

NEHEMIAH
SPIRITUAL CARELESSNESS

Saturday, October 10

Reading: Nehemiah 13

Nehemiah 13:22 *"Remember me for this also, O my God, and show mercy to me according to Your great love."*

After 12 years as governor, Nehemiah returned to Persia as he had promised King Artaxerxes he would (2:6). There is no way to know how long he was away, but it must have been quite a number of years for the situation in Jerusalem to crumble so badly. The people had broken every covenant promise they had made (see 10:28-39). The people were now ignoring God and His Word in every area of their lives: in their worship, in the workplace, and in their homes.

Nehemiah was disgusted to discover that his old enemy Tobiah the Ammonite had been allowed to move into the Temple itself. Not only did this defile God's House but the rooms Tobiah was occupying were for storing the tithes used to support the Levites so they could teach the people. Without these tithes, the Levites had been forced to abandon their teaching and go to work in the fields to support themselves! Nehemiah threw Tobiah out and rebuked the people for not giving their tithes as they should.

Withholding their tithes was not the only indication that money had become more important than God. Nehemiah also found that the people were breaking the Sabbath by treating it as just another market day. Making money had become more important than God's "day of rest." Not only did this break the Israelites' relationship with God, it was also a bad testimony to the Gentiles around them. Nehemiah warned them that this was a major reason God had judged their fathers in the first place. To make sure no one could "set up shop" Nehemiah closed the gates before the Sabbath began and threatened the merchants who then tried to sell their wares outside of the city.

In their family life, the Israelites had once again begun marrying women from the heathen nations around them. Even some of the priests had done this! Nehemiah's extreme response to this (beating and pulling out their hair) shows how terrible these mixed marriages were. These mothers had a greater influence on their children because they were the ones who taught them in the home. These children were learning the language and religion of their unbelieving mothers while the Word of God was being ignored. They could not even understand the language it was written in! If this continued, future generations of Israel would know nothing about God.

LESSON ONE: While the revival years before had shown such promise, the people eventually fell back into their old patterns. How easy is it for us to become careless about the things of God and slip away from Him! What do we need to do to stop this?

LESSON TWO: Satan still focuses on these three areas in believers' lives. He wants to distort our worship, make money our main priority, and destroy our homes and families. What steps are you taking to thwart his plans? Do you have any "open doors" that might allow Satan to get a foothold in your life and family?

LESSON THREE: Nehemiah was not only a man of prayer; he was a man of action. He saw what needed to be done and did it! How we need men and women today who will boldly stand against the wrong and passionately proclaim the righteousness of God!