

Nehemiah 12,13

Day 1

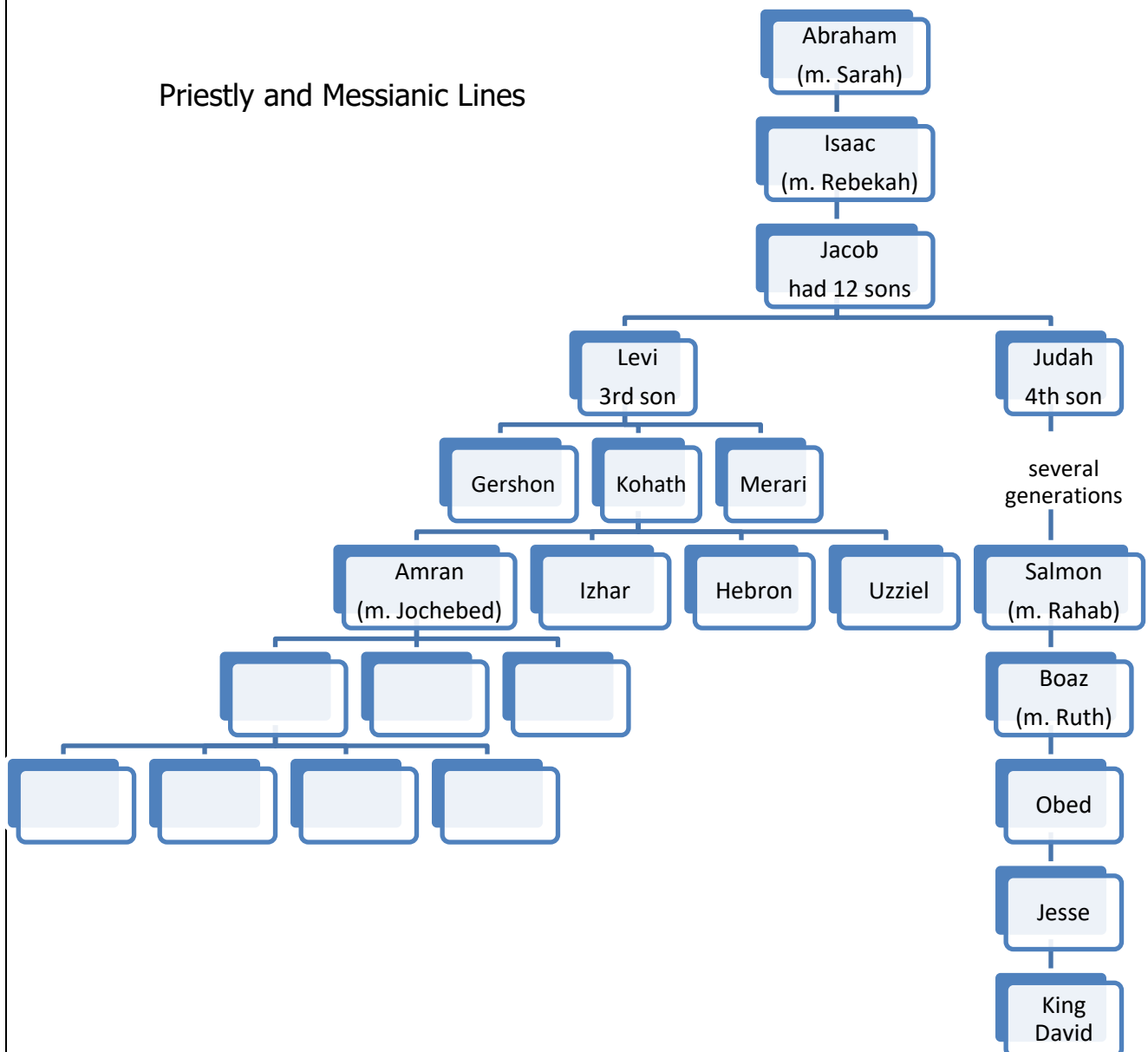
Read (or skim 😊) Nehemiah 12:1-26

1. What people did Nehemiah record starting in 12:1?

- Whose names were recorded starting in 12:12? (1st generation= "in the days of Jeshua"; 2nd generation= "in the days of Joiakim")

