

## WHY IS THE HOUSE OF GOD FORSAKEN?

Sermon by Mark S. Aites

(basic outline borrowed)

**TEXT: NEH. 13:11**

### INTRODUCTION:

1. Our study comes from Nehemiah; what may well be described as a post-exilic work.
2. Judah had sinned and rebelled against the Lord, and as a consequence, Jerusalem was destroyed by Babylon under the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar.
3. Note **2 Chron. 36:14-16**
4. In 536 B.C., some 50 years after Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of the city of Jerusalem, we learn of such men as Nehemiah and Ezra, who were instrumental in the rebuilding of Jerusalem.
5. The first 7 chapters of the book deal with his return to the ancient site, and the rebuilding of the walls of the city.
6. Chapters 8 - 12 deal with the reading of the law, and his efforts to restore a faithful observance of it.
7. In **Neh 13:4ff**, Nehemiah was working on some reforms based upon the hearing of God's law.
8. He had obtained leave of the king to return to Jerusalem, but what he found was disturbing to him (**13:7ff**).
9. The house of God was in disarray and the Levites had not been given their rightful portions.
10. Note **13:11**
11. The question put forth by Nehemiah is one which needs to be asked today: "*Why is the house of God forsaken?*"
12. As Nehemiah continued his reforms, he found more problems; problems which we can make application from for today.

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### DISCUSSION:

#### I. THEY PROFANED THE SABBATH DAY.

- A. Note **13:17**.
  1. **Profane** - to break, defile, to wound.
  2. It was a day they held in contempt; a day without reverence.
- B. In contrast, the old law held that the Sabbath was to be held with special observances.
  1. **Exod. 20:8-10**
  2. **Exod. 35:3**
  3. **Acts 1:12** (Olivet on the eastern side of Jerusalem, located across the half-mile wide Kidron valley.)
- C. The problem that occurred in Nehemiah's day is all too familiar, the decision on the part of the people to ignore God's will.
  1. **Neh. 13:15-16**
  2. **Jer. 17:21-23**
- D. We even read of God's punishment for those who would break his law on the sabbath.
  1. In **Num. 15:30-31**, God warned of those who would commit presumptuous sin.
  2. The account then proceeds to tell of a man who chose to gather sticks on the sabbath day.
  3. **Num. 15:35-36**
- E. Although today we are no longer under the law of Moses, the attitude prevails which did in Nehemiah's day.
  1. It is the attitude of, "I will serve God another time."
  2. It reminds me of Felix's attitude toward Paul (**Acts 24:25**).
- F. Many today would prefer to do other activities on Sundays - golf, fish, go shopping,

have family outings, do yard work, etc.

1. Some say, "But it is the only day I have to do those things."

2. Herein is a priority problem; and deeper, a heart problem.

G. Nehemiah also had to contend with those who stayed up late to interfere with the sabbath.

Note **Neh 13:19-21**.

1. Even today, there are those who find all sorts of things to do into the wee hours of the Lord's Day morning.

2. Then they are too tired or preoccupied with other things to worship God.

G. In Nehemiah's day the people were doing everything but what God commanded; an all too familiar problem even in the 20th century.

1. Here is the reason God's house is forsaken.

2. It was that way in Nehemiah's day, and that way with God's spiritual house, the church today (**1 Tim. 3:15**).

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## II. THEIR CHOICE IN WIVES.

A. Note **13:23, 25**.

B. **Ezra 9:12**.

C. The people of Nehemiah's day opted to take to themselves wives which they were not to have. And with good reason: for such wives from heathen nations can pull one away from God.

1. Consider the example of Solomon (**1 Kings 11:4**).

3. **Neh 13:26-27**

D. Today worldly mates can turn children of God away from the Lord to serve modern idols.

1. Modern idols are things which man covets, such as money, power, and prestige.

2. **Col. 3:5**

E. Paul warned against those things which can lead us away from God (**2 Cor. 6:14-17**).

F. Every child of God would do well to heed the warnings that come from sacred lit. in the danger of marrying someone who is not a Christian!

1. Why is it so terrible? Because it can lead to God's house being forsaken!

2. May we learn from the problems that it caused in Nehemiah's day!

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## III. PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY WAS SHIRKED.

A. Note **13:24**

B. These parents were unable to speak to half of their children; and if that's the case how could they instruct them in the ways of the Lord?

1. **Prov. 22:6**.

2. Remember the admonition given by Moses to the children of Israel.

1) **Deut. 6:6-7**

2) How could that be accomplished when they lacked the ability of communication.

