

Bible Study June 11, 2025

REMEMBER ME...NEHEMIAH 13 (ESV)

Recap:

- Nehemiah rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem 1-6
- He and Ezra read the law and the people recommitted to obeying the Law. 8-10

Nehemiah 10:28-32 (ESV)

²⁸ “The rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple servants, and all who have separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the Law of God, their wives, their sons, their daughters, all who have knowledge and understanding, ²⁹ join with their brothers, their nobles, and enter into a curse and an oath to walk in God’s Law that was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord and his rules and his statutes. ³⁰ We will not give our daughters to the peoples of the land or take their daughters for our sons. ³¹ And if the peoples of the land bring in goods or any grain on the Sabbath day to sell, we will not buy from them on the Sabbath or on a holy day. And we will forego the crops of the seventh year and the exaction of every debt. ³² “We also take on ourselves the obligation to give yearly a third part of a shekel for the service of the house of our God: ³³ for the showbread, the regular grain offering, the regular burnt offering, the Sabbaths, the new moons, the appointed feasts, the holy things, and the sin offerings to make atonement for Israel, and for all the work of the house of our God.

- Then they had a praise and worship session to dedicate the rebuilding of the wall and rededication of the people to God. 11-12

Nehemiah's Final 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 enter the assembly of God, ² for they did not meet the people of Israel with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them—yet our God turned the curse into a blessing. ³ As soon as the people heard the law, they separated from Israel all those of foreign descent.

“Those of foreign descent” refers to the Ammonites and Moabites, two nations who were bitter enemies of Israel (13:1). God’s law clearly stated that these two peoples should never be allowed in the Temple (Deuteronomy 23:3-5). This had nothing to do with racial prejudice, because God clearly loved all people, including foreigners (Deuteronomy 10:18). He allowed foreigners to make sacrifices (Numbers 15:11-16), and he desires all nations to know and love him (Isaiah 42:6). But while God wants all to come to him, he warns believers to stay away from those bent on evil (Proverbs 24:1).

Remember The House Of God!

⁴ Now before this, Eliashib the priest, who was appointed over the chambers of the house of our God, and who was related to Tobiah, ⁵ prepared for Tobiah a large chamber where they had previously put the grain offering, the frankincense, the vessels, and the tithes of grain, wine, and oil, which were given by commandment to the Levites, singers, and gatekeepers, and the contributions for the priests.

1 Corinthians 5:6-8 (ESV)

⁶ Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? ⁷ Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. ⁸ Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

⁶ While this was taking place, I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I went to the king. And after some time I asked leave of the king ⁷ and came to Jerusalem, and I then discovered the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, preparing for him a chamber in the courts of the house of God.

Luke 4:13 (ESV)

¹³ And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

Nehemiah had to return to Babylon in 433 BC, 12 years after he had arrived in Jerusalem. Either he was recalled by Artaxerxes or he was fulfilling an agreement to return. It is not known exactly how long he remained in Babylon, but when he returned to Jerusalem (13:7), he found that one of his major opponents in rebuilding the wall, Tobiah, had been given his own room at the Temple. Tobiah was an Ammonite (4:3) and thus forbidden to enter the Temple. Eliashib, the priest, was a relative of Tobiah, so Tobiah used his influence to get this special room. Nehemiah 2, 4, and 6 tell about Tobiah's opposition to Nehemiah and Nehemiah's appropriate action.

⁸ And I was very angry, and I threw all the household furniture of Tobiah out of the chamber. ⁹ Then I gave orders, and they cleansed the chambers, and I brought back there the vessels of the house of God, with the grain offering and the frankincense.

¹⁰ I also found out that the portions of the Levites had not been given to them, so that the Levites and the singers, who did the work, had fled each to his field.

Because the Levites were no longer supported, they had returned to their farms to support themselves, neglecting their Temple duties and the spiritual welfare of the people. Spiritual workers and ministers deserve their pay, and their support ought to be enough to care for their needs. They shouldn't have to suffer (or leave) because believers don't adequately support them.

¹¹ So I confronted the officials and said, "Why is the house of God forsaken?" And I gathered them together and set them in their stations. ¹² Then all Judah brought the tithe of the grain, wine, and oil into the storehouses. ¹³ And I appointed as treasurers over the storehouses Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and Pedaiah of the Levites, and as their assistant Hanan the son of Zaccur, son of Mattaniah, for they were considered

reliable, and their duty was to distribute to their brothers. 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 his service.

Remember up the Sabbath!

¹⁵ In those days I saw in Judah people treading winepresses on the Sabbath, and bringing in heaps of grain and loading them on donkeys, and also wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of loads, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I warned them on the day when they sold food.

- Sabbath is from the Hebrew root meaning “to cease” – In creation God ceased his work on the seventh day, So the seventh day became the sabbath.
- When is the Sabbath observed? Jews rest and worshipped on Saturday. Christians Worship and rest on Sunday, because that is when Jesus rose from the dead and Salvation’s work was done.

