

THE DISTINCTIVE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Nehemiah 10:28-31

I. INTRODUCTION-

- a. The Bible declares that God called the nation of Israel...to be His chosen people in the world.
- b. In the Old Testament... God promised to give the Jewish people...the land of Israel ... as an eternal possession.
- c. God promised to protect and provide for the Jewish nation in a special way ... and He promised that the nation of Israel would be a blessing to all the nations of the earth.
- d. In calling Israel to be His chosen people...it was God's intention that the nation of Israel... would be His witnessing nation to the world.
- e. God intended to use the nation of Israel... to declare His glory and to draw the lost people of the world to Himself.
- f. In Romans 9:4-5... the Apostle Paul gave a list of the special privileges that God gave to His chosen people.
- g. *Romans 9:4-5 "They are the people of Israel, chosen to be God's adopted children. God revealed his glory to them. He made covenants with them and gave them his law. He gave them the privilege of worshiping him and receiving his wonderful promises. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are their ancestors, and Christ himself was an Israelite as far as his human nature is concerned. And he is God, the one who rules over everything and is worthy of eternal praise! Amen."*
- h. To fulfill God's calling to be His chosen people... it was required that the nation of Israel be a distinctive... peculiar... a different kind of people ... from the people of the lost world.

- i. Israel was called to be a holy people... a godly people ... a people marked by commitment and devotion to the one true God.
- j. *Deuteronomy 14:2* “For you are a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.”
- k. But after coming into the Promised Land... the people of Israel decided that they did not want to be a peculiar people.
- l. They wanted to be like the nations around them... increasingly they adopted the ways of their pagan neighbors... and on many occasions, ... they even adopted their pagan gods.
- m. Finally... after centuries of reaching out to Israel through priests, prophets, proclamations and miracles... God judged the nation for their rebellion and sent the people away from the Promised Land into captivity.
- n. After 70 years in captivity... God began to allow the people to come back to the land He had given them.
- o. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah deal with the third wave of these returnees... after these returnees had secured the city of Jerusalem by rebuilding its walls... Ezra and Nehemiah lead the people in rebuilding their spiritual connection with God.
- p. In Nehemiah we can identify 10 steps to revival... #1, Getting back to the Bible... #2, Obeying the Bible... #3, Desiring holiness... #4, A reawakening of worship.
- q. Today we look at the fifth step to revival found in Nehemiah... to put this step in New Testament terms... this step is a reclaiming and recommitment to living a distinctive Christian life.
- r. In this passage... lead by their spiritual leaders... the people of Israel determined to recover their uniqueness as God’s chosen people... by

making a public covenant and commitment to live in a distinctive way from the lost world around them.

II. THE NATION OF ISRAEL TODAY AND THE CHURCH-

- a. The revival that occurred in Nehemiah's day was successful... but after a generation ... the effect of this revival began to fade in the life of the nation.
- b. After their captivity... the nation of Israel never again returned to pagan living and the practice of idolatry in the way they had done before ... but they also as a nation never fully returned to living for God... loving God... and serving God in the world as they should.
- c. When the nation of Israel rejected Jesus... the Son of God... as their Messiah... and crucified Him... things changed dramatically for the nation of Israel.
- d. God did not repeal His promises to Israel... He will keep every one of them.
- e. But after Israel crucified Jesus... God temporarily set Israel aside as His chosen people... and He chose a new nation to be His witnessing nation to the world... and that new nation is the church of Jesus Christ.
- f. 1 Peter 2:9 says this about the church... *“You (the church, true Christians) are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”*
- g. Today... during what we call the “Church Age”... the church has been called to carry the gospel and witness to the world of the saving grace of Jesus Christ.
- h. But one day... in the Rapture...the church of Jesus Christ will be taken out of this world... and during the time of Tribulation that

follows... the nation of Israel will finally accept Jesus Christ as their Messiah, Savior and Lord.

- i. And finally... during the time of the Tribulation... the nation of Israel will fulfill God's calling... and a redeemed Israel will cover the earth with a witness for Christ.
- j. As the nation of Israel was called by God... to live holy, godly and distinctive lives from the world around them.
- k. So today the church ... Christian people... are called to live holy, godly and distinctive lives from the world around us.
- l. Today... when the people of God lose their distinctiveness... when Christians begin to live lives that are little different from the world around them... then revival is desperately needed.
- m. In these verses... we see what the people of Nehemiah's day did ... to regain their distinctiveness.

III. THEY SIGNED A COVENANT, THEY MADE A COMMITMENT-

- a. These people put down in writing... and they signed their names ... to what they were committing to do.
- b. Maybe that would be a good thing... for us to do today.
- c. When you borrow money from the bank... it is one thing to promise the banker that you will pay it back... it is something else entirely when you put your name on the dotted line... committing yourself in writing to fulfilling the contract.
- d. It is one thing for you to say... "I want to live a holy life ... I want to live a distinctively Christian life."
- e. Our word should be good enough ... but maybe it would be something else entirely... if we wrote our commitment down ... if we put it on paper...if we signed our name to it...framed it...and keep it before us.

- f. That is what the people of Israel did... they wrote their commitment to live holy and distinctive lives down... and they signed it before God and everybody.
- g. In the first verses of Nehemiah 10... are the names of 84 leaders of the people... who signed their names to this commitment.
- h. Once these leaders had signed their names to this covenant and commitment ... one by one the people stepped forward and signed it as well.
- i. If a church is going to have revival... it must be led by the spiritual leaders of that church.
- j. The spiritual leaders of that church must step forward and say ... “We want revival ... we want God to work in us a powerful and new way ... and we commit ourselves to pray for revival... to work for revival ... and we commit ourselves to leading our church family to live lives that are holy, right with God and distinctively Christian.”
- k. Before they signed that covenant... some of these spiritual leaders had some repenting to do... there were some things in their lives of some of these leaders that were not right...and before they signed that document ... some of these men had to confess, repent and get right with God.
- l. Confession and repentance... is where revival begins.
- m. In the covenant they signed... the people of Nehemiah’s day made three commitments.

