

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Nehemiah: Pattern For Solutions In Spiritually Hard Times
L. Valuing Accurate Bible Exposition
(Nehemiah 8:1-12)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

We face a lot of spiritual questions and resulting unrest, what can make it hard to know even how to think:

(1) Last week, I heard local radio talk show host Todd Feinburg say that we should affirm homosexuals and homosexuality, for Jesus said we are to "love, love, love" everyone! How do we know if we should heed this advice?

(2) David Crary's story, "U. S. Catholic bishops may press Biden to stop taking Communion" (Republican-American, April 30, 2021, p. 3B) told of the struggle U. S. Catholic bishops have over whether to allow the President to partake of Catholic communion when he publicly advocates abortion rights. One bishop worries that withholding communion from President Biden "undercuts Pope Francis' exhortations . . . to stress . . . climate change, immigration and inequality," Ibid. How do we then know if abortion is not really so bad that we need tolerate it for the sake of supporting the climate change, immigration and inequality ideologies that the far left promotes?

Besides, how do we know if Church leaders have God's authority to decide who is fit to take communion?

(3) Nicole Winfield's piece, "Pope rejects German cardinal's resignation, urged reform" (Ibid., June 11, 2021, p. 3B), reported on the battle within the Catholic hierarchy over how to handle the sex abuse scandal in the Church in Germany. It told of "fierce resistance inside Germany and beyond, primarily from conservatives opposed to opening any debate on issues such as priestly celibacy, women's role in the church and homosexuality" that the Vatican's "'Synodal Path'" toward handling the sexual abuse issue also seeks to have discussed, Ibid. How, then, do we know if celibacy for the clergy, women's leadership of men and homosexuality in churches are right or wrong?

(4) This same story reported that Pope Francis told Reinhard Marx "he must continue" in office "and 'shepherd my sheep,'" Ibid. Does the Pope's statement mean that the people who attend Roman Catholic churches are his possession, and that people who attend other Christian churches like ours are the possession of their pastors?

(5) I sometimes face questions about statements in the Bible that seem to imply that a problem exists in the Bible or with God: (a) for example, in Matthew 20:28, Jesus said He would give Himself on the cross as a ransom for "many." Some Calvinists like to say that this means Jesus died for only the elect who would be saved, that He died for "many" as *opposed* to "all." Yet, 1 John 2:2 claims Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, so does the Bible contradict itself when it also claims that Christ would die as a ransom for "many"? How do we know?!

(b) Another example is Genesis 28:15b KJV: God promised not to leave Jacob "until" He had done what He had promised for him. Does this mean God implied that He would leave Jacob after He kept His promise to bring Jacob safely back to Canaan? Does it also mean that God might leave *us* after He has helped *us*? How do we know?

Need: *So, we ask, "How can we know how to think over the spiritual questions and resulting unrest we face?!"*

- I. **Spurred by Nehemiah's decision to have the Hebrew people of Judah registered according to their Biblical genealogical records, the people desired to have the Scriptures read to them, Neh. 7:5 with 8:1.**
- II. **To address this request, Judah's leaders not only had to read the Hebrew Scriptures publicly, but to translate them into Aramaic and expound them so that all the Hebrews could understand God's Word:**
 - A. When the Hebrews were in Babylon, they learned Aramaic, seen in Christ's Aramaic statement on the cross, "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*" ["My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?"], Matthew 27:46 NIV; Bib. Know. Com., N. T., p. 89. [In Hebrew it reads, "*Eli, Eli, lama 'azabtani?*" (Kittel, Bib. Heb., p. 992)]
 - B. So, at least some of the people were unable to understand the Hebrew Scriptures as read to them, Ibid., p. 689.
 - C. Accordingly, Ezra, a highly skilled scribe in the Hebrew Scriptures (Ezra 7:6, 10), read from the Hebrew Scriptures on a raised, wooden platform as other priests and Levites translated and explained the Scriptures to the people so they could understand them, Nehemiah 8:2-8; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Neh. 8:7-8:
 1. Nehemiah 8:7 sums that while Ezra read from the Hebrew scroll(s), other priests and Levites with him addressed the 30,000 to 50,000 Hebrews present to translate and expound the text as necessary, Ibid.
 2. Nehemiah 8:8 gives the details: Ezra read and other men had it "made distinct" (Pual ptc. [intens. pass.] of *parash*, B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 831) "and set" (waw + *som*, the infin. abs. of *sum*, where the infin. abs. is used in place of a verb; Ibid., p. 962-964; Ibid., Kittel, p. 1313) the "insight" (*sekel*, a segholate noun derived from *sakal*, "be prudent," Ibid., B. D. B., p. 968) so that the hearers understood it.
- III. **The response to this expository ministry was a great spiritual moving of the people, Nehemiah 8:9-12:**

- A. The people wept when they heard God's Word understandably expounded to them, Nehemiah 8:9b.
- B. Such weeping was inappropriate for that day, the Feast of Trumpets, Neh. 8:2; Ibid., Ryrie, fn. to Neh. 8:2.
- C. Accordingly, Judah's leaders directed the people not to weep, but to celebrate that day, Nehemiah 8:9-10.
- D. When their leaders had calmed the people down from grieving, the people rejoiced and celebrated with feasting that they had been able to understand God's Word that had been spoken to them, Nehemiah 8:11-12.

