

Let's Worship God

5th-10th August 2019
Nehemiah





Monday - Nehemiah 8:1-2 - Change of Focus

There is a very interesting and significant change that takes place between the end of chapter 7 and the beginning of chapter 8. The first seven chapters are written in the first person, it is Nehemiah who is recounting what is taking place, but now Nehemiah steps aside for a while. The narrative is written in the third person, and Ezra the scribe comes to the fore.

The focus of attention now shifts from the building of the walls to the building up of the people of God. This change of focus necessitated a change of leadership. Nehemiah was faithful, spiritual, courageous, and visionary, but he was a layman. The spiritual building up of the people of God needed the direction of one who was called to that office and ministry, and so Nehemiah is here seen 'standing aside in favour of another man, refusing to intrude into an office that was not his, but giving those duly appointed by God for the preaching of the Word their rightful place and function' (James Philip).

There is remarkable evidence in the first verse of chapter 8 of the way that the Almighty God had been working in the hearts of the people as they had been doing the hard, physical work of wall rebuilding. There is no other way to explain the fact that all the people 'as one man' gathered together and asked Ezra the scribe to read the Word of God to them. It is only when the Spirit of God works in the hearts of men and women that they have a desire for the Scriptures of truth. Ezra was asked to bring the book of the law of Moses - the first five books of the Old Testament that gave God's gracious revelation of His mind and will.

When God begins to put this kind of desire into the hearts of His people, it is certain that He is going to do a great work amongst them.

Questions

1. What do the people ask Ezra to do?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that we would have a hunger for God's Word.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." Nehemiah 8:10b

Praise: Psalm 12 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.



Tuesday - Nehemiah 8:1-4 - The Word of God

Ezra, described as both Scribe and Priest, was the man who was responsible for having the Temple rebuilt and so was a key figure in restoring the worship of God within the restored city. Ezra brought the book of the law to the people gathered in the square in front of the Water Gate:

a. Those who gathered were 'all who could listen with understanding'. Nobody was excluded from the need to hear the Word of God - no excuse would be accepted from man, woman or child. It was not for those who had a high or profound theological knowledge or those who were academically gifted - ALL who had the ability to understand were to be there.

b. The Scriptures were read in the hearing of the people from 'early morning until midday'. This was not a brief or cursory hearing of the Word, and it seems as though the people did not complain or flag in their attention for we read that 'all the people were attentive to the book of the law'. When there is a heart for the Word of God it is not wearisome to listen to it!

c. The people were so anxious that everybody should be able to hear the Word with clarity that they made a platform, so that the voice of the speaker would carry as far as possible. They made sure that there would be no hindrances for people wishing to hear the Word of the Lord.

d. As soon as Ezra opened the book of the law, the people all stood up, thus demonstrating a great reverence for the Word of God. They understood that this was not just a book of human composition but was the very Word of the living God.

It should be the desire of God's people that they have a similar respect for and give similar attention to the revealed will of God.

Questions

1. Who came to hear the reading?
2. How did the people show their desire for God's Word?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that God would give those around us a desire for His Word.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." Nehemiah 8:10b

Praise: Psalm 13 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.



Wednesday - Nehemiah 8:4-8 - Explaining the Word

We have seen how the people respected the Word of God when they stood up when Ezra opened the book, but their response demonstrated more than just respect for a relic! When Ezra prayed and blessed the Lord, the people responded by thanking the Lord, by praying and by worshipping. When God does a work for His people and in His people the right and proper way to demonstrate it, is through thanksgiving, praying and worshipping the Lord.

For a people whose heart was being prepared by the Lord, it was of the greatest importance that they should have a clear understanding of what it was that the Lord required of them. It was not sufficient that the law should be read in the people's hearing, it must also be expounded and explained so that they would have a clear understanding of its meaning.

Whilst it is important that God's people read the Word of God for themselves, God has graciously provided teachers for His church so that they might dedicate themselves to instruct the people of God in the truths of God. One of the most important gifts that God has given to His church is the provision of those who would teach and preach His Word 1 Cor. 12:28, so that men and women would come to faith, and that God's people would grow in grace and in knowledge of the Lord.

How sad it is that in some churches the exposition of the Scriptures has been relegated to a very minor place in favour of so-called praise songs, drama, and personal experiences. Ezra and Nehemiah knew better! They understood that if the people in Jerusalem were going to withstand all that would come upon them, they needed to be taught, sustained, and strengthened by the living Word of the sovereign God.

Questions

1. How did the people respond to Ezra's prayer?
2. What did Ezra do as he read the Word?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks for true ministers of the Word.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." Nehemiah 8:10b

Praise: Psalm 14 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.



