

Nehemiah 11-13 – Chapter Study

INTRO

I. FIRST TERM AS GOVERNOR Chs. 1-12

A. Return & Reconstruction Chs. 1-7

B. Revival & Renewal Chs. 8-10

C. Resettlement & Rejoicing Chs. 11-12

1. Jerusalem resettled Chs. 11:1-12:26

11:1 Now the leaders of the people dwelt at Jerusalem; the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to dwell in Jerusalem, the holy city, and nine-tenths were to dwell in other cities. **2** And the people blessed all the men who willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem.

Vs. 1-2

In chapter 7, Nehemiah records the city was only sparsely populated. [7:4] This made it difficult to defend since there would not be enough people to man the walls, gates, & watchtowers.

So a lottery was held.

Those selected moved to Jerusalem to re-populate the city.

Some volunteered to resettle in the capital. These were given special honor by their neighbors & leaders.

In vs. 3-24, we get a listing of the families who relocated.

Then in vs. 25-36 we read of the cities that were resettled in Israel during this period.

The list is a significant because it becomes an important clue for the archaeology of these sites.

Chapter 12

In vs. 1-21, Nehemiah names the priests who'd made the first return with Zerubbabel many years before, along with their descendants who now served as his contemporaries.

22 During the reign of Darius the Persian, a record was also kept of the Levites and priests *who had been heads of their fathers' houses* in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan, and Jaddua. **23** The sons of Levi, the heads of the fathers' houses until the days of Johanan the son of Eliashib, were written in the book of the chronicles. **24** And the heads of the Levites were Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brothers across from them, to praise *and* give thanks, group alternating with group, according to the command of David the man of God. **25** Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, and Akkub were gatekeepers keeping the watch at the storerooms of the gates. **26** These lived in the days of Joiakim the son

of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor, and of Ezra the priest, the scribe.

These records of the Levitical & priestly families were kept because it was *vital* that a son be able to *prove* his descent from the tribe of Levi if he was to serve in the temple.

This is one of the reasons we find these seemingly laborious lists in the scriptures.

What's interesting about the genealogies & name lists we find in the Bible is that while there are many of them, all but 2 of them fade out after a few generations.

The list we find here for the Levites is the 2nd longest list, stretching for many generations.

Again – because it was crucial to the priesthood & knowing who was qualified to serve in the temple to have such a record.

But the Levitical chronicle eventually ends up being broken like the rest. There's only one genealogy that goes all the way back, not just to Abraham, but all the way back to Adam – The genealogy of David & his descendants, all the way down to Jesus.

You see, God had promised Eve that the Messiah would come from her seed.

So the genealogy begins with Adam & Eve.

Then the promise was renewed to Abraham, then to the tribe of Judah from which David came.

Then Nathan the prophet told David the Messiah would come through his descendants – the throne of Israel would pass to Him one day.

This is why in both Matthew & Luke we get those long genealogies of Jesus, one going back to Abraham, the other all the way back to Adam – because they're both testaments to the incredible faithfulness of God.

What's astounding is to realize that of the many lists of names we find in the OT, as we see here – none of them lasts for long except the one that leads to Jesus – yet they were written *hundreds of years* BEFORE JESUS WAS BORN.

That's one more evidence of the divine engineering of the Scriptures.

2. Walls dedicated Chs. 12:27-47

27 Now at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought out the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings and singing, with cymbals and stringed instruments and harps. 28 And the sons of the singers gathered together from the countryside around Jerusalem, from the villages of the Netophathites, 29 from the house of Gilgal, and from the fields of Geba and Azmaveth; for the singers had built themselves villages all around Jerusalem.

The *Levites* have been mentioned several times now. Just who were the Levites?

These were the guys who made & wore denim. No! ☺

The Levites were the descendants of the tribe of Levi.

Moses & his brother Aaron were Levites.

When the tabernacle was first dedicated, only Aaron & his sons were

consecrated as the priests.

They alone were the ones allowed to offer the sacrifices & attend to the rituals of worship inside the sacred precincts.

The Levites were the rest of the men of the tribe of Levi who functioned as assistants to the priests.

