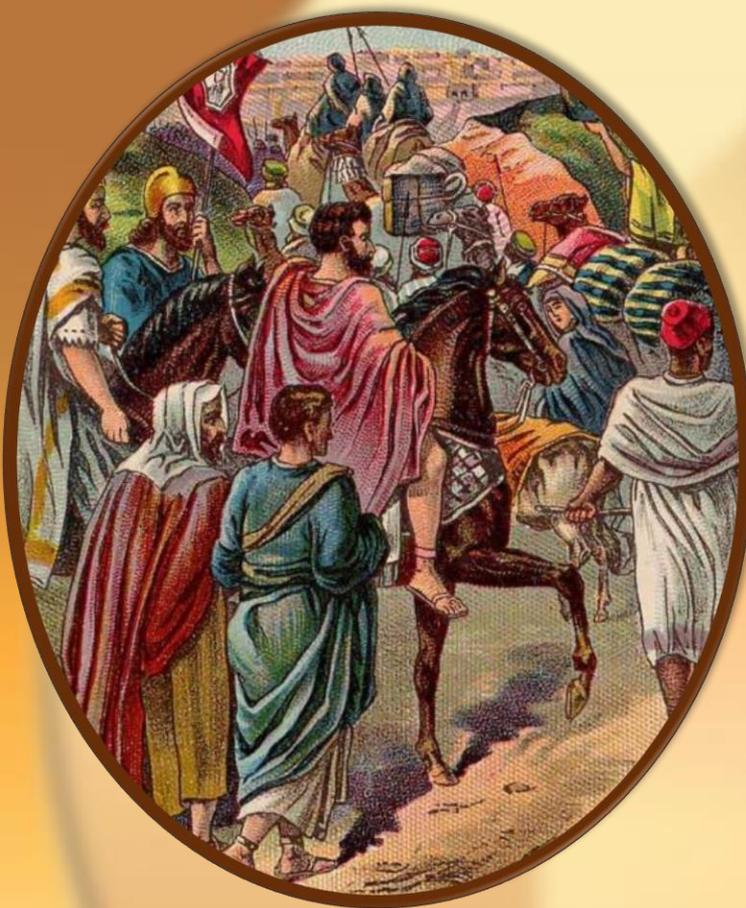


BACKSLIDDEN PEOPLE

Lesson 11 for
December 14, 2019





Nehemiah returned to king Artaxerxes' house after serving as governor for twelve years.

Some years later, he returned to Jerusalem. He found out that the people had already forgotten about the covenant they had made. They were marrying foreigners, desecrating the Sabbath, and not supporting the Temple (Nehemiah 10:28-39).

Nehemiah 13 tells how Nehemiah confronted this crisis.



**Intermarriage
(v. 1-9, 23-31)**



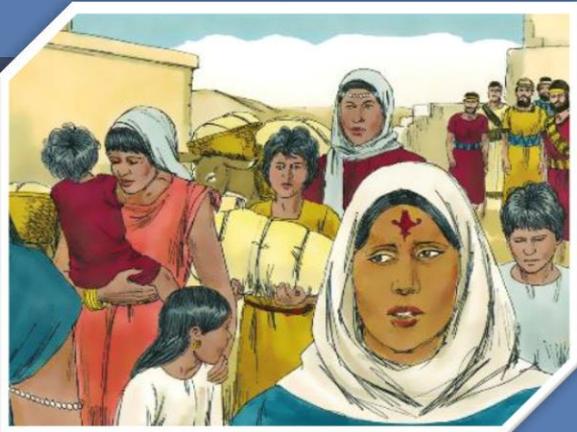
**Neglecting the
tithe (v. 10-14)**



**Desecrating the
Sabbath (v. 15-22)**

INTERMARRIAGE

"In those days I also saw Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab." (Nehemiah 13:23)

