

MAKING A WISE CHOICE

Jon Macon

In Nehemiah 13:23-27, Nehemiah testified that “in those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab: and their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews’ language, but according to the language of each people. And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves. Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin. Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to transgress against our God in marrying strange wives?” There were specific commandments from the Law of Moses that pertained to this situation in Nehemiah. But there are also important principles to learn from in this passage that have important application for Christians today concerning whom they choose to marry.

God’s marriage law for Israel

In Deuteronomy 7:1-6, God had commanded this to Israel: “When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; and when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them: *neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.* But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire. For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath

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chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.” Israel had frequently transgressed this commandment. But there was a spiritual principle behind this Old Testament law. God had forbidden Israel to marry the people from these other nations because He said they would “turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you” (Deut 7:4). God reminded King Solomon of this when he too broke this commandment, and his foreign wives turned his heart to idols (1 Kings 11:2).

New Testament teachings

In the New Testament, we no longer have a law which forbids us as Christians from marrying people of other physical nations. But the spiritual principle behind that Old Testament law is still found in the New Testament. We are told not to be “unequally yoked together with unbelievers,” but to “come out from among them, and be ye separate” (2 Cor 6:14-18). We must not be deceived, because bringing “evil communications” into the family by marrying an unbeliever will corrupt (1 Cor 15:33). This little leaven will leaven the whole family (Gal 5:9). A Christian widow should marry again “only in the Lord” (1 Cor 7:39). If this instruction is good and wise for a second marriage, it also is appropriate to for a first marriage. And the prospective mate should already be faithful *before* the marriage. No one will be spending more time teaching our children than our mate. Therefore, it is essential for us to find someone who is a *faithful* Christian who will be teaching our children later (2 Tim 2:2). In almost every case, when a Christian marries a non-Christian, the Christian is “converted” away from Christ rather than the non-Christian being converted to Christ. Christians today need to learn from the example in Nehemiah 10:30 and determine only to marry another faithful Christian. As we know, King Solomon with all the wisdom God had given him had his heart turned away from God because he had married unbelievers (1 Kings 11:1-13; Neh 13:23-27). We do not have the wisdom of Solomon, and if we think we can stand where he fell, we should take heed before we fall (1 Cor 10:12).