

NEHEMIAH 10-11

REVIEW...

- 5 days after the wall was completed - the people gathered on the 1st day of the 7th month ...
 - They waited a few days – because they wanted to celebrate ROSH HASHANAH...
 - Ezra the Priest taught the Word of God to the people from morning till midday!
 - The Levites helped – by interpreting the Word from Hebrew into Aramaic...
 - They also helped by giving sense to the Law - expounding on the Word of God!
- As a result of hearing and understanding the Word – the people wept and repented before the Lord...
 - The Levites encouraged them to celebrate – because – the joy of the Lord was their strength!
 - More than that the people were encouraged to tell others – so they could celebrate too!
- The next day the leaders gathered with the priests and Ezra – and continued to read the Word ...
 - They read they were to celebrate the 7-day feast of tabernacles on the 15th day of the month...
 - On the 24th they held a solemn day of fasting - confession of sin - and reading the law...
 - Then the people made a covenant to God – to keep the Law of God!

A COVENANT WITH GOD... (3 THINGS)

- 1ST – PROMISE TO THE LORD ... vs. 1-29
 - 1st – 3 groups of people sealed the covenant (*promise*) to God to obey all His commands... vs. 1-28
 - Nehemiah the governor – along with 23 priests / 17 Levites / and 44 leaders!
 - In other words the promise to obey the Word of God came from the top...
 - Too many leaders today follow the motto – ‘Do what I say – not what I do...’
 - But words are cheap – it is easy to tell other what to do – but the power is in the example!
 - We need to be wise when it comes to picking our leaders – those who guide us...
 - Be careful of leaders who say one thing – but do not live up to their own words...
 - When it comes to picking leaders – people tend to get very political...
 - They want to argue about financial policies / and party affiliations...
 - But when we look at whom to choose to lead – we need to look to the Word!
 - Because the only man fit to lead – is a man who is devoted to God!
 - Proverbs 29:2 - “When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice.”
 - Everyone who had knowledge and understanding signed the promise!
 - The suggestion is that all who were old enough to make the decision...
 - Which brings up a somewhat controversial question...
 - What happens to young children/babies who are not old enough to believe in God...
 - Every child is different – salvation is likely a process - not a single moment...
 - A 3-year-old child might ‘accept’ Jesus - but not with full understanding...
 - They might ‘accept’ Jesus again at 10 or 12 - then again at 15 or 16...
 - Coming to a place as an adult where they understand and choose Jesus!
 - As long as at least one of the parents is a believer...
 - I Corinthians 7:14 – “The Christian wife/husband brings holiness to the marriage. Otherwise, your children would not have a godly influence, but now they are holy...”
 - This could simply mean because of the influence of the believing spouse...
 - Teaching the children about Jesus - training them up to follow the Lord...
 - But it could also have a spiritual aspect - the kids are literally sanctified...
 - The saving faith of the believing spouse extending over the children...
 - Until they reach an age where they can choose whether or not to follow Jesus!