Some of them led musical worship. These singers were from 3 families - Asaph, Heman, & Jeduthun.

Many of them had settled in villages surrounding Jerusalem.

But they all returned for the dedication ceremony of the reconstructed walls.

30 Then the priests and Levites purified themselves, and purified the people, the gates, and the wall. 31 So I brought the leaders of Judah up on the wall, and appointed two large thanksgiving choirs. One went to the right hand on the wall toward the Refuse Gate. 32 After them went Hoshai and half of the leaders of Judah, 33 and Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, 34 Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, Jeremiah, 35 and some of the priests' sons with trumpets—Zechariah the son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Michaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of Asaph, 36 and his brethren, Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, and Hanani, with the musical instruments of David the man of God. And Ezra the scribe went before them. 37 By the Fountain Gate, in front of them, they went up the stairs of the City of David, on the stairway of the wall, beyond the house of David, as far as the Water Gate eastward. 38 The other thanksgiving choir went the opposite way, and I was behind them with half of the people on the wall, going past the Tower of the Ovens as far as the Broad Wall, 39 and above the Gate of Ephraim, above the Old Gate, above the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel, the Tower of the Hundred, as far as the Sheep Gate; and they stopped by the Gate of the Prison. 40 So the two thanksgiving choirs stood in the house of God, likewise I and the half of the rulers with me; 41 and the priests, [he names 7] with trumpets; 42 also [he names 8 more]. The singers sang loudly with Jezrahiah the director. 43 Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and the children also rejoiced, so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard afar off.

When they had the formal dedication ceremony of the rebuilt walls, Nehemiah took the leaders up on top of the wall & split them into two groups.

One group went one direction, the other in the opposite - and as they went, they sang songs of praise & thanksgiving to God.

Then they all met & went to the temple to worship to God together.

The celebration was so great, they could be heard a long way off.

44 And at the same time [or better, 'at *that* time'] some were appointed over the rooms of the storehouse for the offerings, the firstfruits, and

the tithes, to gather into them from the fields of the cities the portions specified by the Law for the priests and Levites; for Judah rejoiced over the priests and Levites who ministered.

The spiritual renewal that took place at this time because of Ezra's teaching the Word to them as we read in ch. 8 resulted in a revitalized service at the Temple. The worship became more intense & sincere. More sacrifices were made as more & more people came to worship & offer themselves to the Lord. And giving went up! Tithes increased, offerings poured forth. That's why Nehemiah had to beef up the attendants to the storerooms; the offerings were flowing in at a steady rate.

I just want to say how stoked I am to see how during the time of my sabbatical, both attendance & giving didn't just stay steady – but edged up! As you all know only too well, the recession has been brutal. Its impact on giving to churches across the country has been substantial. I've heard different statistics but the average downturn in giving seems to be right around 12-15%. For several months last year and this, we saw a decline as well, but not like that. And over the last few months, the trend has turned around and we're once again seeing giving go up. God has always taken care of us – always! We know He always will. We see the faithfulness of God in the giving of His people as a sign of their growth in grace.

45 Both the singers and the gatekeepers kept the charge of their God and the charge of the purification, according to the command of David and Solomon his son.

Both David & Solomon had written a clear set of guidelines for the order of service in the temple.

These guys renewed & reinvigorated that service.

46 For in the days of David and Asaph of old *there were* chiefs of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving to God. 47 In the days of Zerubbabel and in the days of Nehemiah all Israel gave the portions for the singers and the gatekeepers, a portion for each day. They also consecrated *holy things* for the Levites, and the Levites consecrated *them* for the children of Aaron.

The tithes of the people supported the Levites, who then tithed from that to the support of the priests.

II. SECOND TERM AS GOVERNOR Ch. 13

13:1 On that day [again, better 'at *that* time'] they read from the Book of Moses in the hearing of the people,

Let's pause there for a moment.

A break in the story is about to come. In vs. 6-7 we learn that not long after the dedication ceremony for the rebuilt walls, he returned to the Persian capital to serve King Artaxerxes once more.

He was gone for about a year.

When he returned to Jerusalem & his duties as the governor, he discovered that many of the old problems had returned.

