Dedication

Nehemiah 10



Agreement of the People

- □ Nehemiah 9 records the peoples' confession of their sins. What happened next?
- ☐ Read Nehemiah 9:38. Nehemiah 10:1-27 records a list of names¹ of those who "sealed" (solemnly assented to) the written agreement, though the commitment was not limited to those who signed but was shared by the whole community.² Read Nehemiah 10:28-29.³

To Obey the Law of God

□ The people agreed to "follow the Law of God given through Moses" and "obey carefully all the commands, regulations and decrees of the Lord our God" (10:29). While they committed to obey "all the commands," particular commitments are mentioned in verses 30-39.

Their Commitment & Our Commitment

- ☐ In Nehemiah's day, the people agreed to obey God's will as given in His written revelation. In *our* day, *we* should agree to obey God's will as given in His written revelation the Bible. However, since we live in the New Testament era (following the first coming of Christ), we apply the Old Testament commands differently from the Israelites in Nehemiah's day. 6
- □ Read Nehemiah 10:30.
 - 1. Why was this regulation given to the Israelites? How does it apply to Christians today?
 - "Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, for they will turn your children away from following me to serve other gods…" (*Deuteronomy 7:3-4a*, NIV)
 - \square "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers." (2 Corinthians 6:14)⁷
- ☐ Read Nehemiah 10:31. The Sabbath will be discussed in Lesson 12 (Nehemiah 13:15-22).

¹ The list includes both individual names and family names, and includes leaders, priests, Levites (responsible for care of the temple) and 'the leaders of the people' (mostly family representatives).

² 'the rest of the people...together with their wives and sons and daughters' (10:28).

³ 'separated' – as a distinct people with a special relationship with God, fully devoted to His values and will.

⁴ This probably refers to the 'Pentateuch' – the first five books of the Bible

⁵ These regulations are probably emphasized due to the peoples' failure to observe them (Neh. 13:10-30). While all the regulations are based on the Pentateuch, some of them add new details as they are applied in specific ways. ⁶ The Law was given to Moses and Israel at a specific time in the history of God's people, and is part of the *Old* Covenant. When Christ came, he fulfilled the Law and inaugurated the *New* Covenant (New Testament). As Christians, we live under the *New* Covenant. Theologians disagree on exactly how the Law relates to Christians today. See the book *Five Views on Law and Gospel*. In any case, the moral will of God is reflected in the Law of Moses, and God's moral will transcends the written Law. Thus while we are not under the binding authority of the Old Testament Law, the moral principles that underlie the Law apply to our lives today.

⁷ This verse is often quoted in relation to marriage, but the principle is not limited to marriage. Elsewhere Paul says a Christian widow 'is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord' (*1 Corinthians 7:39*). While a believer should not marry a nonbeliever, one person in a couple may become a believer after marriage. If you are a believer married to a nonbeliever, consider reading *Surviving a Spiritual Mismatch in Marriage* (ICF library).

- □ Read Nehemiah 10:32-39. These verses concern "the house of our God" which refers to the temple. This section concludes with a summary statement: "We will not neglect the house of our God." The following commitments are mentioned:
 - Give money (the temple tax) to support the ministry of the temple (10:32-33).9
 - © Contribute wood to burn on the altar (10:34). 10
 - Bring the firstfruits of our crops and fruit trees to the temple (10:35). 11
 - Bring the firstborn of our sons and our livestock to the temple (10:36). 12
 - Fing the first (best) of our contributions and offerings to the temple (10:37a, 39).
 - Give a tithe (10^{th}) of our crops to the Levites who give a tithe to the priests (10:37b-38).
- □ The temple and sacrificial system were part of the Old Covenant. When Jesus Christ entered the world, he fulfilled the temple and sacrificial system. ¹³ Those who are united with Jesus Christ through faith become part of His body the Church, which is the temple of God. ¹⁴ God dwells in and among His people who are the "living stones" in "the house of our God."
 - 2. Consider the commitments (*from verses 32-39*) listed above. How may they apply to Christians today?
 - 3. How would you summarize the main point(s) of this lesson? What practical steps can we take to apply this lesson?

Dedication

- ☐ The commitments listed in verses 30-39 represent a total dedication to God and His service in response to His Word. As our Creator, Life-giver and Redeemer, God is uniquely worthy of our total devotion. Everything is His and should be used for His purposes and glory.
 - "You are not your own; you were bought at a price." (1 Corinthians 6:19b-20a, NIV)
 - Jesus said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." (*Matthew 22:37*, NIV)

Reflection/Application

- ➤ Obedience is good, but we cannot earn our salvation by obeying God's laws. We are saved by God's grace through faith in the crucified and risen Christ. Do you need to trust in him?
- ➤ Have you truly dedicated everything to God? Read Romans 12:1 and act on question 3.

⁸ The phrase "the house of our God" occurs seven times in verses 32-39.

⁹ While the temple tax was not prescribed in the Pentateuch, it could be an application of Exodus 30:11-16.

Leviticus 6:12 says, 'The fire on the altar must be kept burning; it must not go out. Every morning the priest is to add firewood...' Nehemiah 'made provision for contributions of wood at designated times' (Nehemiah 13:31).

¹¹ 'Firstfruits' – offerings from the first produce of the year acknowledging that the whole harvest is owned and supplied by God. The offerings were brought for the priests and Levites (Deuteronomy 18:13).

¹² In recognition of God's redemption of Israel from slavery in Egypt, firstborn sons and male livestock were dedicated to God, though firstborn sons and some animals were redeemed – bought back (Exodus 13:11-16).

¹³ Jesus is the fulfillment of the temple – the ultimate meeting place with God (*Rev. 21:22*). He is the Word who became flesh and tabernacled among us (*John 1:14, 18*). He is the Truth in whom true worshipers worship God the Father (*John 4:21-23*). Jesus is the fulfillment of the sacrificial system – the ultimate High Priest and once-for-all sacrifice for our sins (*Heb. 7:23-27*). Thus the New Testament 'house of God' is not a physical structure but rather consists of believers 'in Christ.' Of course, the church still uses physical structures and paid leaders and workers.

¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 2 Corinthians 6:16-18; Ephesians 2:21-22; Hebrews 3:6; 1 Peter 2:5.