

Nehemiah 8

The Mission of the Church is to Equip and Send

I. Proclaiming the Word of God

- **Gates Guarded:** Safe Place for God's People to Worship
- Worship now begins:
 1. **Reading** of the Word of God
 2. **Teaching** of the Word of God

1 Now all the people gathered together as **one man** in the **open square** that was in front of the Water Gate...

- Gathered as one man
- Open Square for all to hear

At the Water Gate ready to be washed with the water of the Word of God

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that [Jesus] might sanctify and cleanse [His bride] with the **washing of water by the word**, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

- **Water Gate:** Speaks of being made clean as the water of the Word washes over us

John 15:3 You are already clean **because of the word** which I have spoken to you.

**God's spoken Word manifested in Jesus the Living Word
...Revealed in God's Written Word.**

1b...and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded Israel.

- **People demand the Word? One day people will not be able to find it...**

Amos 8:11 "Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord God, "That I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine of bread, Nor a thirst for water, **But of hearing the words of the Lord**. 12 They shall wander from sea to sea, And from north to east; They shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the Lord, But shall not find it.

- **End Times:** "Teachers" will cower to peoples fleshly desires...

2 Timothy 4:3 ...the time will come when they will **not endure sound doctrine**, but according to their **own desires**, because they have **itching ears**, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they **will turn their ears away from the truth**, and be turned aside to **fables**.

- **Sound Doctrine:** Verse by Verse, Chapter by Chapter, Book by Book

2 So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly of men and women and all who could **hear with understanding** on the first day of the

seventh month.

- **Ezra brought the Law:** Lit. the Word of God
- All who could understand: Men, Woman and Youth
- **Youth Groups:** Only one in Scripture: Mocked Elisha and he called she-bear to maul

Youth should be with the congregation during church.
All who could hear with understanding?

3 Then [Ezra] read from it in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate from **morning until midday**, before the men and women and those **who could understand**; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law.

- **Read the Bible from Morning to Midday:** 6+ Hours!
- **People were attentive:** Desired to hear the Word of God
- 2x: Word given to "Those who could understand"

I don't understand what I read?

- **First, Are you saved:** Do you have the Spirit of God?

1 Corinthians 2:12 ...we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the **Spirit who is from God**, that we might **know the things** that have been freely given to us by God. 13 These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14 But the **natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God**, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

- Without the Holy Spirit you *cannot discern the Word*
- We are sealed with God's Spirit to understand His Word when we believed...

Ephesians 1:13 In [Jesus] you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, **having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise...**

- The Holy Spirit is our **Helper** and **Teacher** of God's Word...

John 14:26 ...the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, **He will teach you** all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

- Holy Spirit gives discernment to the listeners: Tells us this true/false

1 John 2:27 But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you **do not need that anyone teach you**; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.

... Because of the anointing of the Holy Spirit given to all believers, they possess the resources for knowing the truth. This is not to say that teachers are unnecessary, because one of the resources for knowing the truth is the reminder given by teachers like John. [Guzik]

- **OT:** Spirit would come upon teachers and listeners alike to understand God's Word

Nehemiah 9:20 You also gave Your **good Spirit to instruct them**, And did not withhold Your manna from their mouth, And gave them water for their thirst.

- **Are you saved? If so...**
 1. You will desire to know Jesus
 2. You will begin to love others
 3. You will crave the Word of God...

Psalms 119:105 Your word is a **lamp to my feet** And a light to my path...**103** How **sweet** are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth...**165** Great peace have those who love Your law, And **nothing causes them to stumble.** [Lit.They have no stumbling blocks]

- Newly saved will crave the word like a baby craves mother's milk...

1 Peter 2:1 [If you are saved...] [Lay...] aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, 2 as **newborn babes**, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, 3 **if indeed you have tasted** that the Lord is gracious.

- *If you have tasted* the Lord's grace [if you are saved...] you will be like a baby craving mother's milk

God desires us to get beyond milk of the Word and onto meat

Hebrews 5:11...we have much to say, and [things] hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. 12 For though **by this time you ought to be teachers**, [but] you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to **need milk and not solid food.** 13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

- **Milk:** Superficial teaching of the Word
- **Meat:** Deeper meaning; Primary, Secondary, Tertiary [sticks to the ribs]

4 So Ezra the scribe stood on a platform of wood which they had made for the purpose; and beside him, at his right hand, stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaijah, Urijah, Hilkiyah, and Maaseyah; and at his left hand Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam.