IV. THEY COMMITTED TO BE SUBJECT TO THE WORD OF GOD-

- a. *Nehemiah 10:29 (NKJV) “These joined with their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse and an oath to walk in God's Law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do*

all the commandments of the LORD our Lord, and His ordinances and His statutes.”

- b. Notice that these people were not just committing themselves to become better students of God’s Word... as important as that is.
- c. They were committing themselves to “walk in”... “observe”... and “do” all the commandments of the Lord.
- d. These people were saying... that the Bible... the Word of God... will be our guide... for what we believe... and how we live.
- e. The purpose of Bible study is not just to know more facts about the Bible... the purpose of Bible study is to “do” the Bible... to put into practice what God has required in His Word.
- f. The Bible is more than a book to know... the Bible is a book to obey and fulfill.
- g. If you want to live the distinctive Christian life that God wants you to live... you must live by the Bible.
- h. Because believe me... the lost world around us is living by a completely different “book”... a completely different set of beliefs, standards and values.
- i. As a Christian... you are in big trouble if you ever say... “I know what the Bible says... but...”
- j. Anything you say after that “but”... is just your attempt to justify your disobedience of God’s Word.
- k. To live the distinctive Christian life... the Bible... as it should be rightly interpreted and understood... must be our guide for what we believe... and how we are to live.

V. THEY COMMITTED TO SEPARATE THEMSELVES FROM THE WORLD-

- a. The Bible teaches that while Christians are in the world... we are not to be of the world.
- b. Christians are to be different and distinctive from those who are lost in their language ... in their lifestyle... in their conduct... in their behavior ... in their morals... in their values...in their goals for life.
- c. This does not mean that as Christians...we are to isolate ourselves from the world and those who are lost.
- d. It is important that we cultivate friendships with those who are lost... it is important that we interact with those who are lost.
- e. Often believers are in situations... in which they have no choice but to associate with those who are lost.
- f. In their jobs... many believers work for and with people who are lost.
- g. As Christians... we have been commanded to share the gospel with the lost world... how will we do that if we never have anything to do with those who are lost?
- h. While Christians are to be friends with those who are lost...we are not live like those who are lost... we are not to talk like those who are lost ... we are not to act like those who are lost.
- i. Romans 12:2 says that believers are not to be... “conformed to this world.”
- j. There are many places that lost people go... that Christians should not go ... there are many things that lost people do... that Christians should not do.
- k. The moment a Christian loses their Christian distinctiveness ... is the moment they lose their witness... and that is the moment they lose their credibility as a Christian.

- l. Throughout the centuries... Jewish people intermarrying with lost pagan people... had taken a great toll and caused a great deal of trouble for the nation of Israel... intermarriage with the lost had caused many of the people of God to forsake the true God and go into idolatry.
- m. Even in the New Testament... Christians are warned about being unequally yoked in marriage... with someone who is lost.
- n. *2 Corinthians 6:14 (NKJV) "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?"*
(Unequally yoked- Putting an ox and a horse in the same yoke... different natures, desires)
- o. The Bible warns that a Christian is asking for trouble... for themselves ...for their Christian life...for their marriage... for the children they may have...if they marry someone who does not love Jesus.
(Fellowship- yes... Partnerships like marriage, going into business with a lost person- no)
- p. What if a person gets saved after they are married... but their spouse continues not to be a Christian?
- q. In that case... the Bible says three things... (1) Stay with your spouse... (2) Live a committed Christian life... (3) Pray that your spouse gets saved.

VI. THEY COMMITTED TO SET APART THE SABBATH-

- a. Prior to their captivity... the nation of Israel had been guilty of neglecting the Lord's Day... the Lord's House... the Lord's Worship ... and the Lord's service.
- b. But now as they recommit themselves to being the distinctive people of God... they recommitted themselves to honoring, serving and worshipping God... on the Lord's Day... in the Lord's House.
- c. The observance of the Sabbath Day as a day of rest and worship... was unique and distinctive to the nation of Israel.

- d. Other nations had their so-called “holy days”... but no other nation had anything like the regular observance of the Sabbath day... and the worship of God that happened on that day.
- e. To the people of the pagan world... the Jewish people were known as people of the “day”... people of the Sabbath day.
- f. While the Sabbath... the seventh day... was given to the Jewish nation as that nation’s day of worship.
- g. According to the New Testament...Sunday... the first day of the week ... the day that Jesus arose from the dead... was taken by the early church as the Christian day of worship.
- h. As the Sabbath was given to the nation of Israel... so Sunday was given to the church.
- i. Going to church on the Lord’s Day... and being active and involved in the worship, service and life of the local church... is an important part of living the distinctive Christian life in this world.
- j. Being active and involved in the life of a local church is not only important for our Christian life... it is also important for our witness to the world.
- k. Lost people expect people who claim to be Christians to go to church ... they expect people who claim to be Christians to be active and involved in church.
- l. I don’t understand professing Christians who are not active and involved in church... lost people don’t understand it either.
- m. How is a Christian who decides to skip church for no good reason ...any different from a lost person who decides not go to church?
- n. Today Christian are to be known as people of the book... the Bible ... people of the day... Sunday... and people of the way... holiness.

VII. CONCLUSION-

- a. An important step toward revival... is a commitment to live a distinctive Christian life.
- b. Today will you commit yourself to living a distinctive Christian life ... a holy life... a life lived in obedience to God's Word... a life that honors the Lord on the Lord's Day in the Lord's House?