2. Finish filling in the lineage of Levi from 1 Chronicles 6:1-3 (see Exodus 6:23).

Priestly and Messianic Lines



3. Among the Levites, what special calling did the Lord give to Aaron's family? Exodus 28:1

FYI: "David took the priestly family of Israel...and divided them **into 24 sections**, to serve **according to the schedule of their service**. { See 1 Chronicles 24:1-19) 'In later Jewish practice, the number of twenty-four courses was based on a lunar calendar of forty-eight weeks, with each course serving for a week at a time and thus twice in a year.' (Selman) "At the first return from exile in 527 b.c., only four courses were registered... By 520 twenty-two were again operative Nehemiah 12:1-7...' (Payne)" - David Guzik

"Twenty-two "chief of the priests" that went to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel and Jeshua are listed in Nehemiah 12:1-7, whereas only four groups of priests are listed in Ezra 2:36-39; (also Neh. 7:39-42). Evidently the four original families of priests were divided into twenty-two groups after arrival in Jerusalem." - Henry Morris

4. How did the priests and other Levites duties differ? Numbers 18:6,7

- What responsibilities did the Lord give the Levites? (regarding the tabernacle) Numbers 1:50,51; (later regarding the temple) 1 Chronicles 23:26-32
- What inheritance did the Lord give to the Levites? Numbers 18:20-21; 35:2,3

FYI: "The Bible often speaks of priests and Levites as if these two offices were practically the same (1 Chronicles 23:2; 24:6,31). They were closely related, in that both priests and Levites sprang from a common ancestor. They traced their lineage back to Levi, head of one of the original twelve tribes of Israel. But these two offices were different, in that priests (a specific branch of Levites descended through Aaron) and Levites (all descendants of Levi in general) performed different duties.

Priests officiated at worship by offering various offerings on behalf of the nation and by leading the people to confess their sins. The Levites were assistants to the priests. They took care of the tabernacle and the Temple and performed other menial tasks, such as providing music, serving as doorkeepers, and preparing sacrifices for offering by the priests." - Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary (See Numbers 3:6-9)

5. (*The lineage of high priests is given in given 12:10-11. See the reference to Eliashib as high priest in 3:1*) What was one of the most important jobs of the high priest? Exodus 30:10; also Hebrews 9:7

Digging Deeper
Who did the office of the high priest portray? Hebrews 7:23-8:2; 9:11-12

- How are the responsibilities of priests described in Malachi 2:6,7?

FYI: "High Priest : A chief priest of the Hebrew people, especially of the ancient Jewish Levitical priesthood traditionally traced from AARON. The high priest was the supreme civil head of his people. Aaron held this position above his sons that was to continue in the firstborn of successive holders of the office. The high priest was distinguished from his fellow priests by the clothes he wore, the duties he performed, and the particular requirements placed upon him as spiritual head of God's people." - Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary

12:10,11 "Before the monarchy successive eras were reckoned by the lifetimes of the high priests (cf. Numbers 35:28), and now again, in the absence of a king, theirs are the names which mark the times." - Derek Kidner (123)

6. To understand the importance of maintaining the integrity of the lineage of priests, what had happened earlier under King Rehoboam? 1 Kings 12:26-33 (*Note the three things he instituted that led the Northern Kingdom of Israel away from the Lord.*)
7. Underline what happened to the leadership of the nation before the captivity.
- 2 Chronicles 36:14 Furthermore, all the leaders of the priests and the people became more and more unfaithful, following all the detestable practices of the nations and defiling the temple of the LORD, which he had consecrated in Jerusalem. NIV
 - Micah 3:9-11 Now hear this, heads of the house of Jacob And rulers of the house of Israel, Who abhor justice And twist everything that is straight, 10 Who build Zion with bloodshed And Jerusalem with violent injustice. 11 Her leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe, Her priests instruct for a price And her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the LORD saying, "Is not the LORD in our midst? Calamity will not come upon us." NAS
 - Jeremiah 5:31 The prophets prophesy falsely, And the priests rule on their own authority; And My people love it so! But what will you do at the end of it? NAS
8. What insight does this give you into the careful attention Nehemiah paid to the integrity of the Priests and Levites?

