

Nehemiah 13:4-9 – Cleaning out the Church for the Kingdom’s Sake

TSK, HebrewLexicon, Barnes, Handfuls, Gaebelin, Clarke, Gill, Geneva, JFB, Delitzsch, Henry, Poole, Trapp, Armstrong, Gray, Expositor’s
Brothers and Sisters in the Lord: **What do you do if you have a person living in your house who is always drunk...or uses drugs...or refuses to work...or steals...or takes God’s name in vain...or hates your wife?**

You would be at your wits end very quickly, wouldn’t you?

Wouldn’t you want to clean your house...for the sake of your family?

Of course! You would show that person the door!

The welfare of your family is your priority.

There was also corruption in God’s house in Judah! It started with corrupt families.

The corrupt priest had made God’s house into a pigsty by bringing in a corrupt family to live there.

And it was time to clean house!

Hear about this today.

Our headings are:

Corruption of God’s House

Cleansing of God’s House

Our goals are: **That you will pray and work to clean-up churches where the leadership is corrupted, knowing that corrupt leadership leads to corrupt worship, and that corrupt worship hinders God’s kingdom from expanding.**

Corruption of God’s House

4 Now before this, **Eliashib the priest, having authority over the storerooms of the house of our God,** was allied with Tobiah. 5 And he **had prepared for him 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.

1. Eliashib the priest of Yahweh (likely the High Priest), a man of notable authority, watching over the storerooms of God, was allied by marriage to Tobiah, the Ammonite, so he prepared a large room (with other rooms) for Tobiah to live in.

Tobiah had married a relative of Eliashib and his son married as Jew also.

Nehemiah 6:18 For many in Judah were pledged to him, because he was the son-in-law of Shechaniah the son of Arah, and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah.

Also **Eliashib's grandson was married to Sanballat's daughter.**

Sanballat was a clear enemy of God's people and worked against the coming of Messiah.

2. The Ammonites (Tobiah was one of their diplomats.) and the Moabites were people God had singled out for special attention because they hated his people.

The Ammonites and the Moabites were the descendants of Lot through his incestuous relations with his daughters.

God declared that these people were to be kept out of his temple and even its courts. Ammon was bad.

Tobiah was one of the worst Ammonites.

Tobiah meant "goddess of Jehovah." But it should have been "**godless of Satan.**"

He was an avid mocker of Nehemiah and the Jews as they rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem and secured it.

Nehemiah 2:19 But when Sanballat the Horonite, **Tobiah the Ammonite official**, and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they laughed at us and despised us, and said, "What is this thing that you are doing? Will you rebel against the king?" 20 So I answered them, and said to them, "The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build, **but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem.**"

3. These storerooms were used to keep things for the priests and for the offerings in the worship of God, so they could not be polluted by non-believers, especially one from Ammon, and they could not have non-consecrated things there.

Deuteronomy 14: 28 "At the end of every third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store it up within your gates.

These storerooms were like additions to the temple.

1 Kings 6:5 Against the wall of the temple he built chambers all around, against the walls of the temple, all around the sanctuary and the inner sanctuary. Thus he made side chambers all around it.

Tobiah the Ammonite and his things were ceremonially unclean.

To take a place that was ceremonially clean and then give it to a non-believer was abominable!

The High Priest should have known better than to violate God's law, but he didn't care.

4. The things that were stored there were apparently moved out to make room for Tobiah.

We don't know where they went, but we know what should have been there!

Look at what was being replaced: the grain offerings, frankincense, articles used in the temple, and tithes of grain, new wine, and oil.

Look at what they got in return! They got a sweet talker. The worship of God was harmed for not cleaning house!

5. And what about these mixed marriages?

The Jews had other sinful mixed marriages and they had to clean house too.

6. Lesson:

a. *Bad relations with non-Christians can make you make bad decisions that hurt you and bring shame to the Lord Jesus.*

You can leave the church.

You can destroy your family.

You can develop bad habits.

b. *Family line is not as important as faith line.* God must come first.

Never sacrifice worship relations.

Someone's birthday must never take place when you must worship.

That is making that person into god and endangering that person's life!

God hates any other gods before his face! Did you hear that?

Think about that!

c. Nothing corrupts a church more than a corrupt, compromising minister.