It was the same old thing all over again.

So here, as he recounts the dedication & devotion of the people in that earlier renewal, he's recounts some of the reforms they'd made.

As we've already seen in earlier chapters, the people understood that spiritual revival is sustained and deepened by giving attention to the Word of God, so they called for more of it to be read.

And when they did they discovered something they needed to comply with - **and in it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever come into the assembly of God, ² because they had not met the children of Israel with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them. However, our God turned the curse into a blessing.**

Moses had been very clear in Deut 23 that because of the horribly abusive way the Ammonites & Moabites had treated Israel during the Exodus, they were forever banned from settling in the territory of Israel.

That rule had not been enforced in recent generations, but it was renewed now.

³ So it was, when they had heard the Law, that they separated all the mixed multitude from Israel.

The "mixed multitude" was turned out.

As the Jews listened to their history in the Word, they heard how often the "mixed multitude" had been a thorn in Israel's side & a cause of trouble to them.

It began with the many poor Egyptians & other oppressed peoples who took advantage of the Exodus to make good their escape from Egypt.

These weren't Jews, but hid out among them when they fled the land of bondage.

It was this mixed multitude that complained so bitterly against Moses.

It was the mixed multitude that whined & suggested they return to Egypt.

It was the mixed multitude who were the first to fall to Balaam's plan to curse Israel.

They were a cause of trouble to Israel because they weren't real believers & followers of God.

They were IN Israel but they weren't OF Israel.

They *weakened* Israel because of their incessant compromise with the world.

This is why God told His people to separate themselves from them, so their sin would not weaken their resolve to follow Him.

Just as there was a mixed multitude in Israel, there's a mixed multitude in the church.

Always has been, always will be.

In fact, Jesus told several parables about what the Kingdom of God would be like & in each, it's a story of good mixed with bad.

The Kingdom of heaven is like a woman who hides leaven in 3 measures of meal.

It's like a tree where the birds make their nests.

It's like a dragnet that brings up both good & bad from the sea.

All of these were illustrations of how the Kingdom of God would be manifest in the Church.

It's the *mixed multitude* in the Church throughout the ages that's been the problem.

These are the ones who commit crimes & violence in the name of Christ.

These are the ones who hide their greed behind a religious façade, relabeling gain as godliness.

The mixed multitude aren't just backslidden believers who struggle with the world.

They're the lost who wear a thin veneer of religion & pretend to belong w/o every really submitting to the Lord.

They want the blessings but not the obligations of belief.

Their appetites & desires are for the things of the world.

Just like the mixed multitude of ancient Israel, the church's bunch counsel a policy of compromise with the world.

They say the best way to influence the world is by fitting in & looking like the world.

Instead of following Nehemiah's example of the Spirit of God using the Word of God in the people of God, these mixed-nuts advise using *worldly means* to do the work of God.

Unlike ancient Israel, we can't take the mixed multitude to the door of the church and give them the boot.

The truth is, we can't always see who's who.

It was easy for Israel – it was about being a Jew; for us, it's about the new birth.

And we all know that spiritual growth differs between all of us.

So discerning who the mixed multitude is isn't always easy.

That's the whole point of the parables of the Kingdom Jesus told.

God will sort the good from the bad, the clean from the unclean, the wheat from the tares.

How then should we act?

We ought to encourage everyone we meet who calls him/herself a believer to live without moral, ethical, or spiritual compromise.

When we meet people who are compromised, *love*, don't condemn them. Judgment is God's business, not ours.

If a brother or a sister is sinning, a gentle rebuke is an act of love – but rebuke aims at *correction* so it's delivered carefully so as to restore – not crush, not condemn or put down.

Condemning someone is often a *greater sin* than what's being judged.

Also, looking toward *this idea of separation*, as we consider who we're going to fellowship with, we need to exercise discretion & not *open ourselves up to* those so enamored by the world that sharing with them requires that we weaken our devotion to Jesus.

I have good friends with whom I disagree vehemently over several areas of theology.

But I know they love God & are sold out to Him. We have great fellowship & encourage each other mightily. Being with them makes me a better man.