- You might ask - what about if both parents are un-believers...
 - The Bible is silent on this - we do not know what happens to these children...
 - I would say - God is still just - and if they kids are not old enough to understand...
 - Then God would take them straight into heaven - but we cannot say for sure
- All of those who had separated themselves from the people of the lands around them!
 - The rest of the Levites / the gatekeepers / singers / and the Nethinim signed...
 - Cause Israel was to be a holy nation - set apart – not look or act like the world...
 - Instead they were to be a representative of God to a lost and dying world!
 - **Leviticus 19:2** - “You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.”
 - God calls us to be Holy - we are called to be saints...
 - The NT word saints – *hagios* – means to be holy – set apart from the world for God!
 - The NT word for church - *ekklesia* - meaning to be called out of the world...
 - I have met so many believers who are miserable – there is no joy in their lives...
 - They have too much love for the world – to be happy in the Lord...
 - The problem is they think the world has something to offer them...
 - Yet every time they try to ‘have fun’ the Holy Spirit is there to convict them...
 - So they are not happy in the world – because they know too much about the Lord...
 - They are miserable wherever they are – because they are divided in their heart!
 - **Luke 16:13** – “No one can serve two masters. You will hate one and love the other...”
- 2nd – All entered into a curse – an oath – to walk in the Law of God... vs. 29
 - Why a curse - perhaps they came across Deuteronomy 28 in their reading of the Word...
 - In which are 13 verses of blessings for those who obey – then 53 verses of curses....
 - Far more curses than blessings - because those who try and live by the law are cursed!
 - **Galatians 3:10** - “Those who depend on the law to make them right with God are under his curse, for the Scriptures say, “Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all these commands that are written in God’s Book of the Law.”
 - Not that the Law is the problem - we are the problem - we cannot keep the Law!
 - The Law points out to us all our failures – showed us all our flaws...
 - The problem is it does nothing / can do nothing – to help us change...
 - There is only the ability to show us what we do is wrong – not to make it right!
 - I could tell you all day long to read your Bible - go to church - be ‘good’...
 - You might even agree that what I am saying is true – the law is good...
 - But no matter how many ‘laws’ I gave - I could not make you follow them...
 - It all comes down to the heart - you are going to do what you want to!
 - The Law only stirs in us the desire for sin – sin that leads to judgment/death...
 - Why is it the only toy a child wants – is the one they do not have...
 - Why is it the moment we are given a ‘rule’ / ‘law’ we want to disobey it...
 - Because we are sinners – and the Law ‘stirs’ up our sinful desires...
 - Those sins inevitably lead to death – physical death / spiritual death!
 - The only thing we get by promising to do go – is to bind ourselves to the curse of the law!
 - Yet where the Law brought death – the Spirit brings life
 - **II Corinthians 3:5-6** - “The new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”
 - Jesus - set us free from the Law - so we can live by the Spirit...
 - Only through the power of the Spirit – can we have a change our heart!
 - Only Jesus can bring lasting change - a transformed heart and new life...
 - As we look to Jesus - we are changed from the inside out!
- 2ND – 3 CONDITIONS OF THE PROMISE... vs. 30-39

- o 1st – They would be holy in their marriages... vs. 30
 - The parents would not let their daughters or sons marry unbelievers...
 - There have also been many men/women who were convinced they were 'in love'...
 - The only problem was their 'spouse' was not a Christian (*although really nice*)...
 - But they were convinced they could change them - make them believe – 'missionary dating'...
 - Only to end up in a bad marriage - with children who learned mixed values!
 - **II Corinthians 6:14** - "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers..."
 - It is easy to put on the rose-colored glasses and make a foolish choice that lasts a lifetime!
 - And while arranged marriages might be tough to pull off today...
 - It is important parents are involved in the decisions their kids / grandkids make!
- o 2nd – They would be holy in their worship ... vs. 31
 - If vendors came to sell their wares or grain on the Sabbath – they would not buy them...
 - They people understood the need to set aside a day to worship God...
 - o There are some who argue that we MUST obey the Sabbath – no work on Saturday...
 - o But it does not matter what day we set aside to worship the Lord – **Romans 14:5**
 - o What matter is taking a day to stop worrying about work – and focus on Jesus!
 - The Sabbath also points us to a greater truth – the True Rest - **Hebrews 4:9-10**
 - o Even if we take a day off – we still have to go back to work the next day...
 - o Meaning that we have not yet entered into THE rest of God...
 - o The true Sabbath comes when we see Jesus face to face – when we are home!
 - o The Sabbath was meant to point us to the hope of Heaven – eternity with our Lord!
 - o **Colossians 2:16-17** – "Let no one judge you in food or in drink... or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ."
 - o If you see the shadow of your best friend do you run up and hug the shadow...
 - o Of course not – but the shadow does tell you your friend is close!
 - o The Sabbath was a shadow of Jesus – He is our true rest - **Matthew 11:28-30**
 - The people would give the Land a Sabbath every 7 years...
 - And at the same time they would forgive all debts – **Deuteronomy 15:1-6**...
 - This meant putting the Lord before money – trusting the Lord to provide for their needs
 - The obvious concern of giving the land rest – was what to eat if there was no harvest...
 - If you forgave the debts others had – what would happen to 'your' money!
 - The Word of God often asks things of us that cause us to have faith - trust in the Lord...
 - God tells us if we seek Him first (*before money/stuff*) - He will provide for our needs
 - He promises if we give our life to Him - we will find true life - **Luke 9:4**
 - The test we all have to face - is do we believe - do obey the Word of the God!
 - Part of worshiping the Lord – is learning to have faith in the Lord – trust He will provide!
- o 3rd – They would be holy in their giving... vs. 32-39
 - The people would freely give to provide for the needs of the Temple... vs. 32-33
 - The Law required the people to give a ½ Shekel every year – **Exodus 30:11-16**
 - But the people were hard pressed under the Persians – and could only afford 1/3 Shekel...
 - It was not about what they were required to give – it was what they wanted to give!
 - We read about the Temple tax in **Matthew 17:24-27** - when Jesus arrived in Capernaum...
 - Peter was asked – 'Does your teacher not pay the temple tax?'
 - Peter immediately answered - 'yes' – then thought to go and check with Jesus...
 - Jesus then asked Peter - who do the Kings of the earth tax – their sons or strangers...
 - The point being that Kings do not tax their own sons – they are tax-free!
 - We are not strangers in the Kingdom of God – we are sons and daughters of the King...