What danger!

d. Have we at New Horizon added or removed anything God requires from us?

e. If a church embraces the state, which is an enemy of God, then that church is not your friend.

f. The church is not a place for independent spirits as Eliashib, and it is not a place of independence for any of us. We have a constitution: The Word of God!

Too many people want to do whatever they want without submission to God's law.

g. Be moved...be angry...when there is compromise.

Acts 17:16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, **his spirit was provoked within him** when he saw that the city was given over to idols.

2 Corinthians 5:13 For **if we are beside ourselves, it is for God;** or if we are of sound mind, it is for you.

Cleansing of God's House

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. Then **after certain days I obtained leave from the king,**

1. Nehemiah was not in Jerusalem for a long time, for after the walls were rebuilt and the people renewed their vows to worship God, he had returned to Shushan to serve the king.

Likely, upon hearing of the troubles in Jerusalem, he asked the king's permission to return to Jerusalem to sort out the troubles concerning the worship of God – again!

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.**

2. Nehemiah then came to Jerusalem and saw the disaster it had become in a few years, including seeing that Eliashib had made room for Tobiah in the holy temple!

This temple represented Christ so it was abominable to bring someone like Tobiah to not just visit, but to live there. The rich symbols were lost.

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.

3. Nehemiah was grieved, even as he had grieved earlier when he found out the state of the walls of Jerusalem.

Tobiah's nice things (and he was an official) were not fit for the clean house of God.

4. Nehemiah then acted.

a. He threw out all of Tobiah's household goods from the apartment.

When Ezra had seen the abomination taking place in Israel, he became appalled, but that was it; when Nehemiah saw it, it not only grieved him but he took action.

b. He demanded Eliashib clean the room and return the articles of worship to the house of God.

Nehemiah did not negotiate because **there is no negotiation with the worship of God.**

Mark 11:15 So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. 16 And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. 17 Then He taught, saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a 'den of thieves.'"

c. The temple building had to then go through a ritual cleaning to removed the pollution it endured. (Numbers 15)

The Levites, not Nehemiah, would have done this.

5. Lessons:

a. Learn to long for the well-being of the church, and then put that longing to action!

Speak up. Elders and deacons, act!

The church belongs to Jesus and you must keep his church pure.

He does not want a polluted bride.

Don't be satisfied with being disappointed or disgusted. Act!

b. Since the temple represented the presence of Christ, and since we are the temple of God, you can't afford to be indifferent to what is occurring in the church.

c. Man must worship God the way God says, and he wants clean worship.

It is not your duty to go into another church and start turning it upside down, but you can pray for them and engage them if they are corruptly worshiping God.

You don't have the authority to take a whip like Jesus did, overturn their tables, and beat them.

d. Man's precious possessions might be good for man, but they are not fit for the kingdom of God unless they are used for God's glory.

e. In this passage you also see the need for discipline, leading to excommunication of those who show by their lives that they will not honor the Lord Jesus.

f. Do you have the stomach for discipline?

Do you have the stomach to remove a deacon, an elder, or a minister from his office?

If you don't have the stomach, ask God for it!

It is essential that personal relations don't cloud your judgment!

Conclusion:

Nehemiah had to clean up the temple as it was the sacred place of worship of Yahweh.

He had to get rid of pollutants as Tobiah and his possessions.

He had to rebuke the High Priest so he would honor God instead of sacrificing God's worship for his family relations.

He then had to purify the temple so it would be ready for worship.

Beloved in Jesus Christ:

1. Because worship is your most important duty, be ready to remove any obstacle from

worship, whether it would be thing or people.

Christ's honor is at stake.

It doesn't matter if the church becomes smaller; you must do what is right.

Clean the church!

2. Pray that the church will continue to be pure.

Pray Christ and the cross will always be the center.

Pray that discipline will be carefully, but determinedly administered.

Pray the sacraments will be treasured and received.

3. Bring in people to the church, people who are willing to bow the knee to the King.

May the church never accept those who have other gods just because it wants to grow.

Finally: If you are not a Christian, you wouldn't simply be tossed out of the church; you will be tossed into hell for eternity.

If you don't want to be tossed into hell, come with the blood of Jesus on your hands and plead with the Father and say: "I bring Christ's blood for my blood.

Receive me as your own child.

I want to live for you."