

THE CHURCH GOD IS LOOKING FOR

Nehemiah 12:43

I. INTRODUCTION-

- a. The Israelites who returned to their homeland from exile... did not constitute a church in the New Testament sense.
- b. But as they went about rebuilding the land... these people actually demonstrated many of the characteristics that God wants to see in every local church.
- c. A recent study by the Pew Research Center... noted seven key things people look for in a church.
- d. This may surprise a lot of people but 83% of those surveyed... said the quality of sermons was the number one thing they looked for in a church.
- e. That result is backed up in a recent book *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched*... written by the head of Lifeway Thom Rainer.
- f. 79% said feeling welcomed by church leaders and members... was what they were looking for in a church.
- g. Next on the list in this survey in order were...Style of services... Location... Programs for kids... and Having friends or family in the congregation.
- h. But what does God look for in a church?...Today as we continue our study of steps to spiritual revival from these verses in Nehemiah... I want us to see some characteristics of the church that God is looking for.
- i. In our study... we have already seen the importance of the local church in the life of the Christian.

- j. God intends for every Christian... to join and be an active part of a local church family.
- k. And as a church worships and serves Him... and does what a church is supposed to do... God intends for every local church to represent His presence, power, love and grace in this lost world.
- l. If we want to have revival... then we need to be the church God wants us to be... what kind of church is that?

II. GOD WANTS A CHURCH TO BE A BIBLICAL CHURCH-

- a. Today churches use all kinds of terms... to market and describe themselves.
- b. Today in America there are ... contemporary churches... traditional churches... relevant churches... progressive churches... and so on.
- c. What kind of a church... does God want a church to be?... God wants a church to be a biblical church.
- d. As you read these verses... and the rest of the book of Nehemiah that we have studied... one thing is clear.
- e. These people realized... that neglecting and disobeying the Word of God had led the nation of Israel to disobey God... which led the nation to be conquered and deported... and they were determined never to let that happen again.
- f. These Jews were determined... as individuals and as a nation...to respect and obey the Word of God.
- g. The kind of church God wants every church to be... is a biblical church.
- h. A biblical church... is a church that believes that the Bible is God's inspired, inerrant and infallible Word of God.

- i. In the America I grew up in... the Bible was respected in our nation.
- j. When I was a boy... almost every church in America respected, honored and proclaimed the Bible as God's inspired Word.
- k. And even most of those in our country who were not Christians... had a respect for the Bible.
- l. Today in America... our nation is filled with churches that no longer regard and honor the Bible as God's inspired Word in its entirety.
- m. And today in America... the Bible has never been more maligned, dismissed and attacked ... by those who are lost... and as time goes by... it is getting worse.
- n. Many Americans in the generations after mine... have grown up in a nation that has increasingly called into question, doubted and denied the Bible...as God's inspired, inerrant and infallible Word.
- o. A biblical church ... is a church that still believes that the Bible is God's inspired Word of God... in its entirety.
- p. Many people in our world today dismiss the Bible... because there are things in the Bible they don't like.
- q. There are things in the Bible that I don't like to hear... there are things in the Bible that I don't like to preach... but that does not mean that the Bible is not God's Word.
- r. The Bible is full of good news... but it is also has bad news.
- s. In the Bible...the good news from a good God far outweighs the bad news... but if a person chooses to ignore or reject the good news and the good God of the Bible... they will have to live with that choice.
- t. When we say that the Bible is inspired... we mean that in a special and unique way ... through the person of the Holy Spirit...God

guided those men who wrote the Bible ... to write what He wanted them to write.

- u. Using their own unique personalities and styles... God literally breathed into the men who wrote the Bible...what He wanted written.
- v. *2 Timothy 3:16* “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God ...*”
- w. *2 Peter 1:21 (NKJV)* “*For prophecy (the Word of God) did not come by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke (wrote) as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*”
- x. We also believe that the same God who inspired the Bible... has preserved the Bible...and He has protected the translation and transmission of the Bible over the centuries.
- y. So that today when you hold a legitimate translation of the ancient manuscripts of the Bible in your hand... you are holding the inspired Word of God.
- z. When we say the Bible is inerrant and infallible...we mean that the Bible is truthful in all it that it affirms... the Bible is free from error.
- aa. *Psalm 119:160 (NKJV)* “*The entirety of Your word is truth.*”
- bb.No other book in the history of the world is a book like the Bible ... it belongs in a class by itself.
- cc. The Bible is a book that God has used to change the course of human history throughout human history ... it is a book that God has used ... to literally change the lives of multitudes of people... including mine.
- dd.The Bible is still the inspired Word of God... the truth of the Bible has not been changed, edited or been updated to conform with the beliefs of modern man.
- ee. The church God wants is the church that still believes the Bible without compromise... that still teaches the Bible without

compromise ... that still proclaims the Bible without fear, favor or compromise.

- ff. The church God wants is a church that obeys the Bible... obeys the Bible in the organization of the church... in the worship of the church... in the mission and ministry of the church... and in all that the church does.