- Therefore we are not required to give any tax or tithe - **II Corinthians 9:7**

- You can 'give' if and when you desire – God loves his kids to give cheerfully!

- The people cast lots to see who would bring the wood in the Temple... vs. 34
 - There was no law given by Moses regarding the gathering of wood...
 - It had always been taken care of by the Nethinim - descendants of the Gibeonites...
 - But few had returned from the Diaspora – so now the Jews had to share the responsibility!
- The people would give their first fruits to the Lord... vs. 35-37
 - The first of their crops / their trees / their flocks / their dough (*not money*)...
 - The idea of first fruits speaks of order – giving to the Lord first...
 - If I went out and bought some new gym clothes – because mine were falling apart...
 - Then offered to give you my old clothes – because I do not need them anymore...
 - What would that say about our relationship – how much do I value you!
 - I am always amused when people donate things to the church...
 - We tend to get the things people could not even give away at the garage sale!
 - So often when people give to Jesus – it is almost as an after thought / the leftovers...
 - But what does that say about the priority Jesus has in our lives / His importance to us!
- Part of the first fruits was their children... vs. 36
 - Fulfilling the promise of **Exodus 13** – all first born sons had to be given back to God...
 - Because God had spared their first born sons in the Passover in Egypt...
 - But it speaks of a greater truth - that our children belong to the Lord!
 - Our kids are not ours – they are on loan to us - and we are called to give them back...
 - That is why we have the tradition of dedicating our kids - **I Samuel 1:27-28**
 - The dedication is not for the children – they are babies – it is for the parents!
 - We make the promise/vow to train up our kids to know and follow the Lord!
 - **Proverbs 22:6** – “Train up a child in the way he should go...”
- The Priests and Levites would be accountable for all that was given... vs. 38-39
 - When the Levites received the Tithes of the people – they were not alone...
 - Then a 10th of all tithes given by the people would take by them into the Temple...
 - Because the people vowed they would not neglect the House of God!
 - It is important that the gifts people give to the church are accounted for...
 - We want to know the money is not mishandled – and there is no abuse of funds...
 - For that reason we always have at least 2 people when tithes are collected...
 - And again when they are counted – so there is always accountability!

- **3RD – FILLING THE LAND... vs. 1-36** READ: **NEHEMIAH 11:1-4**

- o 1st - The leaders cast lots to choose a tenth of the people to move to Jerusalem... vs. 1-19
 - Jerusalem is not a very easy city to live in – lots of rocks / poor farming...
 - So the majority of the Jews who had returned from captivity had not settled there...
 - But as the rising capital of the reborn nation it needed to be filled – so 3,062 moved in...
 - From Judah 486 men / Benjamin 928 / Priests 1,192 / Levites 284 / Gatekeepers 172
 - And everyone blessed the men who willingly offered themselves to live in Jerusalem!
- o 2nd - The rest of the people dwelt in the cities from Beersheba to Bethel... vs. 20-36
 - Beersheba is in the south of Israel – in the Judean wilderness...
 - The people of Judah dwelt from there to the valley of Hinnom (*south side of Jerusalem*)...
 - The people of Benjamin dwelt from the north side of Jerusalem to Bethel!
- o 3rd - In **I Samuel 30:24** – David had returned from a battle...
 - The 200 of his men he had left out of the fight – they had not gone to war...

- Some of his men argued – those who stayed should not share in the reward!
- But David rebuked them – do not be selfish – they would share equally...
- Those who staid behind to guard the things – shared with those who went to war!
- In the same way not all of us are called into full time ministry – pastors / missionaries...
- That does not mean we are not part of the work – we get to encourage those who go!
- We ‘stay back and guard the stuff’ – so that others can go to fight the battle!
- Those who help send share in the reward (*eternal*) with those who go...
- God does not overlook the littlest act of service – small or great He remembers!
- **Mark 9:41**- “If anyone gives you even a cup of water... that person will be rewarded.”