

Luke 21:28-31 *But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near. And He told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees: as soon as they put forth leaves, you see for yourselves and know that summer is now near. So you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near."*

Lots of monumental events happening lately... political polarizations, health crisis, economic upheaval, war, crippled energy resources, plague of locusts, and then a ray of hope - Roe vs. Wade overturned. This is the beginning but we need to keep our eye on the goal, the return of Jesus Christ. So much more turmoil is to happen but look up because your redemption draws nigh. Ask God to open our eyes to understand. Embrace and recognize God's hand in these things and change. God is speaking to His church.

Israel recognized what was needed to rebuild Jerusalem, the temple, and worship. **Nehemiah 10:29-39** Nehemiah is a pattern book and we can see ourselves in this. Nehemiah was a type of the Holy Spirit and encouraged the people to rebuild. The church today needs this same empowering of the Holy Spirit to rebuild and retool. Last week we covered 3 of the 6 commitments of the people. These covered personal sins of the people that affected the corporate church:

- Have a lifestyle after God. Verse 29
- To protect their children and their heritage. Verse 30
- To keep and observe the Sabbath. Verse 31

Today, we can personally begin by confessing our sins, confess our not living for God, receive God's forgiveness, and commit to live according to God's Word and His ways. **Proverbs 22:6** *Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he grows older he will not abandon it.* The Sabbath is our declaration that God is our provision. When we give Him our time, energy, finances, then He will do great things beyond what we can do. The church can thrive in persecution. The light will shine brightest in darkness outside.

The key scripture of all six covenants is **Nehemiah 10:39** ... *So we will not neglect the house of our God.* Nehemiah is a builder's manual for restoration. As a community is restored, then it becomes a haven to the lost. Jerusalem was marked as a haven for anyone to find refuge. The church today is to be the same.

The next 3 commitments are corporate sins that affect individuals.

4. Corporate Responsibility. Nehemiah 10:32 *We also imposed on ourselves the obligation to contribute yearly a third of a shekel for the service of the house of our God.* These people poured part of what they had into and were responsible to the mission of keeping the worship going.

5. Practical Service in the House of God. Nehemiah 10:34 *Likewise we cast lots for the supply of wood among the priests, the Levites, and the people so that they could bring it to the house of our God, according to our fathers' households, at set times annually, to burn on the altar of the Lord our God, as it is written in the Law.* The work of the Kingdom is simple... we take care of the lost, the stranger, the sick, the weak, the vulnerable, and when those are healed, they will do the same for others. We all have a part - every person stokes the flames of worship.

6. Commit to the tithe. Nehemiah 10:37 *We will also bring the first of our dough, our contributions, the fruit of every tree, the new wine, and the oil to the priests at the chambers of the house of our God, and the tithe of our ground to the Levites...* A revival was breaking out. Each time revival broke out, the tithe or generous giving was reestablished. It is about the heart, not the money. **Malachi 3:10-11** *"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and put Me to the test now in this," says the Lord of armies, "if I do not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruit of your ground; nor will the vine in the field prove fruitless to you," says the Lord of armies.* This was Old Testament but what comes before these verses is important... **Malachi 3:6** *For I, the Lord, do not change...* Jesus was not sent to change the heart of God towards rebellious man but Jesus was sent to change the heart of rebellious man toward the heart of a loving God. When we give to God and honor His Word, then it brings the blessings of God on the individual and the church. See ourselves committing to the principles of God and it will change us.

What is needed? **Ephesians 1:18-19** *I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the boundless greatness of His power toward us who believe.* Ask God to open our eyes? God in His mercy calls us to look forward to a new day.

In Nehemiah's day, many heard the words and were convicted by them; others heard and thought they couldn't do it. It's the same today... Here are 2 great promises: **Matthew 11:28-29** *Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.* **John 7:37** *"If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"*

In Nehemiah's day, the people gathered to hear, to commit, and to obey the plan that God had orchestrated. God has a plan today. Earthquakes, persecution, wars... lift up your head. It's getting close. Ask God to revive us again to lift up His name.

Can you list the 6 covenants of Nehemiah that we can apply today?

Which one intrigued you to make a change in thinking or in doing?

What new thing do you want to commit to having a lifestyle after God? How is it a struggle or a blessing?