Applying the Word: *What person in a position of leadership has had a profound positive impact on your life? Why?*

Day 2

Dedication of the Wall. Read Nehemiah 12:27-

9. What service of the Levites did Nehemiah highlight? 12:8,24 (Compare Ezra 3:10-11)
10. Underline reasons for giving thanks in the following:
- Psalm 100:4-5 Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. 5 For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations. NIV
 - Psalm 33:2-5 Praise the LORD with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre. 3 Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy. 4 For the word of the LORD is right and true; he is faithful in all he does. 5 The LORD loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love. NIV

11. What instructions did Paul give about thankfulness?

- Ephesians 5:19-20 Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. NIV
- Colossians 2:6-7 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, 7 rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. NIV

12. What is the first step listed in Romans 1:21 in straying from God and what were the consequences?

Assembling the people

13. Who was sought out for the dedication of the wall and why? 12:27-29

- How were the people made ready? 12:30

Digging Deeper

Although we are washed in Christ (1 John 1:7; 1 Corinthians 6:11), what does scripture say we should purify in our lives? 2 Corinthians 7:2; Ephesians 4:22-25

Procession on the wall

14. What did Nehemiah have the people do? 31-39 (What notable leader was in each group? 11:36)

- Where did the people assemble and how did they celebrate? 12:40-43

Food for Thought: "Some of the landmarks of verses 38 and following, were mentioned in 3:1-11 and 28-32, in the account of the repair work... Every inch of these ramparts had its special memory for one group or another."
- Derek Kidner (127) (See Psalm 48:12-14)

15. How did the people honor the priests and Levites? 12:44,45

16. From 12:43,47, what would you say about the people's attitude toward giving? (See 2 Corinthians 9:7.12.13)

17. Underline the sacrifices that please God.

- Hebrews 13:15-16 Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise-the fruit of lips that confess his name. 16 And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. NIV
- Romans 12:1-2 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-this is your spiritual act of worship. 2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-his good, pleasing and perfect will. NIV

18. What comparison was made between the days of Zerubbabel and Nehemiah and the days of David? 12:46,47 How does this reflect on Zerubbabel and Nehemiah?

Applying the Word: How important/powerful would you say an attitude of gratitude is in your relationship with the Lord?

Day 3

Reforms under Nehemiah. Read Nehemiah 13:1-9

Foreigners

19. What led to the first reform? 13:1,3 (Cross-ref. Deuteronomy 23:3-6)

- Why had the Ammonites and Moabites been excluded from entering the assembly of God? 13:2 (*This account is given in Numbers 22-24.*)
- Who was a notable exception to this rule and why? Ruth 1:16 (See Isaiah 56:6-8)

FYI: "An Israelite was part of God's covenant by birth; but an Ammonite or Moabite was not. They had to become a part of the covenant by choice – by joining with God's covenant people and leaving the gods of their people. **Foreigners/mixed multitude:** This refers to those who wanted to associate with the people of Israel but did make a full commitment and embrace the covenant." - David Guzik

"It is the Ammonite or Moabite...as the embodiment of Israel's inveterate enemy and corrupter who is in view... But let him come as a convert, like Ruth the Moabitess, and he will be entitled to a very different reception." - Derek Kidner (128)

"Race is not the issue here, the issue is purity of faith...Once we understand the morally and spiritually polluted nature of the surrounding cultures, it becomes clear that God was trying to quarantine His people against a deadly spiritual infection." - Ray Stedman (218,221)

Tobiah

20. What relationship did Eliashib have with Tobiah the Ammonite (2:10)? 13:4 How had he accommodated Tobiah? 13:5

FYI: "Tobiah never lacked audacity. When even a toe-hold in the temple would have been a conquest, he obtains a room the size of a small warehouse, and has it cleared for him by the religious authorities themselves. It was doubtless a special satisfaction to see his personal belongings take precedence over the very frankincense for God and the tithes for His ministers; but best of all he was at the nerve-centre of Jerusalem, ideally placed for influence and intrigue." - Derek Kidner (129)