I know others with whom there are no real differences in doctrine, but their

commitment to Christ is so weak, hanging out with them for any length of time would prove a challenge.

I've tried to encourage them in the faith and been a good example – but they're not interested.

I maintain contact with them but I can't *fellowship* with them.

As Paul moved to wrap up his letter to the Corinthians, he wrote . . . [1 Cor 15:33-34]

Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits." Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God.

Note that, "evil *COMPANY*" not *contact*.

We can't help but come into *contact* with evil as we make our daily circuit through this fallen world.

But it's different to *keep company* with it.

That means to *partner* with it, to accommodate it by making room for it, giving attention to it.

Before some men will even pick up the newspaper, they ask their wives to go thru it and tear out all the suggestive girlie pics.

Hey, that's great & a guy needs to do that if he's stumbled by ads and such.

But there might be another way to go – and that's to decide before ever picking up the paper that if & when such an image is there, you don't look – see it but don't look AT it. Don't leer!

Adopt the discipline and habit of not setting your eyes on it with the purpose of stirring up lust.

Don't feast your senses on sin.

Because while you may remove those images from the paper & magazines, what are you going to do when you're driving around town and there's a billboard, or a gal on the sidewalk wearing a bikini?

Maybe the newspaper is a way learn the discipline of seeing without looking.

In Job 31:1 Job says –

"I have made a covenant with my eyes; Why then should I look upon a young woman?"

The word 'look' means to gaze intently – to linger & leer, getting pleasure *by* looking.

4 Now before this,

Meaning before what *follows*, which takes place *after* Nehemiah returned to Susa & King Artaxerxes.

Eliashib the priest, having authority over the storerooms of the house of our God, was allied with Tobiah.

Tobiah was a leader of Jerusalem's enemies.

When Nehemiah returned to Persia, some of the Jewish leadership conspired with him.

Why makes no sense whatever.

They'd seen God's miraculous favor during Nehemiah's time there & knew that God rewarded their faithfulness.

So why they'd go backward now & compromise with Tobiah simply makes no

sense.

But there you go – sin makes no sense. On the contrary, *sin makes you stupid*.

5 And he had prepared for him a large room, where previously they had stored the grain offerings, the frankincense, the articles, the tithes of grain, the new wine and oil, which were commanded to be given to the Levites and singers and gatekeepers, and the offerings for the priests.

Tobiah had been given a suite in one of the *temple* storerooms!

This gives us an idea of how corrupt things got during Nehemiah's absence.

6 But during all this I was not in Jerusalem, for in the 32nd year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I had returned to the king.

Artaxerxes was *Persian*; the *Persians* ruled at this time.

The reason he's called the *King of Babylon* is because Babylon was still considered the premier city of the world and had been conquered by the Persians.

Then after certain days I obtained leave from the king,

We're not sure exactly how long Nehemiah was back in Artaxerxes court but it was probably about a year.

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. 9 Then I commanded them to cleanse the rooms; and I brought back into them the articles of the house of God, with the grain offering and the frankincense.

When Nehemiah returned & discovered his old nemesis Tobiah camped out in the temple, he threw him out & had the room repaired & rededicated to its rightful purpose.

Question: Why hadn't the *other leaders* Nehemiah put in place before he left opposed this?

How did Eliashib get away with it? Where was the opposition, the resistance? It's been said that all it takes for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.

We see an illustration of that here.

We don't know why nothing had been done, but as soon as *Nehemiah* arrived & discovered the situation, he corrected it by taking strong action

He didn't debate with the parties involved - He didn't try to win others to his side.

He didn't take a poll to see how public opinion was running.

He did what he knew was right & if no one else could see it, it didn't matter to him.

HE KNEW what was right & what had to be done - so he did it!

Here's a crucial element of effective, godly leadership → *Courageous Conviction*

A leader has to have the ability to *know* what's right & the courage to *do* what's right no matter the consequences.

This is one of the reasons our nation & world are in such a sorry state.

Where are the leaders who are willing to live courageously by their

convictions?

It seems the majority have no conviction but to stay in power.

God send us a Nehemiah! Send us a dozen of them!