People ask Ezra to read the Word of God Platform is constructed and the Word is proclaimed...

5 And Ezra **opened the book in the sight of all the people**, for he was standing above all the people; and **when he opened it, all the people stood up.**

- **Ezra:** Priest led the building of 2nd Temple
 1. Opens God's Word
 2. **People spontaneously stand...**

Respect and Reverence for God's Word
Very Word's from our Creator... to us

1 Thessalonians 2:13 [We..] thank God without ceasing, because when you **received the word of God** which you heard from us, you welcomed it **not as the word of men**, but as it is **in truth, the word of God**, which also effectively works in you who believe.

- **Word opened ...people stand**

6 And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God.

- **Q.** What did writer Nehemiah think about God? **What motivated Nehemiah to build the wall and accomplish a great work for God?**
- **A.** He believed that **God is Great**

What do we think of when we think of God? Jesus? What motivates us?

"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the *most important thing about us.*" [A.W. Tozer]

- **Wrong conception** of God [Harsh/Cruel] leads condemnation, bitterness, confusion
- **Right conception** of God [Holy/Great/Merciful/Gracious] **leads to peace...**

Isaiah 26:3 You will keep him in perfect peace, **Whose mind is stayed on You**, Because he trusts in You. [God as revealed in His Word]

- **Mind stayed on God:** lit. lean, rest, sustained by, established in God
- **What we think about God when we think about God matters... a lot**

"What we think about when we are free to think about what we will – *that is what we are or will soon become.*" [A.W. Tozer]

Psalm 115:8 Those who make [idols] are like them; So is everyone who trusts in them.

- **We will become like what we worship...if idols/wrong conception of God...**
 1. Apathetic
 2. Indifferent
 3. Unable/unwilling to forgive
- **We will become like what we worship...if Jesus as revealed in His Word**
 1. Loving
 2. Merciful
 3. Forgiving
 4. Patient
 5. Willing to yield...even to death on cross?

**When we think of God what do we think about?
Nehemiah says Ezra blessed the "Great God"**

6b...Then all the people answered, **"Amen, Amen!"** while lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

- **Ezra blesses God/People respond**

1. **A Praising Mouth:** Sacrifice of Praise. Amen!
2. **Lifted Hands** saying Amen, Amen; i.e. Yes, yes...I agree with God's Word
3. **A bowed Head:** Humbly submitted to the King

7 Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law; and the people stood in their place. 8 So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to **understand the reading.**

- Levites helped listeners to understand the Word of God
- Read "distinctly" and "gave a sense" of Word: Lit. to parse out/break down in context

We are doing what we are supposed to be doing and has been done for centuries...Reading God's Word and giving understanding. **Verse upon verse...precept upon precept.**

- We are each responsible to check out what we hear...

Acts 17:11 [Berean's] ...were more fair-minded[well off] than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and **searched the Scriptures daily** to find out whether these things were so.

- **God's Word was opened:**

1. **Feared the Lord:** Received as the very *Words of the Creator*
2. **Fear of the Lord** led to *paying close attention to the Word...*
3. **Payng close attention** to the Word they *realized their desperate need...*

Hebrews 4:12 ...the word of God is **living and powerful**, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

9 And Nehemiah, who was the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn nor weep." For all the **people wept**, when they heard the words of the Law.

- **Weeping** was the *right first response...not joy.*

Mark 4:3 "Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. 4 And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it. 5 Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because

it had no depth of earth. 6 But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it **withered away.** [Not a seeker friendly church/full council of God]

- **Weeping:** First right response to hearing Word of God...

God is Holy. We are a mess. People wept.

- **Repentance** is the next correct response

10 Then [Ezra] said to them, "Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the **joy of the Lord is your strength.**"

- **Word of God:**

1. **Weeping:** Who we are in light of who God is
2. **Repentance:** What are we going to do about it? Go to the Cross.
3. **Joy and Refreshing**

The Joy of the Lord is your strength.

The Joy on knowing that we are blessing God with our lives is our strength

- Some of us do not have joy because we are not letting go of sin!

Acts 3:19 Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord...

