

Restoring Hope: Chapter 13



When We Sin—There is Hope

The end of the book of Nehemiah and the end of the history of Israel in the Old Testament ends on what appears to be a low note. This is NOT a happy ending to what has been up to now a message of faith and perseverance. But there is hope—with God all things are possible.

Introduction: In only a few short years—all of the promises that the Israelites had made in chapter 10—had signed their name to—were broken. Oh how we wish the story had ended in chapter 12 with the great dedication of the people and the wall.

A. When there is no accountability *Neh 13:6-8*

1. After the walls were completed Nehemiah went back to Artaxerxes. We do not know exactly how long before he returned to Jerusalem—but it was probably between 8 and 12 years.
2. Eliashib acted alone with no accountability to God or to Nehemiah in letting Tobiah reside on the temple grounds.
3. Where there is no accountability there usually is grief. Here, Nehemiah ‘grieved bitterly.’
4. The lesson: We must always be accountable to the Word of God and to those who God has placed over and beside us.

B. Forsaken commitments *Neh 13:4-30*

There are three main sections to this passage all starting with a key statement and ending in a prayer. Each section reveals a failure to keep one of the written promises from chapter 10.

1. Neglecting the house of God *Neh 13:4-14; 10:39*
“We will not neglect the house of God.” 10:39
 - a. Nehemiah’s reaction to this defilement was similar to how Jesus reacted *Mark 11:15-17*. Cleansing was required...
 - b. Since Tobiah occupied the storehouse the offerings had stopped. Nehemiah corrects this problem.
 - c. Nehemiah’s Prayer :14 Remember me O my God...
2. Neglecting the Sabbath *Neh 13:15-22; 10:31*
“We will not buy on the Sabbath...” 10:31
 - a. Nehemiah rebukes the leaders for ‘profaning’ the Sabbath. :17
 - b. Greed was at the heart of this sin. It was so bad that Nehemiah had to order the gates of the city closed. :19
 - c. Nehemiah’s Prayer :22b Remember me, O my God...
3. Neglecting personal commitment *Neh 13:23-31; 10:29*
[We] entered into a curse and an oath to walk in God’s Law. :29
 - a. “I also saw Jews who had married women of Ashdod.” :23
 After reading the Law they had separated themselves from pagan wives—but now return to the same practice.
 - b. Nehemiah’s reaction seems severe but uses Solomon as an example of what happens when we turn from God’s Law. :26
 - c. Nehemiah cleanses the people. :30
 - c. Nehemiah’s Prayer :31 Remember me, O my God...
 (See *Jeremiah 18:1-6* in the side bar)

Nehemiah 13:6-8

:6 But during all this I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I had returned to the king. Then after certain days I obtained leave from the king,

:7 and I came to Jerusalem and discovered the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, in preparing a room for him in the courts of the house of God.

:8 And it grieved me bitterly; therefore I threw all the household goods of Tobiah out of the room.

Jeremiah 18:1-6

:1 The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying:

:2 "Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause you to hear My words."

:3 Then I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, making something at the wheel.

:4 And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make.

:5 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying:

:6 "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?" says the LORD. "Look, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel!"