Thursday - Nehemiah 8:4-8 - Understanding the Word

Verses 7 and 8 contain very useful instructions for both those who preach and for those who listen: Those who read the Word to the people did so clearly so that the people could understand what was read and then explained it simply so that people would understand its meaning for them. In his commentary on Nehemiah, David Guzik makes the following comment, 'When I stand to teach God's people, there are some things that I always need to remember: If you leave knowing five helpful hints to a better life, but do not have a greater understanding of God's Word, I have failed. If you leave having been amused by humour, entertained by anecdotes, or captivated by dramatic stories, but do not have a greater understanding of God's Word, I have failed. If you leave motivated to action, or praying a prayer, but it is not based on a greater understanding of God's Word, I have failed. If you leave admiring me, but do not have a greater understanding of God's Word, I have failed - and will be accountable before God for my failure.' This is the goal for every preacher and should be what every member of a congregation of God's people is looking for and expecting from those who minister the Word in their hearing. The Levites helped the people to understand, and that is just as important now as it was in the time of Nehemiah:

a. The things of God are spiritually discerned, and God uses spiritual teachers to guide us.

b. Many things in the Scriptures are foreign to us, and we need gifted teachers to help us understand them better.

c. We often need things broken down into small pieces so that we can understand them

If we leave worship without having a better understanding of the Word we need to ask if the problem lies with the preacher for not explaining it clearly or with us for not giving sufficient attention to it.

Questions

1. What did the Levites help the people to do?

Prayer Points

1. Pray for our minister as he explains God's Word to us.

2. Use prayer points from your congregation.

3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." Nehemiah 8:10b

Praise: Psalm 15 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

NEHEMIAH

pray | plan | build

Friday - Nehemiah 8:9-12 - Joy in Forgiveness

There was an immediate response to the clear teaching of the Word of God. The same kind of response that will always be present to a greater or lesser degree when the Word is faithfully proclaimed:

a. There was conviction of sin - the people wept. When the Word of God had shown them the holy God and the perfect standard that He sets, and had then revealed to them how sinful they were and how far short they fell of the divine standard, it is no wonder they wept. It is one of the purposes of the Scripture and the preaching of the Word to bring men and women to a knowledge of their own sin.

b. The conviction of sin however, is only the first step. Nehemiah urged the people not to mourn or weep, not because he wanted them to cover over their sin or still an awakened conscience, but because he realised that in the same Scripture that had convicted them there was the sure word of salvation and forgiveness. Their eyes were turned away from their sin, sorrow, and weakness to the Lord who would forgive, strengthen, and bring them joy, 'the joy of the Lord is your strength'.

c. The experience of the joy of the Lord was going to have an impact on their own daily lives. There were two important things they were going to do:

i. They were going to enjoy a feast, just as the believer does when he feasts on the Word and enjoys fellowship with his fellow believers.

ii. They were going to share with those who had nothing, just as the believer is to do as he tells others about the Lord Jesus Christ.

And all this was 'because they understood the words which had been made known to them' v. 12

Questions

1. What was the response to the preaching of the Word?
2. Why did Nehemiah tell them not to weep?
3. What two things were they to do?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks for the joy we can have in forgiveness of sin.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

“And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.” Nehemiah 8:10b

Praise: Psalm 16 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.



Saturday - Nehemiah 8:13-18 - Obedience

Although the people had listened to the Word of God and seemed willing to obey its teaching, that was not sufficient for the leaders of the people. Verse 13 shows the heads of families, priests, and Levites gathering together in the house of Ezra to seek to have greater knowledge and insight into the truth of the Word. They did not meet to study the Scripture as an intellectual exercise, but it was the production of a humble and genuine desire to know God's will and to do it.

There is then demonstrated an attitude that should characterise every child of God. When they understood what had been commanded, they immediately set out to do it. As far as their own experience was concerned, there was no tradition that the feast of Tabernacles should be kept - it had not been observed since the days of Joshua - but they did not rely on tradition but on the Word of the Lord.

The Feast of Tabernacles was a particularly appropriate thing for them to celebrate, for it reminded them of how God had provided for His people during the wilderness wanderings, and they themselves had seen much of God's provision and protection during the building process.

It is important to note that when the people followed the instructions of the Book of the Law to the letter, it brought them great joy v. 17. They were not just going through the motions or seeking to cut corners to make the celebration of the feast less onerous - they went out to the hills to gather the branches, they built the booths according to what had been written, they lived in the booths for the entire length of the festival, and they gladly listened to the reading of the Word daily.

So many people think that the path to happiness and joy is to be able to do their own thing, but here the Scripture reminds us that real gladness and freedom come through the path of obedience.

Questions

1. How did the people respond when they learned what God commands?

Prayer Points

1. Pray for the preaching and hearing of God's Word tomorrow.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

“And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.” Nehemiah 8:10b

Praise: Psalm 17 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

The goal of Let's Worship God is to encourage and help you in your worship of God each day.

**God tells us that
Ezra read from
the book of the Law
day after day
and that
the people of God
were filled with joy!**

Let's Worship God is produced for the RP Global Alliance
by the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

If you have any queries please contact - admin@rpglobalalliance.org