¹⁶ Tyrians also, who lived in the city, brought in fish and all kinds of goods and sold them on the Sabbath to the people of Judah, in Jerusalem itself!

Tyre was a large Phoenician city and port on the Mediterranean Sea. They were popular in ancient times as merchants.

- There is a biblical Theology of Work. Six days of work, one day of rest. And during work days it doesn’t have to be 24 hours a day. Take time on that day to commune with God, train your kids, nurture your spouse, connect to community.

¹⁷ Then I confronted the nobles of Judah and said to them, “What is this evil thing that you are doing, profaning the Sabbath day? ¹⁸ Did not your fathers act in this way, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Now you are bringing more wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath.”

God had commanded the Israelites not to work on the Sabbath but rather to rest in remembrance of Creation and the Exodus (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15). The Sabbath rest, lasting from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday, was to be honored and observed by all Jews, servants, visiting foreigners, and even farm animals. Jerusalem’s busy Sabbath trade directly violated God’s law, so Nehemiah commanded that the city gates be shut and traders be sent home every Friday afternoon as the Sabbath hours approached.

¹⁹ As soon as it began to grow dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the Sabbath, I commanded that the doors should be shut and gave orders that they should not be opened until after the Sabbath. And I stationed some of my servants at the gates, that no load might be brought in on the Sabbath day. ²⁰ Then the merchants and sellers of all kinds of wares lodged outside Jerusalem once or twice. ²¹ But I warned them and said to them, “Why do you lodge outside the wall? If you do so again, I will lay hands on you.” From that time on they did not come on the Sabbath.

22 Then I commanded the Levites that they should purify themselves and come and guard the gates, to keep the Sabbath day holy. Remember this also in my favor, O my God, and spare me according to the greatness of your steadfast love.

- Jeremiah 17:19-27 tell that one of the reasons Jerusalem was taken captive was because they didn't keep the sabbath.

Remember the Covenant

23 In those days also I saw the Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. 24 And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and they could not speak the language of Judah, but only the language of each people.

Ashdod was on the Mediterranean coast, in the region controlled by the Philistines. Ammon and Moab were across the Jordan to the east.

1 Corinthians 6:14-15 (ESV)

14 Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?

15 What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever?

25 And I confronted them and cursed them and beat some of them and pulled out their hair. And I made them take an oath in the name of God, saying, "You shall not give your daughters to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons or for yourselves.

Nehemiah was filled with righteous indignation at the blatant way the Jews were breaking God's laws and disregarding the covenant they had reaffirmed such a short time before (10:30; see also Ezra 10:3). The people had promised not to allow their children to marry pagans. But during Nehemiah's absence, the people had been intermarrying, breaking their solemn covenant agreement with God. Nehemiah's severe treatment of these people shows the contrast between his great faithfulness to God and the people's neglect, disobedience, and disloyalty.

26 Did not Solomon king of Israel sin on account of such women? Among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was beloved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless, foreign women made even him to sin.

Nehemiah used the example of Solomon's mistakes to teach his people. If one of the greatest kings of Israel could fall because of the influence of unbelievers, others could too. Nehemiah saw this principle in Solomon's example: Your gifts and strengths won't be of much benefit if you fail to deal with your weaknesses. Although Solomon had been a great king, his marriages to foreign women had brought tragedy to the whole kingdom. A tendency to sin must be recognized and dealt with swiftly; otherwise, it may overpower you and bring you down. One important reason to read the Bible is to learn from the mistakes of God's people.

27 Shall we then listen to you and do all this great evil and act treacherously against our God by marrying foreign women?"

28 And one of the sons of Jehoiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was the son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite. Therefore I chased him from me. 29 Remember them, O my God, because they have desecrated the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites.

Remember Me

30 Thus I cleansed them from everything foreign, and I established the duties of the priests and Levites, each in his work; 31 and I provided for the wood offering at appointed times, and for the firstfruits.

Remember me, O my God, for good.

Revelations 20:12-13 (ESV)

12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. 13 And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done.

Nehemiah's life story provides many principles of effective leadership that are still valid today: (1) Have a clear purpose and keep evaluating it in light of God's will. Nothing prevented Nehemiah from staying on track. (2) Be straightforward and honest. Everyone knew exactly what Nehemiah needed, and he spoke the truth even when it made his goal harder to achieve. (3) Live above reproach. The accusations against Nehemiah were empty and false. (4) Be a person of constant prayer, deriving power and wisdom from your contact with God. Everything Nehemiah did glorified God.

Leadership appears glamorous at times, but it is often lonely, thankless, and filled with pressure to compromise values and standards. Nehemiah was able to accomplish a huge task against incredible odds because he learned that there is no success without risk of failure, no reward without hard work, no opportunity without criticism, and no true leadership without trust in God. This book is about rebuilding the wall of a great city, but it is also about spiritual renewal—rebuilding a people's dependence on God. When we take our eyes off God, our lives begin to crumble.