(Biblical)

III. GOD WANTS A CHURCH TO BE A JESUS FOCUSED CHURCH-

- a. The people of Nehemiah's day faced tremendous problems and challenges...as they rebuilt their nation.
- b. But under the ministry and encouragement of Nehemiah and Ezra ... instead of focusing on their many problems and challenges... the people focused on God.
- c. And the more the people loved God... the more they worshipped Him ... and trusted Him... and obeyed Him... the more God enabled and empowered them to overcome all that they were facing.
- d. The church that God wants... is a church that focuses on Jesus... a church that honors Jesus... a church that loves Jesus ... a church that worships Jesus... a church that lives for Jesus and proclaims Jesus.
- e. This community does not need Whitewater Baptist Church... multitudes around us would not even notice if our church went out of business.
- f. This community needs Jesus... and for our church to be the church that God wants... we must always focus on Jesus... proclaim Jesus ... point people to Jesus.
- g. You will never see my name in lights or my face on a billboard... this church is not about me... this church is about Jesus.

- h. As great as our building is... as great as our people, programs and ministries are ... these are not what our church is about... our church is about loving Jesus... living for Jesus... lifting up Jesus.
- i. The Bible says that the first place believers in Christ were called “Christians”... was in Antioch of Syria.
- j. Christian was not a name that the Christians in Syria gave themselves ... this was a name given to followers of Christ by those in Antioch who were unbelievers.
- k. And the name Christian was not intended by the lost people of Antioch to be a compliment... it was intended to be a term of derision.
- l. The word Christian literally means “little Christ”... because the believers in Antioch were all about Christ... they talked about Jesus ... they preached Jesus... they proclaimed Jesus... they worshipped Jesus... the lost people of Antioch began to call the believers in Antioch “little Christs”... Christians.
- m. By definition... a church that is not all about Jesus is not a Christian church ... and a Christian who is not all about Jesus... is not a Christian.
- n. Jesus is the Head of the church... the church is His bride and His body ... Jesus is the light, hope and Savior of the world... Jesus is the Creator, Sovereign and Lord of all.
- o. The church that God wants... is a church that focuses on Jesus.

(Biblical... Jesus-focused)

IV. GOD WANTS A CHURCH TO BE A UNITED CHURCH-

- a. If the people of Nehemiah’s were going to accomplish the mission of rebuilding their land... and rebuilding their relationship with God.
- b. They had to be one... they had to be united in purpose... they had to work together... they had to respect and love one another.

- c. The verses in Nehemiah 12... reveal a great unity among the people of Israel.
- d. For a church to be the church that God wants... for a church to fulfill its purpose, mission and ministry... for a church to be a church that God can use, bless and work through... it must be a church that is united in mutual love, respect and purpose.
- e. Nothing on earth dishonors God more... than a church that unnecessarily divides and disintegrates... over issues and matters that should be easily solved and resolved... by born-again, Spirit-filled people who love Jesus.
- f. At times we have to have hard discussions in the church... and we have to make difficult decisions... and we have to do difficult things ... but we are not to allow such times to divide us and destroy the unity of our church.
- g. Ephesians 4:3 says that it is the job of every believer... and every church member... to work for and to protect the unity of the church.
- h. One thing that has always concerned me as a Pastor... is how often when we come to church... we immediately divided ourselves into different groups... and we go into different rooms.
- i. If you think about it... the only consistent time a church family comes together in one room... men, women, boys and girls of all ages... is when we come together for one of our worship services.
- j. I understand the purpose and importance of having small groups in a church... I know they are needed and necessary.
- k. But I also understand that the most important group in the church ... is not a small group... but the “big group” of a church family coming together as one to worship and honor the Lord.
- l. Having vibrant worship services in which a church family comes together to worship the Lord... and to hear God’s Word preached and

proclaimed ... is vital and important to the life and to the unity of a church.

m. Also, God has designed the church in such a way that it is in the “big group” of a church family coming together...that God will do His greatest work in a church.

n. The worship services of a church family are important to church unity... and they must be preserved and protected.

o. The church that God wants... is a together church... a united church.

(Biblical... Jesus-focused...United)

V. GOD WANTS A CHURCH TO BE A WELCOMING CHURCH-

a. The people of Nehemiah’s day... were rebuilding Jerusalem.

b. Did you know that the Bible says that one day... during the millennial reign of Christ... people from all over the world will come to Jerusalem to worship the Lord... and the gates of the city will be open to welcome them all.

c. *Isaiah 2:2-3 (NLT2) “In the last days, the mountain of the LORD’s house will be the highest of all— the most important place on earth. It will be raised above the other hills, and people from all over the world will stream there to worship. People from many nations will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of Jacob’s God. There he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths.” For the LORD’s teaching will go out from Zion; his word will go out from Jerusalem.”*

d. God is a welcoming God to all who want to be saved... if a person wants to be saved... God will come running.

e. Today God wants the doors of His church to be open to all... who want to come in to hear the saving gospel of Jesus Christ.

f. Who should be welcome through the doors of our church?... anyone for whom Christ died should be welcome in our church... any color...

rich... poor ... educated or not... anyone for whom Christ died should be welcome in our church.

VI. CONCLUSION-

- a. If a church is not the church that God wants... then that church needs revival.
- b. The church that God wants is a biblical church... a Jesus focused church ... a united church... and a welcoming church.
- c. Help us to be that church!
- d. We are a biblical church... what does the Bible say about salvation?