Lesson: *By the accurate exposition of Scripture, the people were very moved and appreciated knowing God's truth.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life, John 3:16; 1 Cor. 15:1-11. (2) May we practice and heed accurate Bible exposition for blessing.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

We apply this sermon's lesson, expounding Scripture through means of trained and experienced teachers and teaching to address the spiritual questions mentioned in our introduction:

(1) On the advice of the local radio talk show host urging us to affirm homosexuals and homosexuality since Jesus told us to "love, love, love" everyone, Jesus also said in Matthew 15:19-20: "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man . . ." Though Jesus taught us to love all people, He also taught us to oppose immorality! The talk show host erred!

(2) On whether abortion is still a serious sin, in Psalm 51:5, David wrote that he was conceived in sin so that at conception he was a person. Since people are still conceived the same way as David was, abortion is still murder!

(3) On climate change, Genesis 8:22 predicted the world's climate would vary somewhat, but that man would always have habitable sowing and harvesting seasons as long as the earth exists. Climate change ideology errs!

(4) On immigration, Acts 17:24-27 teaches that God created and later set the national boundaries and ages of the human race in order to motivate mankind to seek after Him. Immigration ideology that seeks to eliminate national boundaries thus violates the plan of God to have these bounds set to create a thirst in man for Him!

(5) On inequality, a word used by leftists to promote the Marxist forcible seizure of property from the rich to be redistributed to the poor, Exodus 20:15 forbids stealing and Exodus 20:17 forbids covetousness, both sins being central to Marxism! Rather, we must work for our own livelihoods (2 Thessalonians 3:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12).

(6) On who has authority to decide who qualifies to take communion, 1 Corinthians 11:28, 31-32 teaches that each believer is to decide if he can personally partake, and the one Who either approves or punishes him is the Lord Himself! No church official can dictate who takes communion, so we practice "Open" communion in our Church!

(7) On the issue of required celibacy for the clergy, 1 Timothy 4:1-3a calls the religious prohibition against marriage a demonic belief, what has likely contributed greatly to clerical sexual abuse in the history of Christendom.

(8) On the role of women in the Church, 1 Timothy 2:12-15 clearly states that women are not to teach or to exercise authority over men, but to be in submission to men, making homemaking their primary focus.

(9) On sanctioning homosexuality, 1 Corinthians 6:9 mentions "catamites" (*malakos*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 489-490), those who let themselves be misused homosexually in the female role, and it also mentions "pederasts, sodomites" (*arsenokoites*, Ibid., p. 109) who take the male role in homosexual relationships, and Paul claims that such folk are typical of those who do not inherit the kingdom of God, 1 Corinthians 6:10. Nevertheless, through faith in Christ, such folk are justified and sanctified by God's grace, 1 Corinthians 6:11.

(10) On Pope Francis' directive to a Church official to "'Shepherd my sheep,'" Jesus told Peter in John 21:15-17 to "feed" and "tend" what were "**My** sheep," and Peter in turn called other church elders to "shepherd the flock of **God** that is among you," 1 Peter 5:1-2 ESV. Believers in Christ belong to **God**, *not* to *ministers*, and **we pastors are subject to the Chief Shepherd of the sheep, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.** (1 Peter 5:4)

(11) On Jesus' Matthew 20:28 claim that He would die for "many," in ancient **Hebrew** thought, "many" (*polloi*) was used *inclusively* to contrast "many" with a "few" *as opposed to* the **Greeks** who used "many" *exclusively* to mean "many" in contrast to "all." (T. D. N. T., v. VI, p. 536-545) Jesus did not counter 1 John 2:2 -- He died for all.

(12) Similarly, in Genesis 28:15b, God spoke *inclusively* to the ancient **Hebrew** man, Jacob: God said He would be with Jacob while he was away from his father's protection until he returned to Canaan. Proof that God did not intend to abandon Jacob once he returned is seen in Genesis 35:5, 9-15 where after Jacob was back in Canaan, God guarded him from his enemies (v. 5) and renewed His promise to make of Jacob a great nation and give him the Promised Land (v. 9-15). Similarly, Hebrews 13:5b promises God will **never** leave or forsake us believers in Christ.

May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life. May we practice and heed accurate Bible exposition for God's blessing.