C. Here is a fruit or consequence in disobeying the Lord and intermarrying with the heathen nations.

D. And what kind of house is it going to be, where part of the children are taught and part of them aren't?

1. It almost borders on favoritism in that some get attention, and some don't.

2. One writer said it well: "Inconsistency like a boomerang, will come back to hurt."

E. Although not the same situation, Jacob's favoritism with Joseph over his other children led to division and violence in home (**cf. Gen. 37ff.**).

- F. Half a home taught in the Lord's ways can do the same thing.
- G. Even today, homes where part of the family is religiously inclined, and part isn't, will experience a divisiveness. It is inevitable!
  - 1. **Luke 12:51-53**
  - 2. You cannot teach and uphold Christ without there being some division, especially in a home where teaching the children is neglected.
  - 3. Why is the house of God forsaken? Because parental responsibility is shirked and the children are not taught!

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#### IV. BECAUSE THE PRIESTHOOD IS DEFILED.

- A. Note **13:29**.
- B. The priests of Nehemiah's day were men who should have been men that were respected. Unfortunately, that respect was not there.
- C. Even today, the application is still the same.
  - 1. Although all Christians are priests (**1 Pet. 2:5-9**), there are men who preach the Gospel, who should be in a position of respect.
  - 2. Unfortunately, in some cases that respect is not there.
- D. That respect leaves when men become careless.
  - 1. **Lev. 10:1-3**
  - 2. Nadab and Abihu offered that which was strange or profane before God, that which was not according to a "thus saith the Lord."
  - 3. **Isa. 8:20**
  - 4. When men in pulpits today are careless with the word of God it leads to God's house being forsaken.
  - 5. **2 John 9-11**
  - 6. **Deut. 4:2**
  - 7. **Prov. 30:6**
- E. That respect for preachers also leaves when men become pretenders.
  - 1. **Matt. 7:15**
  - 2. **Rom. 16:17-18**
- F. That respect also is called in question when men who occupy pulpits become ear ticklers (**cf. 2 Tim. 4:2-4**).
- G. Why is the house of God forsaken? Because ministers of the gospel of Christ have defiled that sacred task.
- H. Also, in view of the constant desire for elders, it also is appropriate to mention those who would defile the leadership.
  - 1. Appointing unqualified men can defile a leadership!
  - 2. Let me give you an example in the extreme of a church in Indiana. There were bachelors in the eldership. None of them could meet the qualifications separately, but they maintained that they could do so collectively.
    - 1) For example: One had believing children.
    - 2) Another apt to teach.
    - 3) Another exhibiting the qualifications in regard to character, etc.
  - 4. While we may never go to such ridiculous extremes, history has shown us that unqualified men have abused this sacred office and in doing so, have caused the house of God to be forsaken.

#### CONCLUSION:

1. Why is the house of God forsaken? Perhaps, in an overall view, out of ignorance.
  - 1) For example: In **Matt. 22**, Jesus encountered the Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection, who if you recall, asked him of a woman who had been wife to 7 men. So they wanted to know, "Whose would she be in the resurrection?"
  - 2) **Matt. 22:29**
  - 3) And again, when the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years (**Heb. 3:10**).
  - 4) Some people do act out of ignorance, sometimes even when meaning well (**cf. Acts 23:1**).
2. Another reason the house of God is forsaken over all, may stem also from an, "I don't care attitude."
  - 1) **Heb. 10:25**
  - 2) The Hebrew writer mentions those who had the "I don't care attitude," in that they were missing the services of the church.
  - 3) Unfortunately, such is still all too true in our day and time.
  - 4) We find also the "I don't care attitude" when it comes to the word of the Lord.
  - 5) One may say, "Well, I know what the Bible says, but.."
3. It has been well said: "No matter what the excuse, God is God, and we are subject to Him!"
4. Whether in matters of worship, marriage, parental responsibility, preaching, or being an elder; it must be according to God's word.
5. It all comes down to the fact that if it isn't, then the house of God is forsaken!
6. No matter in what age one lives, whether long ago, today, or even tomorrow, God must be served collectively and individually.
7. Although we have looked primarily at the church as a whole, one can also forsake his individual house.
  - 1) He can forsake his household, in failing to instruct and lead his family in a godly life.
  - 2) He can forsake his house (temple), referring to his own physical body.
  - 3) **1 Cor. 6:19-20**
8. If you have forsaken God's house, your home, or your temple (your body), I encourage you to seek His forgiveness!