

Studies In Nehemiah 9

The Restoration of A Special People

Neh. 11-12-13

Introduction:

1. Nehemiah's efforts in restoring Jerusalem had focused first on the building of the walls of the city, but this was only the beginning of his mission.
2. Jerusalem would not be restored until the **people** were restored to a right relationship with God.
3. Nehemiah had allied himself with the purposes of God. God sought the welfare of His people and thus Nehemiah sought their welfare (1:10).
4. It was because of this allegiance that the hand of God was on Nehemiah to bless the work that Nehemiah was doing.
5. The first six chapters are about the rebuilding of the wall. Chapters 7-13 are about the rebuilding of the people.
6. But how do you rebuild a people? How do you restore a people marred by generations of idolatry, ignorance and exile in a foreign nation?
7. Similar questions concern us.
 - a. How do we rebuild a nation (the church) marred by idolatry, immorality and ignorance?
 - b. Maybe more importantly—If I am marred by idolatry, ignorance and sin how can I be restored?
8. Nehemiah knew just what needed to be done.

Discussion:

- I. The people needed to be made aware of what was revealed in the law of God.
 - A. Ezra, the priest and scribe, read from the law of God and the Levites taught the people, explaining it so that the people understood the reading (Neh. 8:1-9).
 - B. There is no substitute for giving attention to the law of God.
 1. Paul admonished Timothy that a time would come when men would fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons. The alternative was to prescribe and teach the things of God (1 Tim. 4:1ff).
 2. Attention needed to be given to the reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching (1 Tim. 4:13ff).
 - a. This is not merely the practice of reading a passage during the assembly.
 - b. But to the reading of Scripture to gain understanding, rather than to follow some rote ritualistic procedure.
 - C. Leadership has been given in the Lord's church to bring this about (Eph. 4:11ff), but there is responsibility that rests on each of us that we might be familiar with what God has revealed so that we might stimulate others (Heb. 10:24).
 - D. Failure here means there will be no restoration, only further deterioration. This was the message of the Levites song (Neh. 9).
 1. "Our fathers acted arrogantly; they became stubborn and would not listen to Your

commandments. They refused to listen and did not remember Your wondrous deeds which You had performed among them” (16-17).

2. “They became disobedient and rebelled against You, and cast Your law behind their backs and killed Your prophets who had admonished them so that they might return

to

You, and they committed great blasphemies” (26).

3. “They acted arrogantly and did not listen to Your commandments but sinned against Your ordinances, by which if a man observes them he shall live. And they turned a stubborn shoulder and stiffened their neck, and would not listen” (29).
- E. Do you have a Bible? One that you can read and understand? Are you reading it? Are you accepting personal responsibility? Are you waiting for someone else to read it digest it and put it in your mouth? That may be all right for babies, but there comes a time to grow up. We ought to feed on the words of those more spiritually mature, but let us not think that we should always be passive in our development.
1. “Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation” (1 Pet. 2:2).
 2. “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).
 3. “By this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food” (Heb. 5:12).
- F. Nehemiah knew that for there to be a restoration among the people of God it had to begin with the law of God. So it is among us!

II. The people needed to return to the practices required by the law of God.

- A. The priests and Levites needed to be identified and purified along with the people (12:1ff, 30).
1. You will observe in chapter 12 a listing of priests and Levites.
 2. These were specially selected by God to serve in a special capacity.
 3. Their lineage was critical. Not just anyone could serve in the temple.
 4. But they had to be devoted to God (30). Lineage was not everything.
 5. Notice the phrase “as prescribed by David the man of God” (v. 24).
- B. They needed to praise God and give thanks (12:24).
- C. They needed to rejoice in song (12:31-47).
- D. They did it “as prescribed by David the man of God” (v. 24, 45). When Hezekiah restored temple worship they too sought out the way of God according to the command of David and Gad and Nathan (2 Chron. 29:25-28).
1. Worshiping God today is not the same as prescribed in the days of David— They worshiped at temple. We are the temple. They had a Levitical priesthood. We have the priesthood of Christ. They had instruments of music. We have the instrument of the heart (Eph. 5:19).
 2. But for restoration to take place today we must return to the instruction of God and the practices required by God for our generation.

III. They needed to separate themselves from the foreigners and be the special people of God.

- A. From their reading of the book of Moses they learned that they should be separate from the Ammonites and Moabites (13:1ff).
 - 1. They were to be separate from all foreigners (v. 3).
 - 2. But they had intermingled with those who were not the people of God.
 - 3. They had joined together with the world.
- B. If restoration was to occur they had to be the people that God meant for them to be.
 - 1. He had taken them as His people in marriage.
 - 2. Just as marriage involves giving up all alternatives for one, so marriage to God meant giving up all idolatry and joining themselves to Him.
- C. They expelled Tobiah, the Ammonite from the temple.
 - 1. Tobiah had ridiculed them when they were building the wall.
 - 2. He and his allies had determined to fight against Jerusalem.
 - 3. He had tried to frighten Nehemiah to distract him from building the wall.
 - 4. Now he has taken up residence in the temple!!!!
 - 5. Tobiah had married into a prominent family in Jerusalem. He was the son-in-law of Shecaniah. In addition, his son was married to the daughter of Meshullam. So there were two marital connections between the family of Tobiah and some prominent families in Jerusalem.
 - 6. All of this is reflective of their compromise with the people of the world.
- D. The people of God cannot be married to God and at the same time sleep with the world. See James 4:4-10. He had told Israel when they left Egypt, "I will be their God and they shall be My people. Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate" (Ex. 29:45). 2 Cor. 6:14ff calls on us to do the same.
 - 1. Would it be OK with you if your spouse were sleeping with someone else?
 - 2. If not, how do you think you can sleep with the world and belong to God at the same time?
 - 3. You might be able to forgive your spouse for such sin, but you would not allow the sin to go on. You would demand separation.
- E. There can be no restoration without separation!!!

Conclusion:

- 1. If there is to be restoration to God we need to learn what the law of God says.
- 2. If there is to be restoration we need to practice what the law of God requires for our generation.
- 3. If there is to be restoration we must separate ourselves from the world and be the special people of God.