"**Meshullam's** daughter married Johohanan, **Tobiah's** son, which made Meshullam and Tobiah in-laws (Neh. 6:18). As Meshullam was one of the 'gatekeepers' who watched 'the storerooms of the gates' [12:25] he might have been useful to Tobiah in gaining access to the temple storeroom." - The Woman's Study Bible (778)

21. Where had Nehemiah been when this had occurred? 13:6 (Why do you think he asked “leave” to come back?)

- What did he learn about upon his arrival? 13:7 (What aspects of this do you think would have made Nehemiah so “displeased/grieved” (13:8)?)

22. List the actions Nehemiah took:

- 13:8b (Compare Mark 11:15-17)
- 13:9

Digging Deeper

To review Tobiah words and actions against the Jews see 2:10,19; 4:3,7,8; 6:10,12,19.

FYI: “Nehemiah 13 reveals clearly how evil works. Sin is subtle, and it invades us quietly and covertly. Before we are even aware of the danger, we have already compromised ourselves and given evil a place in our hearts. We lower our defenses - and soon we have lowered our standards. We seldom fall suddenly into sin. Our descent into sin is almost always gradual - the culmination of a lot of seemingly insignificant choices.” - Ray Stedman (227)

Tithes

23. What else had been neglected? 13:10 (What had the people promised? 10:37-39)

- What had this lack of support caused the leaders to do?

24. What did Nehemiah do? 13:11 (Compare Nehemiah’s question with the people’s promise in 10:39b.)

- How did the people respond? 13:12

25. What other action did Nehemiah take? 13:13 What reason is given for the men he chose? (See 1 Corinthians 4:2)

26. What did Nehemiah ask of God? 13:14

- Of what can we be sure? Hebrews 6:10; 2 Timothy 1:12

FYI: God’s ‘remembering’ always implies His intervention, not merely His recollection or recognition. Nehemiah is committing himself and his cause to the only safe hands.” - Derek Kidner (130)

Applying the Word: When have you seen a leader take strong action in a godly, constructive manner in order to correct a wrong? What effect did it have?

Day 4

Further Reforms. Read Nehemiah 13:15-30

Sabbath

27. How were the people “profaning” (breaking/dissolving) the Sabbath? 13:15 (What had they promised? 10:31)

- What else had happened? 13:16

Food for Thought: “The bustling scene of verses 15 and 16 shows how rapidly the trickle which must have begun in Nehemiah’s absence (vs. 6) had become - as such trickles do - a flood.” - Ray Stedman (131)

28. Underline the reasons God gave Israel for observing a Sabbath (*For the law of the Sabbath and who was included see Exodus 20:8-11.*)

- Exodus 23:12 "Six days you are to do your work, but on the seventh day you shall cease from labor so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female slave, as well as your stranger, may refresh themselves. NAS
- Exodus 31:13 "Say to the Israelites, 'You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy. NIV
- Deuteronomy 5:15 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day. NIV

29. Of what did Nehemiah remind the nobles? 13:17,18

FYI: “On the Sabbath day when they were supposed to rest and trust God, foreigners sold, and the people of Israel bought. At the root, this was a problem of priorities. There was nothing wrong with buying and selling, only when the desire to buy and sell, to make money or spend money, became more important than honoring God. This was a clear way the people of Israel put making and spending money before glorifying God.” - David Guzik

30. Although we are not under the law of the Sabbath as Israel was (see Colossians 2:16-17), what principles for our lives do you think we can glean from it?

- What prophetic picture did the Sabbath give? Matthew 11:28

31. What actions did Nehemiah take? 13:19

- How did some try to sabotage them? 13:20

Digging Deeper

For interesting confrontations Jesus had about the Sabbath see Mark 2:24-28; Luke 6:7-10.