On a spiritual level, this episode reminds us we need to be keeping diligent guard over the house of God.

Unless we keep our guard & courage up, the enemy may move right in & set up his headquarters in the church.

That's already happened in some churches.

There are a lot of Pastor Eliashibs who've moved the Word out of their ministry & moved in all kinds of other things; entertainment, pop psychology, accommodation.

They've replaced a *call to holiness* with a slickly packaged offer of *happiness*.

They've turned from a humble dependence on the Holy Spirit to Hollywood.

Without strong, godly, spiritual leadership, God's people are prone to stray like sheep.

At Sinai, Moses was away from the people only a short time, yet they became idolaters (Ex. 32).

Nehemiah was only gone a year, and Tobiah moved in.

Throughout his church planting career, the Apostle Paul would start a church & leave it in the hands of elders, only to have trouble begin soon after his departure.

It was dealing with that trouble that prompted many of his letters that have come to be a large part of our NT.

Don't underestimate the power of a good leader like Nehemiah.

There's a pervasive mentality in the modern world that's *wary* of strong leaders.

During the counterculture of the 60's a mindset was installed in the Baby boomers that looked at all forms of authority as corrupt and worthy of resistance.

Even today you'll see that expressed in the bumper sticker – *Question Authority*.

When I was in Germany a couple years ago, my topic was the duty of the pastor.

I shared that it's to lead, feed, and protect the flock.

Several of the participants in the conference told me later that while they understood and agreed with what I had to share, it was a really difficult thing to follow thru on because European, & especially Germans are ultra leery of anyone who *claims* authority.

They've been burned by too many Hitlers & Mussolinis & have developed a knee-jerk resistance to anyone who asserts authority.

We have much the same attitude here in the US toward authority.

Political liberty is so ingrained in us we bristle at the idea of anyone who demonstrates strong leadership.

But the problem isn't authority – it's abuse of authority.

Authority that's God-given and God-directed ought to be the very thing we pray for & look to.

What we need are good, wise, courageous leaders like Nehemiah.

When they arise, we ought to follow them.

10 I also realized that the portions for the Levites had not been given them; for each of the Levites and the singers who did the work had gone back to his field.

The revival that had resulted in a boost in tithes & offerings had fallen onto hard times again, so the Levites had had to go back to their villages to work the fields.

This is another thing that happens when corrupt leaders are allowed to run things – the people know it and they stop supporting the work.

If the mainline denominations want to know why they have to close hundreds of their churches & sell off their assets, it's because they've forsaken God in favor of the Tobiahs of this world.

The churches & movements that are faithfully proclaiming God's Word and serving Him are doing just fine.

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

12 Then all Judah brought the tithe of the grain and the new wine and the oil to the storehouse.

Once again we see how quickly things turn around when the right person in the right place does the right thing.

13 And I appointed as treasurers over the storehouse 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 considered faithful, and their task was to distribute to their brethren. 14 Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and do not wipe out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for its services!

15 In those days I saw people in Judah treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and loading donkeys with wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I warned them about the day on which they were selling provisions.

If you were here last week you'll remember that during the revival that followed their return to the Word, the leaders of the people had all gone on record in their devotion to the Lord.

They signed their names to a covenant, saying they would keep the sabbath.

Yet here they are a scant year later, doing the very thing they had promised NOT to do.

16 Men of Tyre dwelt there also, who brought in fish and all kinds of goods, and sold them on the Sabbath to the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem.

Not only had the Jews promised to keep the sabbath but they had agreed to not allow foreigners to hold market day on the Sabbath.

Yet, here it was as if their earlier commitment had never been made.

17 Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said to them,

“What evil thing is this that you do, by which you profane the Sabbath day? ¹⁸ Did not your fathers do thus, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Yet you bring added wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath.”

Nehemiah went after the nobles because they were the business owners.

They were the ones who were mainly responsible for the resumption of work on the Sabbath.

As leaders, they needed to take the lead and do the right thing.

Nehemiah urgently reminded them that keeping the Sabbath was crucial to their survival as a nation.

Neglect of it in earlier times had led to the destruction of their nation.

