⁺ 1Sa 2:30⁺ Mal 2:4-8,10-12⁺

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

Bob Utley - "Remember them" Another prayer of Nehemiah, but this one is a curse!

Nehemiah 13:30 Thus I purified them from everything foreign and appointed duties for the priests and the Levites, each in his task,

- cleansed (KJV): Ne 10:30⁺
- appointed (KJV): Ne 12:1-26⁺ 1Ch 23:1-26:32

Thus I purified them from everything foreign and appointed duties for the priests and the Levites, each in his task

Believer's Study Bible - The book ends with a brief summary of Nehemiah's ministry in the community of Israel: (1) the purification

of the people from heathen practices, and (2) the restoration of regular worship. His final words are a prayer indicating once more his constant reliance upon God for all things in all times (1:4-11; 2:4, 20; 4:4, 9, 20; 5:15, 19; 6:9, 14; 13:14, 22, 29).

Bob Utley - Nehemiah restored the order established before he left (cf. Neh. 13:11⁺).

Nehemiah 13:31 and I arranged for the supply of wood at appointed times and for the first fruits. Remember me, O my God, for good.

- the wood (KJV): Ne 10:34⁺
- Remember (KJV): Ne 13:14,22⁺ Ps 25:7 Ps 26:8,9 Ps 106:4⁺ Lu 23:42⁺

and I arranged for the supply of wood at appointed times and for the first fruits. Remember me, O my God, for good

Bob Utley -

"Remember me, O my God" This book is characterized by Nehemiah's prayers for God to remember (1) His word – Neh. 1:8⁺ (2) His servant, Nehemiah – Neh. 5:19⁺; Neh 13:14,22,31⁺ (3) His enemies – Neh. 6:14⁺; Neh 13:29⁺