

Nehemiah Chapter 13

Verses 1-31: Only a few years after signing the covenant, the people had already forgotten their vows of separation (see note on 10:28-31). "Their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod" means the people had intermarried. God's people must be aware of the enemy's tactics and be aggressive in confronting them: Otherwise, they will compromise with this world.

Verses 1-3: Verses 1 and 2 faithfully summarize (Deut. 23:3-5). Descendants of mixed marriages with these two nations were excluded from the congregation of Israel until the tenth generation. Tobiah was an Ammonite (2:19), and he was already forging strong alliances with prominent Jewish families through marriage (6:18; compare 13:4-9). The "mixed multitude" (compare Exodus 12:38), were descendants of mixed marriages. Those from marriages with Egyptians and Edomites were permitted full membership in Israel after the third generation (Deut. 23:7-8). The group many have included heathen who attached themselves to the Jews by marriage, commerce, or religious observances.

Nehemiah 13:1 "On that day they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was found written, that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever;"

"On that day they read in the book of Moses": Not surprisingly, as they read on the regular calendar cycle, they were confronted with areas in which their thinking and practice had wavered from the Scriptures, specifically with regard to the requirements of (Deut. 23:3-6).

I am not certain just exactly which day this was speaking of. It seemed to be a fairly regular happening in the time of Nehemiah. This could have been on one of the feast days, but was not necessarily so.

Deuteronomy 23:3 "An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the LORD for ever:"

The Ammonites and Moabites were descended from the sons of Lot and his two daughters.

Nehemiah 13:2 "Because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them: howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing."

Because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt. To supply them therewith, either as a gift, which was a piece of humanity to strangers and travelers. Or rather to sell unto them, for on no other terms did the Israelites desire their bread and their water. In the way when ye came forth out of Egypt. Not as soon as they came forth from there, for it was near forty years after; but it was while they were in the way from there, as

they were journeying to the land of Canaan. And so were travelers, and should have had kindness shown them as such; for though they needed not bread and water. God providing both for them, yet this does not excuse the inhumanity of these people. The words are to be understood by way of distribution. This charge here only belongs to the Ammonites, for it appears that the Moabites did give them bread and water for money (Deut. 2:28). As what follows belongs peculiarly to the Moabites and not the Ammonites.

"And because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee": This the Moabites did in conjunction with the Midianites, but the Ammonites had no concern in it (see Num. 22:7). It was not therefore because the Moabites and Ammonites were born in incest that they were forbidden entrance into the congregation of the Lord. Which might have been thought to have been the reason of it.

The very same statement is made (in Deuteronomy 23:4). It is interesting that the curse was not because they were descended from their mothers through an act of incest with Lot, their father.

Nehemiah 13:3 "Now it came to pass, when they had heard the law, that they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude."

This was done in compliance with their recent pledge (compare 10:26-29), before Nehemiah left for Persia.

God had strictly forbidden the marriage of Hebrews with the heathens.

Verses 4-31: The book closes with a summary of Nehemiah's reforms once he arrived back in Jerusalem after a trip to report to "Artaxerxes". Among other things, he installed a system of oversight to ensure that the people would support the "Levites and the singers" as they did their work for God.

Verses 4-9: "Tobiah" still had a foothold in the city, and even occupied a "great chamber" on the temple grounds. Nehemiah evicted him. Nehemiah's response, "it grieved me sore", is echoed in (1 Peter 4:17).

These events probably occurred while Nehemiah had returned to Susa to report to Artaxerxes his success in building the walls. "Tobiah" was Nehemiah's old enemy and had always had admirers and sworn supporters in the highest circles of Judah (6:17-19). "Eliashib" had turned over a "great chamber" (or room), to Tobiah in the court of the temple. Nehemiah's action was like that of Jesus (in John 2:14-17). He threw out Tobiah's belongings and ceremonially cleansed the room.

