

Nehemiah 8

vs. 1-12. The people here attended to the reading and exposition of the law of Moses.

- A. There was congregational unity in the matter: they "...gathered themselves together as one man..." (v. 1). c/w **PHIL 1:27; 1CO 1:10.**
 - 1. Their cooperation and unity of purpose in the building of the wall carried over into spiritual areas. Good character rightly manifests itself in all areas of life.
 - 2. Such a unified group is well fitted against falling before the enemy. c/w **MAT 12:25.**
- B. There was congregational desire in the matter: "...they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses..."
 - 1. The best "altar calls" are when the people call upon the minister of the word for instruction. c/w **ACT 2:37.**
 - 2. Blessed is the minister whose congregation has such desire for the word of God.
 - a. It is noteworthy that their desire was for the word of God, not a sorry substitute like the Talmud which developed in the Babylonian captivity, nor did they opt for some corrupt New Israel Version.
 - b. It is obvious that they deemed the law of Moses to be God's word, not the word of man which does not profit. **JER 23:32.**
 - c. The church that receives God's word as God's word is a well-built church that also builds well. **1TH 2:13; 1:5-8.**
 - 3. A Bible-hungry congregation needs a well-studied man of the word like Ezra. **EZR 7:6, 10 c/w 1TI 4:15-16.**
- C. It was appropriate that the word of God should go forth from "...before the water gate..." (v. 1) of Jerusalem. The going forth of the gospel of grace is described under color of *living waters going forth from Jerusalem*. **ISA 2:3 c/w ZEC 14:8 c/w JOH 7:37-39.**
- D. "...the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law" (v. 3). The people *attentively* listened to the reading of the law. c/w **ACT 8:6; 16:14.**
 - 1. They were very unlike their later countrymen who *stopped their ears* at the exposition of the word of God. **ACT 7:57.**
 - 2. Even though the sermon was long, they were attentive.
 - a. They were not so consumed with personal interests that they could not pay attention.
 - b. Neither (bless God!) had they trained their minds to process life through rapid, short information bits cycling past their eyes on a screen.
 - c. Curiously, nobody seems to have had ADD or ADHD.
 - 3. If we would derive maximum benefit from the reading or exposition of the word, we must disconnect ourselves from the noise of life. **PRO 18:1; 22:17.**
- E. **vs. 5-6.** The worship clearly centered around the word of God.
 - 1. There was no entertainment or "special music."
 - 2. There was no liturgy, nor eye-candy pageantry and ceremony.
 - 3. There was no speaking in tongues for speaking in tongues' sake, only edifying delivery of the word. c/w **1CO 14:1-5.**
 - 4. Worship rightly should center around the word of God since valid worship is rooted in truth. **JOH 4:23-24.**
- F. **v. 7.** There were a number of readers and expositors ministering the word of God to the multitude, yet "...the people stood *in their place*."
 - 1. They didn't wander around creating commotion that would distract their neighbor from the

edifying word. **ROM 15:2.**

2. They didn't wander from speaker to speaker looking for a favorite or measuring one against another after the manner of Corinth. **1CO 3:4-5.**
3. It was an ordered worship meeting of speaking and listening that promoted edification, not chaos. **1CO 14:26, 40.**
4. Remember, there is no successful building where chaos reigns. **GEN 11:7-8.**