How could these men show such spiritual ineptness now?

The reason why the Sabbath was so important was because of what it was; what *role* it played.

The Sabbath was the sign of Israel’s uniqueness as the people of God.

It reminded them weekly **WHO** they were and the covenant they had with God.

[Reminders: Communion, wedding ring]

¹⁹ So it was, at the gates of Jerusalem, as it began to be dark before the Sabbath, that I commanded the gates to be shut, and charged that they must not be opened till after the Sabbath. Then I posted some of my servants at the gates, so *that* no burdens would be brought in on the Sabbath day.

While our day begins at Midnight, the Hebrew day begins at sunset.

SO just minutes before the commencement of the Sabbath, Nehemiah shut the city gates & posted a guard to make sure when the Sabbath actually started, no one would be found laboring.

²⁰ Now the merchants and sellers of all kinds of wares lodged outside Jerusalem once or twice. ²¹ Then I warned them, and said to them, “Why do you spend the night around the wall? If you do so again, I will lay hands on you!” From that time on they came no *more* on the Sabbath.

Nehemiah gave the Gentile merchants a couple weeks to catch on, then warned them if they persisted in trying to get the Jews to break the Sabbath, he’d arrest them.

They got the message & ceased.

²² And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should go and guard the gates, to sanctify the Sabbath day. Remember me, O my God, *concerning* this also, and spare me according to the greatness of Your mercy!

²³ In those days I also saw Jews *who* had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, *and* Moab.

These were the same people we already saw were forbidden to abide in the land & from whom the Jews were to distance themselves.

²⁴ And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and could

not speak the language of Judah, but spoke according to the language of one or the other people. ²⁵ So I contended with them and cursed them, struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, *saying*, “You shall not give your daughters as wives to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons or yourselves. ²⁶ Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? Yet among many nations there was no king like him, who was beloved of his God; and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless pagan women caused even him to sin.

Nehemiah lays it on THICK.

If someone like Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived couldn't escape the spiritual perversion of intermarrying pagan women, what made these guys think they could?

²⁷ Should we then hear of your doing all this great evil, transgressing against our God by marrying pagan women?” ²⁸ And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was a son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite; therefore I drove him from me. ²⁹ Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites.

Another of the promises the leaders made & signed their names to in Ch. 10 was to *not* marry foreign wives, specially from Ammon & Moab!

But they'd done it!

And far from raising their children in the knowledge of the God of Israel, their children weren't even learning the Hebrew *language*, let alone about the Hebrew *God*.

The point here is that the problem wasn't that these women were JUST foreigners – they were pagans who continued to worship their idols.

Hey, the Word of God was clear, if a Gentile came to faith in Yahweh, they were taken into the people of Israel.

Rahab & Ruth were Gentile brides who became members of Israel.

The problem here is that these women stayed *pagans* and were raising their kids as *little* pagans.

Nehemiah was *furios* & showed his displeasure with some corporal punishment.

It was entirely within his authority as the governor to discipline these guys by pulling out some of their hair.

Pulling out the hair was a sign of utmost grief.

As leaders, these men ought to have been so grieved over their error that they repented in great travail.

Nehemiah's action here was a radical challenge to them to wake up and realize how as leaders they were not only *not resisting* Israel's turn away from God, they were encouraging it by their horrible example.

³⁰ Thus I cleansed them of everything pagan.

Simply stated – but not easily done.

For what Nehemiah means is that every wife who clung to her idols was put away; sent home to her family.

This was the end to not a few marriages.

I also assigned duties to the priests and the Levites, each to his service, ³¹ and to bringing the wood offering and the firstfruits at appointed times. Remember me, O my God, for good!

Nehemiah was complete in his devotion to God.

Even when others were flaky, he remained true.

Though Ezra encouraged Nehemiah for a while during his first term as governor, Nehemiah stood pretty much alone for most of his life.

His zeal for God set him apart from those who were willing to compromise with the world.

He was no doubt considered a radical & zealot by his contemporaries.

But we don't commemorate them today.

No book of the Bible is named after Sanballat, or Tobiah or Eliashib.

We honor Nehemiah because he honored God with his life.