

Tobiah's Junk¹

Nehemiah 13:4-9

INTRODUCTION:

1. Nehemiah may have been excited about returning to Jerusalem to live (and maybe retire) in the city he helped to rebuild, but he found his work was not done.
2. In Nehemiah 10, the Israelites made four sacred vows.
 - a. They vowed to follow God's laws (vv. 28, 29).
 - b. They vowed not to inter-marry with the idol-worshipping nations around them (v. 30).
 - c. They vowed to observe the Sabbath day (v. 31).
 - d. They vowed to give to support the priests and Levites (vv. 32, 33).
3. On Nehemiah's return, he found that the people had broken all four of those promises.
4. Surely this was not intentional, so what went wrong?
 - a. Nehemiah was away (13:6).
 - b. Eliashib was too closely associated with Tobiah (13:4).
5. Tobiah's household furniture cluttered the chamber and crowded out the necessary things. Like junk, Nehemiah threw it out (13:8).
6. What kind of "junk" has caused us to break our promises we have made to God and others?

DISCUSSION:

I. Junky Finances

- A. When Nehemiah found out how the temple storehouse was being misused, he threw out Tobiah's "junk" and cleansed it (vv. 8, 9).
- B. Why was there room for Tobiah's stuff in the first place? Had the people failed to give?
- C. If the room had been filled with grain, frankincense, vessels, wine, and oil, there would have been no room for Tobiah's junk (v. 5).
- D. When people stopped giving, the Lord's work fell by the wayside. "...the Levites and the singers, who did the work, had fled each to his field" (v. 10).
- E. It may be time to clear out "Tobiah's junk" and purify our budgets.

II. Junky Calendar

- A. Observance of the Sabbath day was so important that Nehemiah stationed guards at the gates and drove away the merchants and sellers who lodged outside the Jerusalem wall (vv. 19-22).
- B. The Israelites had come to observing the Sabbath day much the same as they did any other day.
- C. We may need to take a look at our calendars and get rid of some junk.
- D. We may need to set a guard over our worship time and family time.

¹ Edward "Ed" Skidmore, www.sermoncentral.com. Accessed 12/05/2012. Adapted by Andy Kizer.

III. Junky Associations

- A. After the people had broken their vows concerning marriage, Nehemiah “confronted them and cursed them and beat some of them and pulled out their hair” (v. 25).
- B. He knew their inter-marriage with idol-worshipers would ruin Israel.
- C. The same thing can happen in our homes when we compromise with the culture around us. Parents may try to keep the faith, but the children will reject it.

CONCLUSION:

1. The people of Jerusalem did not break all of their vows on the very day that Nehemiah left town, but over the next few years, they gradually slid down hill, and Tobiah’s junk began to pile up.
2. When Nehemiah saw the temple storehouse filled with Tobiah’s junk, he cleansed it. Almost 500 years later, when Jesus saw the temple courts filled with the junk of commerce, he cleansed it.
3. We must throw out the junk in our finances, calendars, and associations.