G. "So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading" (v. 8).

1. distinctly: In a distinct or separate manner; separately, individually, severally. 2. In a distinct or clear manner; without confusion or obscurity; so as to be clearly perceived or understood; with clear perception or understanding; clearly, plainly.
2. sense: The meaning or signification of a word or phrase.
 - a. They did not give *their sense* to the words, as it seemed fit to them.
 - b. They did not give *the senses* to the words, confounding understanding by multiple interpretations.
 - c. *The sense* of a word would be its primary definition.
 - d. Giving to individual words of the reading *the sense* yields one interpretation with the whole being the sum of the parts.
3. By this method, they understood the words of the Lord that "...were declared unto them" (v. 12).
 - a. declare: To make clear or plain (anything that is obscure or imperfectly understood); to interpret.
 - b. Generally, defining terms in their ordinary, primary sense is the best way to make plain the word of God.
 - (1) Figurative senses of words have their place and even enrich the Scripture.
 - (2) But sometimes folks don't discern the figure. **JOH 11:11-14.**
 - c. Understanding is best facilitated by plain words. **HAB 2:2; 2CO 3:12; 1CO 14:9.**
 - d. *Without* understanding, the received word produces no fruit. **MAT 13:19.**
 - e. *With* understanding, we properly love our God. **MAR 12:33.**

H. **vs. 9-12.** The people were humbled by the plain declaration of the word of God.
ct/w **JOH 10:24-31.**

1. Their weeping was due to the mighty convictions of the law which is *the ministration of condemnation and death*. **2CO 3:7-9.**
2. Nehemiah, Ezra and the Levites encouraged them to rejoice in the Lord, which saints ought to do at all times, even when convicted about their sin. **ROM 7:24-25; PHIL 4:4.**
 - a. The Law may humble us but it cannot relieve us.
 - b. Faith can scarcely be built under the unbearable burden of law. **GAL 5:4-6.**
 - c. Faith is built by continual hope in the love and mercy of God. **JUDE 1:20-21.**
3. The people did rejoice and have great mirth (v. 12), not because of a feast or a great gathering, but "...because they had understood the words that were declared unto them" (v. 12).
 - a. The day of hearing and understanding the word of God is *holy to the Lord* and a cause for great joy. **ACT 13:48; 2:41-47; LUK 15:10.**
 - b. The joy of the LORD is the strength of His people. v. 10.
 - (1) Religion without true joy is an *enervated* (deprived of strength) religion. If all we are about is Law and our deficiencies, we have no strength and are therefore easy prey for the enemy. **2PE 2:14.**
 - (2) We should rejoice in our God Who loved us and saved us according to His mercy and grace. **ROM 5:11; PHIL 3:3.**

- (3) We should rejoice at His word which declares Him and gives us understanding of His will. **PSA 119:162; 1CO 13:6.**
4. This worship service and Bible teaching would thus fortify the people against their ever present enemies.

vs. 13-18. The people obeyed the Law they heard. **JAM 1:22.**

- A. Successful building involves more than just being acquainted with the information. It requires application of the information. **MAT 7:24-27.**
- B. There had obviously been great ignorance of the law. **v. 14.**
1. Where there is great ignorance of the law, there is likely to be great error. **ACT 13:27.**
 2. Where there is great ignorance of the law, there is likely also to follow great judgment. **HOS 4:6.**
 3. A mark of a noble people is that when they diligently search the Scriptures, they reform as required. **ACT 17:11-12.**
- C. The law was read each day of the feast. **v. 18 c/w DEU 31:10-11.**
- D. Where desire for the word was present there was also a desire for the proper observances of God's ordinances. **1CO 11:1-2.**
1. The keeping of this ordinance was designed to be an inconvenience to Israel's routine life.
 - a. To a carnal heart, the inconvenience of true religion is a major obstacle to submission to God. **AMOS 8:4-6; LUK 14:16-20.**
 - b. "That man loves his house too well that cannot find in his heart to quit it, awhile, in compliance either with an ordinance or with a providence of God."
(Matthew Henry)
 2. Where there is not a deep, genuine desire for the word, the neglect or abuse of the ordinances of God is a likely concomitant. **1CO 11:19-21.**
 3. It may also be observed that where there is not a deep, genuine desire for the word but a desire for the traditions of man, the word of God will be made of none effect. **MAR 7:13.**
- E. It was on the last day of this Feast of Tabernacles that Jesus proclaimed liberty and release. **JOH 7:2, 14, 37-39 c/w 2CO 3:15-17.**