**Our Joy in the Lord is God's desired result of reading His Word
Salvation! Saved from the bondage of sin! Saved from the penalty of Sin!**

- Some people think joy is a sin; baptized in pickle juice?
- **Commanded to have joy.** Consequence for not serving God with joy

Deuteronomy 28:47 "Because you **did not serve the Lord your God with joy and gladness of heart,** for the abundance of everything, 48 therefore you shall serve your enemies, whom the Lord will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in need of everything; and He will put a yoke of iron on your neck until He has destroyed you.

- **Prescription for Joy:**

1. Read the Word: Revelation of who you are who God is
2. Let Him search your heart
3. **Repent of self will and be filled with Spirit**

11 So the Levites quieted all the people, saying, "Be still, for the day is holy; do **not be grieved.**" 12 And all the people went their way to eat and drink, to send portions and rejoice greatly, because they **understood the words** that were declared to them.

- **Rejoiced greatly** because they understood the Word of God

Acts 2:40 [Read]... [Peter preaching Word of God] "Be saved from this perverse generation." 41 Then those who **gladly received his word** were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. 42 And they continued steadfastly in the **apostles' doctrine and fellowship**, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. 44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

- Received the Word to **Repent**. Saved and Baptized
 1. **Apostles Doctrine:** Reading/Giving understanding to the Word of God
 2. **Fellowship:** Friendships with each other centered around Jesus
 3. **Breaking of Bread:** Communion; intimate time
 4. **Praying and Sharing:** Opening up our lives to each other and to God

46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with **gladness and simplicity of heart**, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

- **Church:** Word of God is at the center of our fellowship. Membership: Those that know they are desperately in need of Savior

Summary Proclaiming the Word of God

People Rejoiced greatly
...Because they understood the words that were declared to them

II. Feast of Tabernacles

13 Now on the second day the heads of the fathers' houses of all the people, with the priests and Levites, were gathered to Ezra the scribe, in order to **understand the words of the Law**. 14 And they found written in the Law, which the Lord had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month, 15 and that they should announce and proclaim in all their cities and in Jerusalem, saying, "Go out to the mountain, and bring olive branches, branches of oil trees, myrtle branches, palm branches, and branches of leafy trees, to make booths, as it is written."

- **Feast of Tabernacles:** First Mention Lev 23
 1. Heb. Feast of *sukkot* Lit. Booth
 2. One of three pilgrimage festivals
 - Marks the end of Harvest time
 - Commemorates Exodus from Egypt to Promised Land
 3. People build temporary shelters from tree branches

4. Inside decorated with 4 plant species resembling human body:
 - Spine
 - Eye
 - Mouth
 - Heart...very intimate time
5. Eat, sleep, hang out in temporary shelter

**No computers, TV's, Tablets, Smart Phones.
Just the people that are actually present and God**

- **God is a God of Communication.** We are created in His image for personal intimate communication with one another
 1. Look at one another
 2. Talk to one another
 3. Listen to one another
- People read God's command for feast/fellowship

1 John 5:1 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot...also loves him who is begotten of Him.

- Love God the Father you will love Jesus.
- Love Jesus and you will love your brother

[cont.] **2** By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. **3** For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments **are not burdensome.**

- Hang out together. Talk about Me. Forgive. Rejoice.

16 Then the people went out and brought them and made themselves booths, each one on the roof of his house, or in their courtyards or the courts of the house of God, and in the open square of the Water Gate and in the open square of the Gate of Ephraim. 17 So the whole assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and sat under the booths; for since the days of Joshua the son of Nun until that day the children of Israel had not done so. **And there was very great gladness.**

- **Read the Word:** Go get sticks
- **Obedied the Word:** Went and got sticks

**For us today: Not under OT Jewish Laws
Two NT Ordinances**

- **Baptism**
 1. Die to old life
 2. Resurrect to newness of life
 3. Outward sign of inward change

- **Communion**

1. Remember what Jesus did and look forward to His coming back
2. Body of Jesus given for our healing
3. Blood of Jesus poured out for forgiveness of sins

- We read that Jesus told us to do these things...therefore we do these things

18 Also day by day, from the first day until the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day there was a sacred assembly, **according to the prescribed manner.**

SUMMARY Feast of Tabernacles