

## Rediscovering Worship – Nehemiah 13:1-22

Nehemiah was just going to help build the wall of Jerusalem. But what happened once he got there? They have found and learned many things that their forefathers have neglected or disobeyed.

The people followed Nehemiah until Nehemiah left.

But you cannot worry about things you have no control:

- Your work will be opposed, criticized, and will be forgotten!
- The rulers/leaders promised to take care of the temple of God and made an oath but failed to keep their promise. (Neh. 9:38; 10:14–29, 35, 37, 39)

If God is to be worshipped, then we should find out from God how he wants us to worship him.

There must be an authority to let us know how to worship so we don't make it up as we go.

Scripture regulates worship – the “Regulative Principle”: what the bible doesn't command is forbidden.

a. The *Elements* of Worship: (can be easily reproduced and transferred)

Unity: Reading the Word, preaching/hearing the Word, praying, giving, singing, and partaking of the Lord's Supper as a gathered Church – the local body of Christ.

b. The *Accidents* of Worship:

Diversity: Times of worship, number of songs, number of services a week, order of service, language of service, location, etc.

So what elements of worship according to the Scripture the people rediscovered?

### 1. Believers come together to worship God.

Nehemiah 13:1–3 <sup>1</sup> **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;** <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> Now it came to pass, **when they had heard the law, that they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude.**

- We worship together as believers, not mixed multitude.
- Worship is for the regenerate people of God, not for unbelievers.
- Believers give thanks because he/she have tasted the special grace and mercy and love of God.
- We have experienced the forgiveness of our sins because of Christ.

### 2. Believers come together in a place to worship God.

Nehemiah 13:4–9 <sup>4</sup> **And before this**, Eliashib the priest, having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God, *was* allied unto Tobiah: <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> **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: <sup>7</sup> **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.** <sup>8</sup> And it grieved me sore: **therefore I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber.** <sup>9</sup> **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.

Nehemiah decisively removed the evil that was taking place in the house of God – public evil required a public rebuke before the people. Notice this happened “and before this” v.1-3, when the people removed the unbelievers from the congregation of God. This might explain why they immediately obeyed what was written from the Scriptures. Nehemiah did not make any idle threats!

- This is the place where the gathered church meet.

- We sanctify this place – No matter where this place is, in a sanctuary or under the shade of a tree, the local church come together to worship.
- In the OT, God chose to place his name in Jerusalem – the place of worship for the people of God. (Deuteronomy 12:11)
- In the NT, it is in the place where the local body of Christ is gathered together to worship “in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:21-23)
- God is present here with us – in fellowship of the communion or Lord’s Supper and in Baptism.

### 3. Believers come together in a place on the Lord’s Day to worship God.

Nehemiah 13:15–22 <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> 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**. <sup>17</sup> 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?** <sup>18</sup> 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**. <sup>19</sup> 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**. <sup>20</sup> So the merchants and sellers of all kind of ware lodged without Jerusalem once or twice. <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> **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.

- We worship on the first day of the week – Sunday, the resurrection day.
- We do not treat the Lord’s Day as an ordinary day. This is a command.
- The purpose of this day is to worship God – this is non-negotiable.

### 4. Believers come together in a place on the Lord’s Day with offering to worship God.

Nehemiah 13:10–14 <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> **Then brought all Judah the tithe** of the corn and the new wine and the oil unto the treasuries. <sup>13</sup> **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**. <sup>14</sup> **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.**

Nehemiah 13:31 <sup>31</sup> And for the wood offering, at times appointed, and for the firstfruits. **Remember me, O my God, for good.**

- When we come to worship, we come with something to offer God.
- We don’t worship expecting “what can I get” out of the worship service.
- Our culture has confused how we worship – what regulates, to how we feel about our worship.
- We please God not ourselves – He is the audience in our worship: we come before Him!
- We offer ourselves to God (Romans 12:1)