Nehemiah 13:4 "And before this, Eliashib the priest, having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God, [was] allied unto Tobiah:"

“Tobiah”: (See note on 2:10). Eliashib had allied with Israel’s enemy for some personal gain and taken it to such an extreme as to desecrate the house of God.

Eliashib was High Priest, and he should have known not to be involved with Tobiah. Nehemiah had a great deal of trouble from him, when he was building the wall of Jerusalem. That was not the reason for the problem here however. It was Eliashib who said who could stay in the chamber of the house of the LORD.

Nehemiah 13:5 "And he had prepared for him a great chamber, where aforetime they laid the meat offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the new wine, and the oil, which was commanded [to be given] to the Levites, and the singers, and the porters; and the offerings of the priests."

In the temple, by throwing together several chambers, as Piscator observes.

For the next clause (see Neh. 10:37).

It is interesting that the High Priest would do such a sinful thing. It appears that many times the High Priest, or even the pastor of a church today, think they are above the law of God. They get the idea that whatever they do is alright. The High Priest and the pastor both, should set an example of holiness. It was terrible to give him any chamber, but to put him in the chamber where the sacred things had been kept, was an abomination. The meat offering for twice a day, symbolized the body of Jesus. The frankincense accompanied the meat offering. The offerings that had been made to give to the Levitical tribe were holy as well. The priest had done a terrible thing.

Nehemiah 13:6 "But in all this [time] was not I at Jerusalem: for in the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon came I unto the king, and after certain days obtained I leave of the king:"

“Came I unto the king”: Nehemiah returned to Persia as he promised (compare 2:6; ca. 433 B.C.), in the 32rd year of Artaxerxes (compare 5:14). It is unknown exactly how long Nehemiah remained in Persia, perhaps until (ca. 424 B.C.), but in that interval the disobedience developed.

It appears that when this happened, Nehemiah was out of the country. He had gone back to report to Artaxerxes, who was, in a sense, king of Babylon, because he had defeated them. The king seemed to be extremely fond of Nehemiah, and allowed him to go back to Jerusalem.

Verses 7-9: Nehemiah's response to the desecration of the temple was similar to Christ's almost 5 centuries later (compare Matt. 21:12-13; John 2:13-17).

Nehemiah 13:7 "And I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God."

Through the king's leave, and with a commission from him.

"And understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah": Was informed of the maladministration of his office.

"In preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God": Whereby it was profaned and polluted.

The courts of the house of God had been a special place for just the Levites. Primarily, it was a place for the priests' families. This particular room had been a place to hold the daily meat offerings, the frankincense, and the sacred vessels. It had also, been used for the storing of the offerings. Tobiah was an enemy of Nehemiah, an enemy of Jerusalem, and an enemy of the temple. This was a terrible sin.

Nehemiah 13:8 "And it grieved me sore: therefore I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber."

That such a sacred place should be converted to common use, and to that of a heathen, and of an enemy to the Jews and their religion.

"Therefore I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber": As being chief magistrate, and acting by commission under the king of Persia, and to regulate everything amiss, according to the Jewish laws, as well as those of the king. His power being, no doubt, as large as Ezra's (Ezra 7:25). By "household stuff" is meant what is movable in the house, as chairs, tables, vessels for dressing, caring, drinking, etc. There are various opinions about this with the ancients.

Nehemiah did not wait to tell him to move his things out. He moved them for him. All of this had happened, while Nehemiah was away. He immediately attacked the problem as soon as he was aware of it when he returned. The High Priest was supposed to watch and not allow something like this to happen. He had committed this sin himself.

Nehemiah 13:9 "Then I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers: and thither brought I again the vessels of the house of God, with the meat offering and the frankincense."

"Vessels of the house of God": In order to accommodate Tobiah, they had moved the utensils of the house of God from their rightful place and put idols in the temple courts.

This cleaning was more than just sweeping out the area. This was speaking of a ceremonial cleansing, as well as a physical cleansing. He could not put the holy things back into this chamber, until it was purified.

Verses 10-14: In Nehemiah's absence, the Jews violated their previous covenant with God regarding offerings (compare 10:35-40), as reported by (Mal. 1:6-14 and 3:8-12). In his presence, it was immediately restored (see notes on 9:38 – 10:39).

Nehemiah discovered that, in spite of the oath the people had taken, the Levites (and most likely the priests, too), had not been receiving their tithes and, as a result, had to work in the fields. He immediately "contended" [a strong legal term] "with the rulers" and "set them in their place". Then he appointed four reliable treasurers over the storehouse (verse 13; compare Mal. 3:10), which was a large room in the temple.

Nehemiah 13:10 "And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given [them]: for the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field."

"Were fled every one to his field": By neglecting the tithe, the people failed to support the Levites. Consequently, they had to abandon their responsibilities in the house of God and perform field labor in order to survive.

It appears that they had failed to furnish the needs of the Levites, other than the priests. The Levites had to go to work to support their families. When Nehemiah went to see the king, the level of worship in the temple deteriorated.

Nehemiah 13:11 "Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken? And I gathered them together, and set them in their place."

The ecclesiastical rulers, the priests that were appointed over those chambers (Neh. 12:44). He expostulated with them warmly, and chided them severely for their conduct.

"And said, why is the house of God forsaken?" No care being taken of the maintenance of the ministers of it, contrary to the promise made (Neh. 10:37).

"And I gathered them together": The Levites and singers that were dispersed in the countries round about.

"And set them in their place": In the temple, and in the course of their ministry there.

It appears that Nehemiah had to do what the High Priest should have done. Nehemiah met with the rulers, and reprimanded them for allowing this situation to occur. The profaning of the

temple would have been the fault of the High Priest and the priests. The fault of the Levites not receiving their portion was the fault of the rulers and nobles.

Nehemiah 13:12 "Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn and the new wine and the oil unto the treasuries."

When they saw a reformation made, and things were going in their proper channel. And a right use would be made of their tithes, these given to proper persons, who were now reinstated in their office.

When Nehemiah came back, the people became serious about their worship again. It was as if they wanted Nehemiah to know they were living right. There must be a strong leader for the people to remain faithful.

Nehemiah 13:13 "And I made treasurers over the treasuries, Shelemiah the priest, and Zadok the scribe, and of the Levites, Pedaiah: and next to them [was] Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah: for they were counted faithful, and their office [was] to distribute unto their brethren."

New ones, since the others appointed were either dead or unfaithful to their trust (Neh. 12:44).

"Shelemiah the priest, and Zadok the scribe": Who also was a priest, as Ezra was both priest and scribe. One that besides his office as a priest was expert in the law, and capable of instructing others.

"And of the Levites, Pedaiah, and next to them was Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah": For they were counted faithful. And had a good report of all that knew them, for men of fidelity and uprightness, and so fit for such a trust.

"And their office was to distribute unto their brethren": To deliver to them their share in the tithes, first fruits, etc.

Nehemiah put treasurers over the treasuries. He chose the men above, because they were faithful to God. The High Priest had been in charge of them earlier, but Nehemiah did not trust him any longer. The four treasurers that Nehemiah chose were a priest, a Levite, a layman of rank, and a scribe. They were not only to receive the tithe, but distribute it, as well.

Nehemiah 13:14 "Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof."

"Remember me": This refrain is used 3 times here, once after each rebuke (compare 13:22, 31).

We see that Nehemiah was doing the best he could, and he had nothing to do with the error the priests and High Priest, and the people had gotten into while he was gone. Now that he had come back, he tried to straighten all of it out. He wanted God to remember the good things he had done.

Verses 15-22: Another violation of the covenant, seen (in 10:30-31), was the action of some Jews who were preparing and transporting goods on the Sabbath (verse 15); Phoenician traders also were being allowed to sell on the Sabbath (verse 16). They went against their previous agreement by violating the Sabbath.

To change the people's lax attitudes about the "Sabbath", Nehemiah not only confronted those who profited from commerce on that sacred day but took practical action at the "gates of Jerusalem" to control the conduct of business (see note on 7:3).

Nehemiah 13:15 "In those days saw I in Judah [some] treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all [manner of] burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day: and I testified [against them] in the day wherein they sold victuals."

Which was not a work of necessity, and so did not drive away the Sabbath, as the Jews express themselves, but might have been deferred to another day.

"And bringing in sheaves": Of wheat, it being the time of wheat harvest.

"And lading asses": With goods to be carried from place to place, and sold on that day. This was contrary to the express law, for the ass was to rest (Deut. 5:14).

"As also wine, grapes, and figs": It being the time of ingathering the fruits of the earth.

"And all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day": Besides those borne on asses, others were carried on men's shoulders. This was contrary to the law of the Sabbath, which required that both men and beasts should have rest.

"And I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals": That is, the Sabbath day. And if it was not lawful to sell food, then not anything else; so far from it, that according to the Jewish canons, such that were in partnership might not discourse together of what they should sell or buy on the morrow, the day after the Sabbath. And so far from gathering and carrying grapes and figs, that a man might not go into his gardens and fields to see what was wanting, or how the fruits were. Now Nehemiah admonished the Jews of these evils they committed, and testified against them as breakers of the law, and called heaven and earth to testify against them, should they go on to violate it.

This was a breaking of the covenant they had made with God. This was not only a breaking of the covenant they made, but also was a breaking of the Ten Commandments of God. Nehemiah testified against them for these sins. The Commandment is Exodus 20:8 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

Nehemiah 13:16 "There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem."

From Tyre and Zidon, and the parts adjacent. These they brought from Joppa, and from thence to Jerusalem. And had houses or lodgings near the fish gate or fish market, where they sold them. "Tyre": A Phoenician coastal town 20 miles south of Sidon.

"And all manner of ware": Or merchandise, which, being a trading city, they had from all nations.

"And sold on the Sabbath day unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem": Or even in Jerusalem, the holy city, where stood the temple, and where the worship of God was kept. And where the magistrates lived, who should have been terrors to evildoers. Indeed, the law of the Sabbath was not binding on these Tyrians, but then they tempted the Jews to break it, by bringing their ware to sell.

The sin was not of the men of Tyre in this. They were not breaking the law living in Jerusalem. They did not observe Sabbath either. The sin was that of the Hebrews, for buying the fish and wares on the Sabbath.

Nehemiah 13:17 "Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing [is] this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day?"

The rulers of the city, the civil magistrates, sharply reproved them for their neglect of duty.

"And said unto them, what evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day?" By suffering servile works to be done in it, and things sold on it.

The covenant they had made with God, just a few years prior to this, had strictly forbidden this type of thing. There was a curse that went with the breaking of the Sabbath. Those most able to pay the tithes and to keep the Sabbath, were the greatest offenders. The nobles were the guilty in this case.

Nehemiah 13:18 "Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath."

Jeremiah had rebuked their fathers for the same things (see Jer. 17:21). By such acts their fathers had brought the misery of exile and oppression, and they were doing the same, increasing God's wrath against them.

The following was a warning that Jeremiah brought to the people, when he was speaking as an oracle of God.

Jeremiah 17:27 "But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the Sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched."

Verses 19-22: Nehemiah had to force compliance with threats.

Nehemiah 13:19 "And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath: and [some] of my servants set I at the gates, [that] there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath day."

Or "were shaded"; that is, as Jarchi interprets it, when the shadows of the eve of the Sabbath were stretched out upon the gates. The Sabbath did not begin till sun setting, and the stars appeared. But before that, as the sun was declining, the shadows through the houses in Jerusalem, and mountains about it, spread themselves over the gates. And when it was near dusk, and as soon as it was so;

"I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the Sabbath": Until sun setting the next day.

"And some of my servants set I at the gates, that there should be no burden brought in on the Sabbath day": The porters being not to be trusted, being liable to be bribed and corrupted, which he knew his servants were not. And therefore, since it might be necessary on a few occasions to open the gates to let some persons in and out. And especially such who dwelt near, and came to worship. He placed his servants there, to take care that none were admitted that had any burdens upon them.

The sabbath begins on Friday night about dark and goes to Saturday night about the same time. Nehemiah stopped the people from bringing in to sell to the people by having the gates locked on Friday night, and not opened until after Sabbath was over.

Nehemiah 13:20 "So the merchants and sellers of all kind of ware lodged without Jerusalem once or twice."

The Tyrians particularly (Neh. 13:16).

"Lodged without Jerusalem once or twice": One Sabbath day or two, not being able to get into the city, such strict watch and care being taken to keep the gates shut. This they did, hoping the Jews would come out to them and buy their goods. Though they were not admitted to bring them within the city.

This was probably before the word got around, that they would not be able to enter Jerusalem on the Sabbath.

Nehemiah 13:21 "Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye about the wall? if ye do [so] again, I will lay hands on you. From that time forth came they no [more] on the sabbath."

Against their continuance there, and threatened them. And called heaven and earth to witness what he would do to them, if they did not depart.

"Why lodge ye about the wall?" Of the city, waiting an opportunity to get in, and tempting the Jews to come out and buy their wares.

"If ye do so again, I will lay hands on you": Beat them, or slay them, at least imprison them.

"From that time forth came they no more on the Sabbath": Finding there was no likelihood of getting into the city, and that they were liable to be taken up and punished.

Nehemiah threatened to arrest the merchants, who came to Jerusalem and waited outside the gates. This made for a noisy Sabbath, and Nehemiah would not allow this. This kept them away.

Nehemiah 13:22 "And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and [that] they should come [and] keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath day. Remember me, O my God, [concerning] this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy."

From all ceremonial uncleanness, that they might be fit in a ceremonial sense to perform the duties of the office on the Sabbath day.

"And that they should come and keep the gates, to sanctify the Sabbath day": Not the gates of the city, his servants were placed there. Nor was this the work of the Levites, and much less did this require a particular purification for that assignment. But the gates of the temple, that no impure person might enter there. And on that day it required the greater diligence, because of the number of people that came to worship.

"Remember me, O my God, concerning this also": With respect to his care to have the Sabbath kept holy, as well as his concern for the honor of the house of God, and the maintenance of his ministers (Neh. 13:14).

"And spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy": He desired to be dealt with, not according to any merits of his own, but according to the abundant mercy of God. That he would kindly and graciously accept any good that he had done, and would, for his mercy sake, forgive whatever was amiss in him.

Nehemiah was doing everything he could to cause the LORD to overlook the sin they had committed about the Sabbath. These Levites had been already assigned this duty, when the gates were re-built. They were to treat this as if it were a gate to the temple. The whole city of Jerusalem had fallen away from the type of faithfulness God required while Nehemiah had been away. He was trying to re-establish order in their worship now.

Verses 23-28: The sin of mixed marriages had erupted again (Ezra 9:1-4; 10:44), and the children of these marriages could not speak Hebrew (verse 24): "in the speech of Ashdod". Even one of the younger sons of "Joiada" married a daughter of "Sanballat". So Nehemiah "chased him" away because the priestly line was not to be contaminated by intermarriage (Lev. 21:6-8, 14-15).

Both the priests and the people had married pagans of the land in violation of the Mosaic law (compare Exodus 34:15-16; Deut. 7:3), the earlier reforms of Ezra (compare Ezra chapters 9 and 10), and their own covenant (compare 10:30). Malachi spoke against this sin (Mal. 2:10-16).

