

Nehemiah 13:1-9 – “Be a Holy People”

A. Sometimes you start a job & leave it for others to manage for a season; however, while you are away those left in charge can cause a whole lot of damage to what you worked so hard to establish.

B. This is what happened to Nehemiah.

1. In **chapters 1 & 2**, when Nehemiah 1st heard how bad things were in Jerusalem with its torn-down walls & burnt gates, it was during the 12th year of King Artaxerxes (**2:1**).
2. In **Neh 5:14**, he mentioned serving as governor of Judea for 12 years.
3. **Chapter 13** recorded how he left for a season to serve the king. Upon his return, it had been 21+ years since God called Nehemiah to this task of serving Jerusalem & the people of Judah.

God calls you to be a holy people.	I. ISRAEL’S SEPARATION FROM GENTILES II. YOUR ONGOING CALL TO BE SEPARATE
------------------------------------	--

I. **ISRAEL’S SEPARATION FROM GENTILES** → **vv1-3**

A. The reading mentioned here was from **Deut 23:3** “**No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the Lord; none of their descendants, even to the 10th generation, shall ever enter the assembly of the Lord.**”

1. As in the case of Ruth the Moabitess, some devout persons were allowed to become Jewish proselytes. In other words, Ruth converted from the idolatry of the Moabites to faithfully worship the God of Israel & Him alone.
2. Ruth married Boaz the kinsman redeemer & both became ancestors of King David. **Mat 1** mentioned them both in the genealogy of Joseph the husband of Mary by whom Jesus was born (**vv5 & 16**) after she conceived the Messiah by the power of the Holy Spirit.

B. Since Israel accepted some gentiles like Rahab & Ruth as Jewish proselytes, why do we read this firm action in **Neh 13:3? v3: “When they heard the law, they excluded all foreigners from Israel.”**

1. In the rare cases of Rahab & Ruth, both women became devout Israelites.
2. This wasn’t the case for the compromised, mixed marriages during the days of Nehemiah.

→ **vv23-24**

- a. The Israelite men didn’t marry devout converts from Ashdod, Ammon, & Moab.
- b. These women from pagan nations clearly had more influence upon the outcome of the children than their fathers did.
- c. The most notorious, pathetic example of a compromised marriage involved Tobiah the Ammonite official. **Neh 6:18** recorded how “**many in Judah were bound by oath to him because he [Tobiah] was the son-in-law of Shecaniah the son of Arah, & his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah.**”

C. When Nehemiah was away, great favoritism was given to this same Tobiah who joined Sanballat to mock & despise the Jews when they began to rebuild the wall (**Neh 2:19**) saying, “**What is this thing you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?**” He also joined the plot to harm Nehemiah to stop their work on the wall (**6:1-5**). Look at the favor they gave such a wicked pagan while Nehemiah was away. → **vv4-8**.

II. YOUR ONGOING CALL TO BE SEPARATE

A. Holiness is defined as being set apart or separate for God's use rather than for the world.

1. Think of the gold & silver Nebuchadnezzar took from the 1st temple in Jerusalem.
 - a. They were set apart— to be kept separate— for the worship of God.
 - b. They were not to be used for drinking parties as in the days when Belshazzar reigned after his father Nebuchadnezzar.
 - c. Because they **“drank the wine & praised the gods of gold & silver, of bronze, iron, wood & stone”** the fingers of a man's hand to emerged & wrote a message of judgment on the wall saying, **“God has numbered your kingdom & put an end to it. you have been weighed on the scales & found deficient” (Dan 5:1-9, vv25-31).**
2. In a similar fashion, God called Israel to be a special people set apart from the nations to worship & serve Him only. For them to join themselves to pagan worship & immorality was to repeat the sin of King Belshazzar. They were weighed on the scales & found deficient.

B. Isa 52:11 gave instruction to the priests & Levites: **“Depart, depart, go out from there, touch nothing unclean; go out of the midst of her, purify yourselves, you who carry the vessels of the Lord”** How do we apply such a verse today in the modern, Christian church after the death, burial resurrection, & ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ?

1. Paul said that saints— holy ones trusting in Christ— are not to be bound to unbelievers.
→ 2 Cor 6:14-18.
 - a. This is a warning against marriage to unbelievers; however, it also tells us to avoid all relationships that can negatively influence us to compromise our holy faith.
 - 1) Some deceive themselves thinking they are serving as the light of Christ to a group of unbelieving friends. Some rarely see a convert; pray for that.
 - 2) The question you must ask yourself is: “Who is really influencing who?”
 - b. God says, **“come out from their midst & be separate”** from unbelievers.
2. When the wickedness of Jerusalem was fulfilled & God foretold how He was going to destroy that great city, he warned the Christians within her through the book of Revelation given to John. He heard a voice from heaven saying, **“Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins & receive of her plagues; for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, & God has remembered her iniquities” (Rev 18:4-5).**
 - a. Christians believed God's warning given to John & fled Jerusalem before the Romans surrounded the city to siege it in 70 AD.
 - b. Josephus the historian recorded how devastating that judgment upon Jerusalem was.

C. All this talk of holiness should make us think about our spiritual condition when we must stand before God one day. He is infinite, eternal, & unchangeable in His holiness & justice!

Review, further application, & conclusion: