

Supplementary Materials for KOOL Journal for Parents/Adults

Week 18: 21 May to 27 May, 2018 (pp. 146 – 153)

21 May to 27 May, 2018: Nehemiah Chapter 13:4 – 30.

Watch video:

- **Confronting Carnal Leaders** (Neh. 13:1-31),
<http://www2.bhpublishinggroup.com/QR/GetzBible/0482/> (13.42 min.)

Review Verse of the Week **Nehemiah 13:22a**

Then I commanded the Levites to purify themselves and go and guard the gates in order to keep the Sabbath day holy.

Date/Read	Reflection and Response (R & R)
<p>Mon. 21 May</p> <p>Neh. 13:4–9 {Neh. 13:4-9}</p>	<p>Nehemiah had to return to Babylon in 433 B.C., 12 years after he had arrived in Jerusalem. He was either recalled by King Artaxerxes, or he was fulfilling an agreement to return. He could have stayed for two years in Babylon but when he returned he found Tobiah, one of the major opponents to his rebuilding of the wall, had been given his own room in the Temple. In direct violation of God’s law Eliashib, the priest, had abused his position as the oversight for the ‘storerooms’ or chambers to house his close associate, Tobiah, an enemy of Israel. In the absence of the priests (who had returned to their homes to work their lands, Neh. 13:10) and the cessation of their services, a storage room was furnished and given for Tobiah’s use. Nehemiah rectified the situation.</p> <p>R & R:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How should the church in general deal with sin (e.g. financial misappropriation or sexual immorality) involving leaders if discovered? <p>Notes:</p> <p>13:4 – ‘Eliashib the priest’ is undoubtedly the same as ‘Eliashib the high-priest’ mentioned in Neh. 3:1, 20; and 13:28, whose name occurs in the priestly lists (Neh.12:10, 22). In violation of God’s law, one of his grandsons married a daughter of Sanballat who was a fast friend of Tobiah, and the great enemy of the Jews. This is a great blot on Eliashib’s character, and the cause of his other sins as described in Neh.13:5. Ezra 10:18 also records that several of the priests had married foreign wives.</p> <p>13:7 – Tobiah is an Ammonite (Neh. 4:3) and thus forbidden to enter the Temple. Neh.2:10, 19-20, 4:3 ff, and 6:1 ff tell about Tobiah’s opposition to Nehemiah and the latter’s appropriate response. He married a daughter of Shecaniah, and his son a daughter of Meshullam, who were both priests (Neh. 6:18).</p>
<p>Tue. 22 May</p> <p>Neh. 13:10–11 {Neh. 13:10-11}</p>	<p>Because the Levites were not no longer given the support due to them, they had to return to work on their farms to support themselves and hence neglected the Temple duties and the spiritual welfare of the people. The support could have been withheld because the people were so offended at Eliashib’s abuse of sacred things that they stopped bringing the offering and tithes, which they knew would be squandered to entertain Tobiah, a sworn and contemptuous enemy of God and His people. Nehemiah reproved the priests, having not only withheld from men their dues, but</p>

	<p>having robbed God, by neglecting the care of His house and service, in breach of their recent solemn promise.</p> <p>R & R:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do we take a direct interest in the spiritual welfare of our pastoral and mission staff (e.g. praying for them individually and giving faithfully)? <p>Notes:</p> <p>13:10 – Every Levite had a plot of ground, which he cultivated when not engaged in the work of the temple (see Num.35:2; Jos.21:3).</p>
<p>Wed. 23 May</p> <p>Neh. 13:12–14 {Neh. 13:12-14}</p>	<p>Nehemiah appointed trustworthy men of integrity to act as trustees of the sacred treasures. Thus order, regularity, and active service were re-established in the Temple. Out of the respect for Nehemiah, and because they saw their tithes and offerings would now used properly under strict supervision, the people readily resumed their support for the Levites who had returned to provide the Temple services.</p> <p>R & R:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> God rewarded Nehemiah and his good deeds were recorded till this day. God does more than we are able to ask. What legacy would we want to be remembered for when during our life time? <p>Notes:</p> <p>13:13 – Shelemiah (Neh.3:30) represented the Temple priests, Zadok (Neh.3:29) the ‘judicial’ section of the priests; Pedaiah (Neh.8:4) the Levites proper, and Hanan (grandson of Mattaniah mentioned in Neh. 11:17; 12:8, 25-35) the singers and porters. Thus the treasurers consisted of two priests and two Levites. The office of these treasurers was to receive and pay; to distribute to their brethren in due season, and due proportions.</p> <p>13:14 – Three times Nehemiah prayed a similar prayer (13:14, 22, 30) appealing to God to remember him, not reward, him. On every occasion Nehemiah looked up to God, and committed himself and all his affairs to Him. He would receive no recompense, or even thanks, from those who benefitted from what he did. Thus he looked up to God as His paymaster in humility (cf. Neh. 5:19). He neither trusted the merit of his good works, or his own worthiness, but, when he had done all, he judged himself an unprofitable servant, and one that needed God’s infinite mercy to pardon all his sins. He recognized that all his righteous acts were but filthy rags (Isa. 64:6).</p>
<p>Thu. 24 May</p> <p>Neh. 13:15–22 {Neh. 13:15-18}</p>	<p>This passage is particularly concerned with Nehemiah’s efforts to enforce Sabbath observance (the abuses, the remedies and his prayer to God). God has commanded Israel not to work on the Sabbath, but to rest in remembrance of the Creation and the Exodus (Exo. 20:8-11; Deut. 5:12-15). Sabbath was to be observed by all Jews, servants, visiting foreigners and even farm animals. Yet, in direct violation of this law, work and active trade took place during the Sabbath hours. The vigorous remedies applied by Nehemiah were administered first to the rulers who were to blame for the violations. They desired the freshest food for their feasts, and encouraged both foreigners and natives to break the law to satisfy their appetites. Nehemiah also entrusted the task of ensuring the gates were closed during the Sabbath rest to the</p>