The account of Solomon's fall from greatness was common knowledge. Nehemiah used him to illustrate how far a person can descend by making poor choices. Nehemiah hoped that his forceful confrontation regarding intermarriage would make the people do better than "Solomon" did.

Nehemiah 13:23 "In those days also saw I Jews [that] had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, [and] of Moab:"

Ashdod, or Azotus, as it is called in (Acts 8:40), was one of the five cities of the Philistines. Which, though none of the seven nations with whom marriage was forbidden, yet it was very unfit and improper to marry with them (Judges 14:3). This place was a mart of the Arabians, where they sold their goods, to which the Jews might resort, and thereby be ensnared into such marriages. And which with the Ammonites and Moabites were unlawful (Neh. 13:1). "Ashdod": (See note on 4:7).

"Ammon and of Moab": Neighboring countries east of the Jordan whose beginnings were by Lot's incestuous relationship with his two daughters (compare Gen. 19:30-38).

Nehemiah 13:24 "And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people."

Which they learned of their mothers, so that it was a mixed language they spoke, partly Jewish and partly Philistine. But some refer this not to their speech, but to the number of their children. That half of them, which Jarchi interprets many of them, spoke in the language of Ashdod, even as many as were most with their mothers, and chiefly brought up by them.

"And could not speak in the Jews' language": Not at all, or so much as to be understood well, which inclines to the last sense.

"But according to the language of each people": Their mothers were of, whether of Ashdod, or of Ammon, or of Moab.

These wives of Ashdod were Philistines. The other two were Ammonites and Moabites. All of these were forbidden for the Jews to marry. Their children were not even speaking Hebrew.

Nehemiah 13:25 "And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, [saying], Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves."

Argued with them, faithfully admonished them, and sharply reprov'd them.

"And cursed them": Assuring them that the curse of God would come upon them, unless they repented. Aben Ezra interprets it of excommunicating them, either with "Cherem" or "Niddui", which were two sorts of excommunication among the Jews. But it is a question whether as yet those were used by them.

"And smote certain of them": Ordered them to be beaten with rods or scourges, as transgressors of the law.

"And plucked off their hair": Or ordered it to be plucked off by the executioner that smote them. Which sort of punishment, as it was painful, it was disgraceful and ignominious (see Isa. 1:6).

"And made them swear by God, saying, ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves": Not intermarry with them. This they had sworn to before (Neh. 10:29).

The cursing had to be of those who had intermarried. Smote them means they were beaten. It seems to be a very cruel punishment to pull their hair out, but that was done also. All of this was to force them to swear they would not intermarry.

Nehemiah 13:26 "Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin."

By marrying strange wives, by whom he was drawn into idolatry (1 Kings 11:3).

"Yet among many nations was there no king like him": As not for grandeur and riches, so not for wisdom, and yet was ensnared by his idolatrous wives.

"Who was beloved of his God": Alluding to his name Jedidiah, which signifies beloved of the Lord (2 Sam. 12:24).

"And God made him king over all Israel": Which was a proof of his love to him, and so he was under the greater obligation to serve him, and him only. And yet his heart, through his wives, was turned after other gods.

"Even him did outlandish women cause to sin": And if so great and wise a man was enticed by them to idolatry, much more may you, and therefore it was very dangerous to marry with them.

(In 1 Kings), there is an extensive study on the sins of Solomon, that were brought on by marrying women who worshipped false gods. The women were called strange women, because they were not Hebrews. It is still a bad thing for those who believe in Christ to marry those who do not. God greatly loved and blessed Solomon, but he sinned greatly because of his wives. Solomon's punishment should have been enough to convince all of them how evil this sin was.

Nehemiah 13:27 "Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to transgress against our God in marrying strange wives?"

To suffer it to be done, and connive at it, and not punish for it.

"To transgress against our God": His law, his mind, and will.

"In marrying strange wives?" Forbidden by him (Deut. 7:1).