32. What further actions did Nehemiah take?

- 13:21
- 13:22a

FYI: "The Sabbath was a standing sign of God's special relationship to His people Israel. Nehemiah...showed great fearlessness. He had to deal chiefly with what amounted to the inducements of the trade and profit motive...It took a brave Nehemiah to deal with the people's urge for increased trading profit. However, he was brave because he remembered the Word of God in this matter. (13:18) The Word of God does not fail those who love it, and who seek the Lord at all times."
- Roland Wickes (8)

33. How do you think Nehemiah felt about finding all this on his return? What emotion does his prayer (13:22b) display?

Mixed Marriages

34. What other practice did Nehemiah confront? 13:23 What had the people promised? 10:30

- How was this affecting families? 13:24 (See Ezra 9:1)

FYI: "The babble of languages among the children was not only a symptom but a threat: it meant a steady erosion of Israelite identity at the level of all thinking and expression, a loss of access to the Word of God, which would effectively paganize them. A single generation's compromise could undo the work of centuries."
- Derek Kidner (131)

35. What was Israel's pattern in history of marrying foreigners? Judges 3:6,7

- What had God said about this? Exodus 34:14-16

36. List the ways Nehemiah reacted. 13:25 (Compare the *curse* in Nehemiah 5:13.)

- What example did he give of the slippery slope they were on? 13:26 (See 1 Kings 11:3-8)

FYI: "Because Judah was part of the Persian Empire, the Jews had contact with many nations and multicultural marriages had become common. Such marriages may even have been undertaken for political or material gain...Nehemiah reminded the people that Solomon's foreign wives had dragged him into idolatry...The consequence of his sin had been the splitting up of the Jewish nation. Women from the very nations mentioned in the book of Nehemiah, Ammon and Moab, were among Solomon's wives." - Africa Bible Commentary (358)

37. How did Nehemiah respond to Eliashib's grandson? 13:28 (See Ezra 9:2)

- Why was this so serious? 13:29
- What special concern did the Lord have about whom priests married? Leviticus 21:13-15

38. What do the further steps Nehemiah took with the priests and Levites say about his concern for leadership? 13:30,31

FYI: "These are some of the saddest words in Scripture...God created the priestly office to be a picture of the ministry of Jesus Christ...He is the great High Priest who would come to meet us in our lostness and weakness, and restore us to a right relationship with God the Father. So these priests of Nehemiah's day didn't merely betray their priestly calling and profession in that day, they betrayed the picture of what God was doing from the beginning to the end of history through Jesus the Messiah, our High Priest." - Ray Stedman (251)

"Only the grace of God, alive and flowing in our lives, can give us the power to truly overcome sin [See Romans 8:3,4]...The Old Testament history of Israel, from beginning to end, illustrates this. When the nation was first born at the Exodus, despite the most spectacular miracles, displays of God's glory, and revelation of the law, the people sinned, by crediting a gold calf with their deliverance from Egypt! And now here, at the end of the Old Testament history of God's people in the promised land, Nehemiah is pulling hair out – his own and those of sinners – because they couldn't keep their promises to God." - David Guzik

39. With what prayer does the book of Nehemiah end? 13:31b ("Remember" prayers are in 5:19, 6:14 and 13:14,22,29,31.)

FYI: Remember *zakar* OT:2142, "to remember, think of, mention....remember means more than 'to recall'; it means 'to retain in thought' so as to tell someone who can take action." [See Genesis 9:15; 40:14] - Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words

"Remember' [Heb. *zakar*, lit. 'to meditate upon and pay attention to'] implies that appropriate action would follow. Nehemiah used this word eight times, four of which were to ask God to remember him for good...which was the only request he had for himself throughout the book. This singleminded desire to be remembered by the Lord revealed the purity of heart of a servant who wanted first and foremost to please his Master." - The Women's Study Bible (781)

Applying the Word: *If you were to pray a "remember me" prayer to God, what would you ask Him to remember?*

For small group discussion: What did Nehemiah's story teach you about (pick one):

- Availability:
- Qualifications for leadership:
- Delegating:
- Community:
- Serving:
- Opposition:
- Backsliding:
- God's word:
- Prayer: