

Restoration of the Sabbath

Nehemiah 13: 15-22

Note 1;

What Nehemiah saw.

*Neh 13:15a In those days saw I in Judah some **treading** wine presses on the sabbath, and **bringing** in sheaves, and **lading** asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day:*

Consider;

They were: treading, bringing and lading.

Also we read:

“all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day”

This was not exceptional but the Sabbath was becoming an ordinary day!

The Jews had a saying:

“Driving away the Sabbath”

This is what they were doing.

As the stuff was coming in, the Sabbath was going out!

Consider:

Even the animals were not spared.

We read:

“*and lading asses*”

Compare:

{The re-giving of the law}

Deu 5:14 But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou.

Consider:

The animals were never given a day of rest.

Note 2;

What Nehemiah Said.

and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals.

Margin reads:

“I warned them”

Consider:

Both sides were doing something.

They were selling.

Nehemiah was testifying or warning

Nehemiah was performing an act of mercy in warning them.

Consider:

This was not the first time Judah had been warning for breaking and despising the Sabbath.

Compare:

Jeremiah 17: 19-27 {Jeremiah had preached and prophesied leading up to and through the Babylonian captivity.

Note:

Sabbath breaking was the key factor in why God gave them over to the Babylonians!

Now, just over 100 years later they are committing the very same sins of their forefathers.

App:

How we honour the Sabbath is a good test of our Spiritual health.

A 100 years before Jeremiah

Isaiah prophesied:

Isa 58:13 If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words:

Isa 58:14 Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage

of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

Note 3;

The influence of other Nations.

Neh 13:16 There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem.

Barnes notes:

Friendly relations subsisted between the Phoenicians and the Jews, after the captivity Ezr 3:7.

Ezr 3:7 Then they gave money to the masons and carpenters, and food, drink, and oil to the Sidonians and to the Tyrians, to bring cedar wood from Lebanon to the sea at Joppa, according to the permission they had from Cyrus king of Persia.

"It was, however, a new fact, and one pregnant with evil consequences, that the Tyrians should have established a permanent colony at Jerusalem. Its influence on the other inhabitants

weakened the hold of the Law upon men's consciences, and caused it to be transgressed continually more and more openly."

App:

The world will never promote obedience to the Sabbath.

We see in our own nation, that the Lord's day is a popular day for all sorts of sports.

Anecdote:

When the girls were younger they wanted to play hockey.

But all the games were played on the Lord's day.

Note 4;

What Nehemiah did.

Neh 13:17a Then I contended with the nobles of Judah,

"Contended" {grapple}

Compare:

Neh 13:11 Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken? And I gathered them together, and set them in their place.

And:

Neh 13:25 And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves.

Note 5;

How Nehemiah reasoned.

*17b
and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do,
and profane the sabbath day?*

Consider:

He left them in no doubt as to the seriousness of the issue.

This was not a small matter.

“Profane”

châlal

khaw-lal'

A primitive root (compare H2470); properly **to bore, that is, (by implication) to wound, to dissolve;** figuratively to profane (a person, place or thing), to break (one's word), **to begin (as if by an opening-wedge)**; denominatively (from H2485) to play (the flute): - begin (X men began), defile, X break, defile, X eat (as common things), X first, X gather the grape thereof, X take inheritance, pipe, player on instruments, pollute, (cast as) profane (self), **prostitute, slay** (slain), sorrow, stain, wound.

Note 6;

How Nehemiah Reminded.

Neh 13:18 Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath.

Consider:

How he says:

“your fathers”

He regarded them not as his forebears.

But then he says:

“our God”

Note 7;

How Nehemiah Restored.

Neh 13:19 And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath: and some of my servants set I at the gates, that there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath day.

Gill quotes Jarchi:

"were shaded" (g); that is, as Jarchi interprets it, when the shadows of the eve of the sabbath were stretched out upon the gates; the sabbath did not begin till sun setting, and the stars appeared

Geneva Notes:

*About the time that the sun went down,
for the sabbath lasted from the sun
setting one day, to the sun setting the
next day.*

Consider:

The Sabbath was not and is not an issue of
conscience!

It is a permanent fixture or a fixed principle of the
Moral Law.

This is why we read:

“I commanded that the gates should be shut”

Even in Heaven the Moral law will stand.

Heaven itself is an Eternal Sabbath.

Also:

Note how Nehemiah safeguarded the observance of
the Sabbath.

v.19b

“and some of my servants set I at the gates, that there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath day.”

He did not trust anyone to do this but only his servants

Consider:

Nehemiah put God’s honour before man’s desire or will.

Note 8;

How Nehemiah Reacted

Neh 13:20 So the merchants and sellers of all kind of ware lodged without Jerusalem once or twice.

Neh 13:21 Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye about the wall? if ye do so again, I will lay hands on you. From that time forth came they no more on the sabbath.

Consider:

Nehemiah would not even let the possibility of Sabbath breaking come near the walls of Jerusalem.

App:

Q. Do we let sin come near us?

Q. Do we trifle with sin as if it is not a dangerous thing?

Nehemiah dwelt with these men as with enemies.

Neh 13:21 Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye about the wall? if ye do so again, I will lay hands on you. From that time forth came they no more on the sabbath.

Compare:

Psa 139:21 Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?

Psa 139:22 I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies.

Note 9;

What Nehemiah Required.

Neh 13:22a And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should come and keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath day.

There was a need for cleansing because of disobedience.

App:

When we disobey God we must go to him for cleansing before we go and serve him!

Anec.

Times I have tried to serve God without his cleansing.

Compare:

{David's prayer for forgiveness. Service and usefulness come after cleansing v.13}

Psa 51:9 Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.

Psa 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

Psa 51:11 Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.

Psa 51:12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

Psa 51:13 Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

Note 10;

What Nehemiah Requested.

22b

Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy.

Consider:

Nehemiah did not come to God with any sense of superiority because of his faithfulness.

He knew that his only basis of acceptance with God was his mercy and grace.

He practiced the principle of our Lord's word's in Luke 17

Luk 17:10 So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

May God grant us the Spirit, Faithfulness and Humility of Nehemiah.

Amen.