	<p>Levites who were in sympathy with his policies and had to first purify themselves for this sacred duty.</p> <p>R & R:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Christian Lord’s Day is not the Jewish Sabbath. How should we then apply this Sabbath rest in the spirit rather than the letter of the law in Christian worship and service? <p>Notes:</p> <p>13:15 – The observance of the Sabbath was always the stumbling-block in the way of free relations between the pious Jew and the Gentile. The temptation to desecrate the Sabbath in order to maintain amicable relations with Gentile traders was a constant source of religious degeneracy among the Jews.</p> <p>13:16 – Tyre was a large Phoenician city and port on the Mediterranean Sea. The perishability of the fish from such a distance was the excuse for allowing their sale on the Sabbath. It was not against the law that foreigners like those from Tyre should dwell in Jerusalem.</p> <p>13:18 – The desecration of the Sabbath is among the sins most strongly denounced by Jeremiah (Jer.17:21-27) and Ezekiel. Hence the strictness with which its observance was inculcated during the Exile.</p> <p>13:22 – See note on 13:14.</p>
<p>Fri. 25 May</p> <p>Neh. 13:23–30 {Neh. 13:23-27}</p>	<p>Neh. 13:1-3 had introduced the subject of the mixed marriages. Here (13:23-30) Nehemiah recorded his role in the matter. He had had his eye on the transgressors who had taken wives of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab. Rooting out intermarriages is as difficult as rooting out tares, which will be continually springing up again. If Solomon, the wise king beloved of God, fell through this snare, how much more likely to sin were these common Jews? As a consequence, the off-springs of these mixed marriages spoke a jargon half Ashdodite and half Aramaic instead of the Jewish language. Nehemiah had sufficient provocation to inflict the severe punishments upon them, because, in their marrying with heathen nations, they had acted contrary, not only to the God’s law, but to their own recent solemn covenant (Ezra 10:3). His severity showed the contrast between his great faithfulness to God and the people’s neglect, disobedience and disloyalty. But he also prayed that God would convince and convert them; put them in mind of what they should be and do.</p> <p>R & R:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If either parent be ungodly, corrupt nature will incline the children to take after that one. Great care should be taken thus about their acquisition of language too: no impious or impure talk, no corrupt communication. How can we ensure our children or grandchildren do not suffer similar consequences from being unequally yoked? • We learn from Solomon’s life that our gifts and strengths won’t be of much benefit if we fail to deal with our weaknesses. How can we deal with our own weaknesses that may lead us to sin? <p>Notes:</p> <p>13:23 – Ashdod, or Azotus (Acts 8:40), was on the Mediterranean coast, in the region</p>

	<p>controlled by the Philistines, a race always hostile to Israel (Judges 14:3). Ammon and Moab were across the Jordan to the east. These nations were historically abhorrent to Israel (Neh.4:7, 13:1; Ezra 9:1).</p> <p>13:25 – “calling curses on them” refers to excommunicating them, and casting them out of the society of God’s people; “I beat some of the men” may refer to Nehemiah having ordered the officers to beat some of the most notorious offenders according to the law (Deut. 25:2); and “pulled out their hair” refers to having them shaved, thereby shaming them as they would look like vile slaves (for hair was esteemed a great ornament and so baldness was accounted a great disgrace and a symbol of slavery and sorrow).</p> <p>13:31 – The practical measures of reorganization (regarding wood offerings and first fruits) remedied two principal causes of discontent and points most liable to abuse from negligence.</p>
<p>Sat./Sun. 26– 27 May</p>	<p>The Book of Nehemiah ends with this prayer “Remember me with favour, O my God.” With these words Nehemiah committed himself and his discharge of duty to the Righteous Judge as his rigorous reformation had been assailed by not only his own Jewish people of the time but also moralists and commentators in every age. But Nehemiah remained “faithful to the end”.</p> <p>R & R:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do we want God to remember us for? • Do we 'expect great things from God and attempt great things for God' as modelled by William Carey (https://odb.org/2013/03/01/expect-great-things/) and other heroes of faith recorded in the Bible (Heb. 11:33-34), including Nehemiah?

References

<https://bibleprinciples.org/pf-search-book/> (search videos by book and click on Nehemiah)

<http://biblehub.com/commentaries/nehemiah/13-31.htm>

Tyndale House Publishers, **Chronological Life Application Study Bible**, 2004.