If Nehemiah had not stopped this at this point, it would have become more and more common. This was one of the main reasons God had destroyed Jerusalem before. Nehemiah did not want that to happen again.

Nehemiah 13:28 "And [one] of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, [was] son in law to Sanballat the Horonite: therefore I chased him from me."

Even the grandson of the High-Priest (compare 12:10), sinfully married a daughter of Sanballat (see note on 2:10).

This was one of the main problems. The priests were not setting the right kind of example for the people. The grandson of the High Priest had married Sanballat's daughter. Not only was Sanballat a heathen, but he was an enemy of Jerusalem, and especially of Nehemiah. He fought Nehemiah, and tried to keep him from building the wall. Nehemiah actually ran the son of Joiada off to live with Sanballat's daughter and Sanballat.

Verses 29-30: Malachi 2:1-8 recognizes the uncleanness within the priesthood.

Nehemiah 13:29 "Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites."

The priests, and punish them. Because they have defiled the priesthood; by marrying strange wives, and rendering themselves unfit to officiate in it.

"And the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites": Made with Levi, Aaron, and Phinehas (see Num. 24:11). Of the corruption of which, complaint is made (Malachi 2:4).

I would have to agree with Nehemiah that a sin was worse for a High Priest to commit, because he should be more aware of God's wishes than the average person. This is true of preachers in our day as well. They should set an example of a holy life before their people.

Nehemiah was asking God not to hold him responsible for what the priests did.

Nehemiah 13:30 "Thus cleansed I them from all strangers, and appointed the wards of the priests and the Levites, every one in his business;"

Both people and priests from strange wives, obliging them to put them away, or flee their country.

"And appointing the wards of the priests and the Levites, everyone in his business": To do the work of their office in their courses and turns.

Nehemiah 13:31 "And for the wood offering, at times appointed, and for the firstfruits. Remember me, O my God, for good."

"Remember me": Nehemiah prayed this for the third time (compare 13:14, 22), desiring God's blessing on his obedient efforts.

For a fourth and final time, the book records one of Nehemiah's prayers: "Remember me, O my God". Clearly he did not think that God would forget him; this illustrates how Nehemiah entrusted himself to God. The request "for good" leaves the specifics of blessing in God's hands.

Again, Nehemiah wanted God to remember the good things he had done, and overlook the things that he fell short in. I can truly say that it appeared that Nehemiah desired to please God with all his heart. He had actually established the wood offering for the first time. He also re-established the firstfruits offerings. This was almost a plea from Nehemiah to God to remember only the good he had done. This is probably the cry of all believers as well. Lord, remember the little good I did, and forget my shortcomings.

Nehemiah Chapter 13 Questions

1. What did they read in the audience of the people?
2. What was found written in the book?
3. Why were they forbidden in the congregation?
4. After they heard this read, who did they separate out from Israel?
5. Who was the priest Eliashib allied unto?
6. When had Nehemiah had trouble from Tobiah?
7. What had the priest prepared for him?
8. What had been there before?
9. What did the meat offering symbolize?
10. Where was Nehemiah, when this happened?
11. Tobiah an enemy of whom?
12. What did Nehemiah do about this?
13. Who should have been watching for this type of sin?
14. What had happened to the Levites, while Nehemiah was away?
15. Who did Nehemiah contend with about this?
16. What did all of Judah bring as a tithe?
17. What four people did Nehemiah choose to be treasurers?
18. Why did he choose them?
19. What does Nehemiah ask of God in verse 14?
20. How were some of the people breaking the sabbath?
21. Who brought fish to Jerusalem on the Sabbath?
22. What did Nehemiah do to stop them?
23. After he did this, what did the merchants do?

24. What did Nehemiah threaten to do to them?
25. In verse 23, who had the Jews married?
26. What did Nehemiah do to them?
27. Who did Nehemiah chase out of Jerusalem?
28. Who had set a bad example for the people?
29. What does Nehemiah want God to remember?