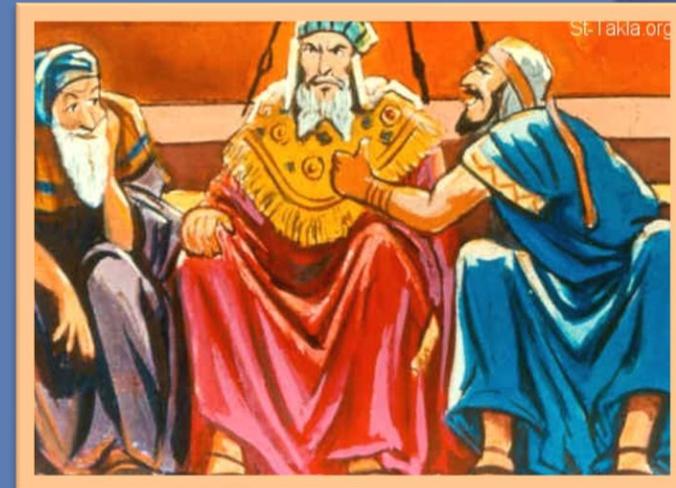
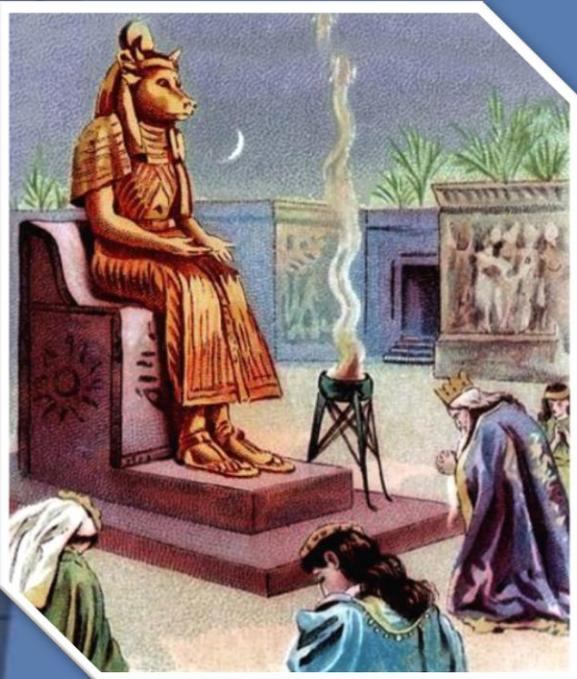


Nehemiah harshly confronted those who had married non-believing foreign women (v. 23-25).

He reminded them that this had led Solomon to sin, so they should avoid it, because it was moving them away from God (v. 26-27).

Their spiritual leader—the High Priest, Eliashib—was also involved.

One of his relatives was linked to Tobiah the Ammonite (v. 4), and one of his grandchildren had married the daughter of Sanballat the Horonite—who had been expelled from Jerusalem (v. 28).



“No one who fears God can without danger connect himself with one who fears Him not. 'Can two walk together, except they be agreed?' Amos 3:3. The happiness and prosperity of the marriage relation depends upon the unity of the parties; but between the believer and the unbeliever there is a radical difference of tastes, inclinations, and purposes. They are serving two masters, between whom there can be no concord. However pure and correct one's principles may be, the influence of an unbelieving companion will have a tendency to lead away from God.”

E.G.W. (Patriarchs and Prophets, cp. 15, p. 174)

NEGLECTING THE TITHE (1)

"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." (Nehemiah 13:10)

Eliashib had emptied the room where the tithe, the offerings, the incense and the Temple's tools were stored. He had furnished it so Tobiah the Ammonite could use it.

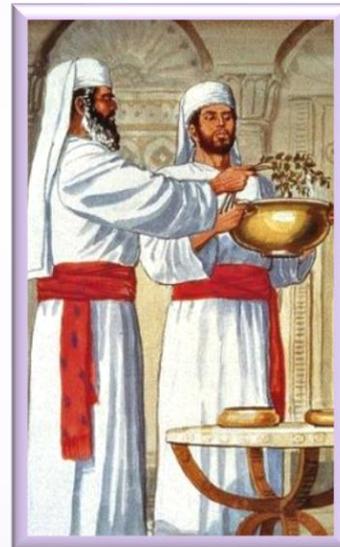


That discouraged the people, so they stopped giving the tithe.

As a result, the Levites had to go back to their homes. The worship of the Temple was ruined.

Nehemiah restored that room and chose faithful and trustworthy people to manage the tithe.

The people once again began to give their tithe. Thus, the worship service was restored.

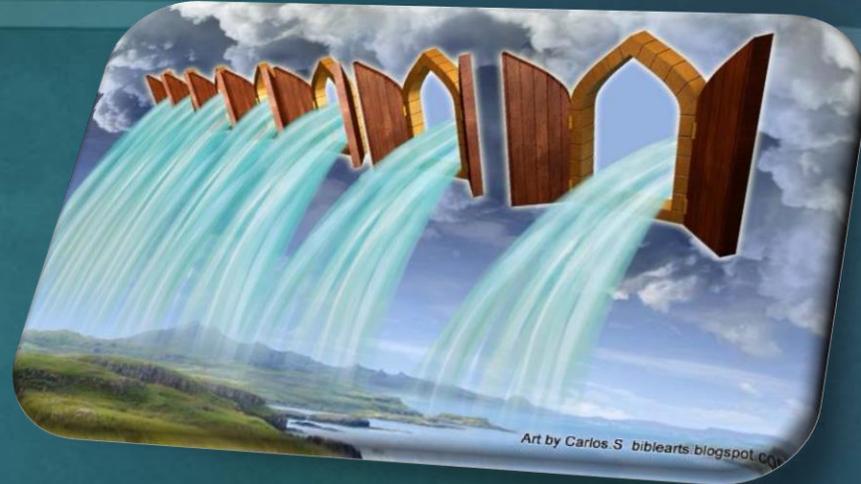


NEGLECTING THE TITHE (2)

“Bring the full tenth into the storehouse so that there may be food in my house. Test me in this way,’ says the Lord of Armies. ‘See if I will not open the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing for you without measure.’” (Malachi 3:10 CSB)

Why should we return the tithe to God?

