

A Not So Happy Ending – Nehemiah 13

Who likes “Happily Ever After” endings?

Have you ever asked the question, “Why did they end the story that way?”

The book of Nehemiah contains a great story! And if only Nehemiah ended the story after CH. 10 or CH. 12 then it would have been a happy ending!

But true stories, real life stories, often don’t have a Hollywood ending! In CH. 13, we reach the end of this book, **but it may not be the end we hoped for!**

WARNING – Proverbs 26:11 – “Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly.” This is how the book of Nehemiah ends!

CH. 13 begins with a time lapse. Nehemiah went back to the king of Persia as he promised, & then after some time returned again to Jerusalem.

Upon his return, the people tried to pick up where things were left off prior to Nehemiah’s hiatus (vs. 1-3), **but things had changed in his absence.**

Eliashib, the priest over the chambers of the temple, had aligned himself with Tobiah, the Ammonite & archenemy of Nehemiah & God’s people!

Tobiah had even been given permission to move in and take residence in the Temple itself! **This was a slap in the face to Nehemiah, and to God!**

Nehemiah was furious & he responded as such (vs. 8-9)! *Does anyone see a problem with this response?* Consider Matt. 21:12-13 & John 2:13-16.

Tobiah’s presence in the Temple also exposed that the services of the House of God had been neglected. **All the covenant promises made in CH. 10, had been broken again.**

Vs 10-13 reveal this sad state of affairs in Jerusalem, but Nehemiah again brings about reforms and leads a time of renewal amongst God’s people.

Unfortunately that wasn’t the only folly that the people had returned to.

Vs. 15 reveals their failure to honor the Sabbath. And Vs. 17-18 reveals Neh.’s response! **This was exactly what had brought about their destruction.**

Vs. 19-22 shows Nehemiah taking action again to lead change. *Does anyone see a problem with his response in vs. 21?* Lyrics of Game On

Nehemiah didn’t go looking for a fight, but if/when the enemy engages, a fight there will be. Heidelberg Catechism Q & A # 127

Vs 23-25 reveals even more of their return to folly – The people had violated their covenant promise - to not engage in intermarriage. And Nehemiah again responds strongly – vs. 25. *Why is this such a big deal to Nehemiah?*

- **The identity of God’s people is found in the Law, God’s Word given to them.**

Vs. 24 – “Half the children from these intermarriages could not speak the language of Judah!” If they could not speak the language, then what role do you think the Law of God played in their lives? The Shema was being lost!

- If King Solomon could not resist the temptation of idolatry, that comes w/intermarriage, than what hope is there for the rest of God’s people?

Nehemiah used everything he could, including his hands, **to enforce obedience to God’s Law.** But even he could not keep the people from returning to their folly, like a dog to it’s vomit!

And if that was not enough, vs. 28-29 says that Eliashib, the high priest, even condoned the marriage of his own grandson to the daughter of Sanballat, the Horonite, the other archenemy of Nehemiah & God’s people.

Like me, you may want to stand up and protest, “How could this happen?” Nehemiah too could only respond by saying, “Remember me, O my God!”

Nehemiah did his best to lead change and bring lasting reform to God’s people, but ultimately our 3 sworn enemies won out, time and time again!

This is not the kind of “end to the story” Nehemiah was hoping for? Thankfully, it wasn’t the end to the story! **This chapter wraps up the history of the Old Testament, but it points to that which is yet to come – Christ!**

That which Nehemiah & the Law could not do, Christ will do once & for all! Rom. 8:1-11 reminds us that **it is Christ who is the happy end to the story!**

If the book of Nehemiah ended with CH. 10 or CH. 12 then the good ending would have been based upon human efforts, not upon God Himself.

God wraps up the O.T. by pointing to the N.T. reality, that Christ was coming & that He alone would bring true & lasting transformation to His people!

4-15-18 A Not So Happy Ending – Nehemiah 13

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