

They had defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood. There was only one way out: cleansing (v. 30). Proper appointments were re-established (vv. 30, 31). For all of this, Nehemiah again sought to be remembered by God (v. 31).

Conclusion Spiritual living was a problem in Nehemiah's day. It is today. The answer is absolute adherence to the Word. God give us Nehemiahs who forthrightly call God's people back to the truth and the living of it!

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

"No Compromise"
Nehemiah 13:1-31

Introduction

1. Here is the last chapter of this tremendous book. It ends where it began — with the Word of God (1:8; 13:1). It is the Word which provokes one to do His will. Action not based on revelation may well be carnal activity!
2. Nehemiah made two visits to Jerusalem (1:1; 2:1, 8; 13:6, 7). Although not stated, he probably was absent from Jerusalem an extended period. It was at this time the problems recorded here erupted. They teach a terrific lesson: constant vigilance is required for Godly relations.
3. Here is a summary of the difficulties Nehemiah discovered and how he handled them. There are three in the text:—

1. SEPARATION

a. Provoked v. 1.

It is crystal clear that the problem of separation was highlighted by the Word. Difficulty about discerning separation principles may always be traced to lack of Bible knowledge or acceptance of Bible truth. The reference here is to Deut. 23:3-6.

b. Illustrated v. 2.

The rationale behind the word (v. 1) is given. It relates to an historical event (Num. 22-26). Even with this problem God overruled a curse to become a blessing.

c. Included v. 3.

The "mixed multitude" are added to the foreign groups (v. 1). These were first mentioned in Moses' day (Ex. 12:38). The reference has probable concern for those who are not whole-hearted for the Lord. They want identification, but no separation.

d. Specified vv. 4-9.

A definite item of contravening separatist princi-

ciples is here recorded. Eliashib and Tobiah were relatives, this is the import of the word "allied" (v. 4). The "great chambers" (v. 5) was probably made by combining several smaller rooms which were previously used for other projects (v. 5b). Nehemiah calls this "evil" (v. 7) and it caused him much grief (v. 8). This verb is used elsewhere with the same idea (2:3; Jonah 4:1). The only action in such cases is separation, hence the strong series of verbs is given; cast forth, commanded, cleansed, brought again (vv. 8, 9). Things were made right with a meal offering and frankincense (v. 9).

2. DISTRIBUTION vv. 10-14.

a. Problem v. 10.

Certain support belonged to various workers (cf. 12:47). This was not given to them. As a consequence, they had deserted their responsibilities and fled to the fields to get food!

b. Question v. 11.

When Nehemiah saw the difficulty, he did not sweep it under the rug. He tackled the problem directly. The verb "content" means "to seize by the hair" and here to do it with words and not hands (cf. Deut. 33:7).

c. Solution v. 12, 13.

Three items are listed here (v. 12) as being promised by "all Judah": tithe of 1) grain, 2) new wine, and 3) oil. All was brought unto the storehouses and control was provided (v. 13). Four persons are named for the control and these were "faithful" to distribute what was provided. For what Nehemiah did, he asked God not to forget him (v. 14). He had carefully undertaken for the service of the temple.

3. OBSERVATION vv. 15-22.

a. Desecration vv. 15, 16.

The law declared that the sabbath day was to be kept for God (Ex. 20:8-11). The sabbath was a sign between the Lord and Israel (Ex. 31:12-17). Openly, the day was being abused terribly. Trade was brazenly practiced (v. 15). Nehemiah did hesitate to witness against Israel in this (v. 15). Furthermore, there were men from Tyre who apparently tarried undisturbed (so "dwelt,"

v. 16) in the city. They also sold to Israel on the sabbath.

b. Rectification vv. 17-22.

Due to the situation, Nehemiah took action. Here are some of the things he did: -

1) Rebuked the leadership (vv. 17, 18). This is usually where the problem lies - - with those who are in charge, hence Nehemiah "contended" (cf. v. 11) with the nobles. The abuse of the sabbath is called "evil" and a "profanity".

2) Guarded the gates (vv. 19-21). The gates were ordered closed before the sabbath (v. 19). Guards were placed at the gates to enforce the order (v. 19). Some merchants tried to fulfill the "spirit" of the law by staying outside the gate, but selling (v. 20). Nehemiah warned them severely and threatened jail for them (v. 21). Complete adherence to the law was required and exorted. Levites were called to assist (v. 22). Nehemiah again asked God to remember his acts (v. 22).

4. PROVOCATION vv. 23-31.

a. Fact of it vv. 23, 24.

Foreign marriages had been contracted (v. 23). This resulted in family language problems (v. 24). The whole thing was detestable to God's established law (10:30; Deut. 7:1-4).

b. Response to it vv. 25-28.

Nehemiah again engaged in verbal rebuke (v. 25). Further, he condemned their action, smote them, and even plucked out hairs from others. He extracted a promise not to do this again (v. 25). He illustrated the gravity of the problem from Solomon's experience (v. 26). Three important favorable comments are made about Solomon, but the "nevertheless" of the text showed he sinned in this matter of mixed marriages! Nehemiah resisted this sort of behavior for his people (v. 27). He was particularly horrified in that a relative of the high priest had actually married into the family of Sanballat, arch enemy of the nation (v. 28 cf. 2:10). Nehemiah called God to witness against the evil deeds of the people (v. 29).