It is because God is our Creator and we acknowledge Him as such that we give back to Him. We give out of gratitude for what He has done: created us, sustains us, takes care of us, died for us, and continues to re-create us.



What can be done thanks to our tithes and offerings?



The Word of God can be preached throughout the world.



We can praise God in our local churches.



Our faith and trust in God is strengthened.

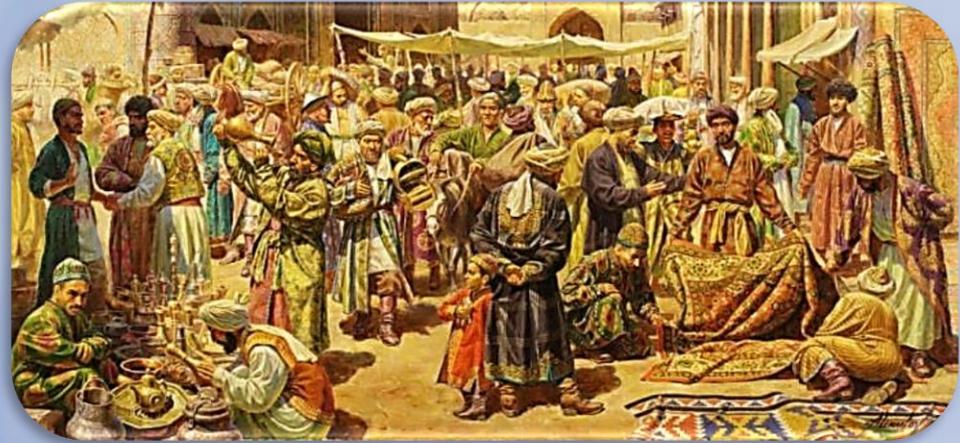
“God is constantly bestowing upon you the blessings of this life; and if He asks you to dispense His gifts by helping the various branches of His work, it is for your own temporal and spiritual interest to do so, and thus acknowledge God as the giver of every blessing. God, as the Master Worker, cooperates with men in securing the means necessary for their sustenance; and He requires them to cooperate with Him in the salvation of souls.”

E.G.W. (Counsels on Stewardship, cp. 9, p. 47)

DESECRATING THE SABBATH (1)

"In those days I saw people in Judah treading winepresses 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." (Nehemiah 13:15)

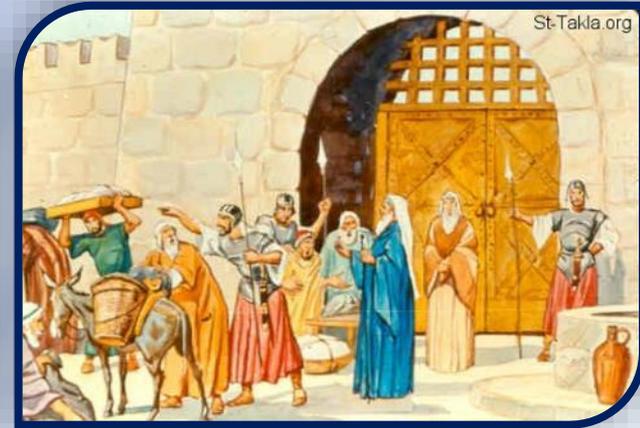
In the past, the people of Israel had understood Sabbath was a blessing from God as they reviewed their history (Nehemiah 9:14). They had committed to not desecrate it (Nehemiah 10:31).



However, the leaders had been allowing a market on Sabbath. Nehemiah closed the city gates on Sabbath to prevent this.



The market was still taking place outside the city. After the merchants were threatened, this didn't happen again.



DESECRATING THE SABBATH (2)

"If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the Lord; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the Lord has spoken." (Isaiah 58:13-14)



Sabbath is a day set apart so we can enjoy it with God, setting our worries aside.

It's a day to praise and honor Him who created us and gave us life.

It's a day to remember that He died at the cross to forgive our sins and give us salvation.

Unfortunately, the Pharisees gave so much importance to the trifles of the law and made the Sabbath a burden instead of a delight.



We celebrate our special Sabbath gathering with God every week. This is a foretaste of the many Sabbaths we'll celebrate with Him in the New Jerusalem (Isaiah 66:23).

“And the Lord says, 'If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; ... then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord.' Isaiah 58:13, 14. To all who receive the Sabbath as a sign of Christ's creative and redeeming power, it will be a delight. Seeing Christ in it, they delight themselves in Him. The Sabbath points them to the works of creation as an evidence of His mighty power in redemption. While it calls to mind the lost peace of Eden, it tells of peace restored through the Saviour.”