

# NOURISHING OUR SOULS

*“They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read.” —NEHEMIAH 8:8*

In the book of Nehemiah there is a great work of God going on in Jerusalem. The city walls, which had been left in ruins for 140 years since the Babylonian invasion, have been rebuilt, but more importantly, there is also a work of God going on in people’s hearts.

After the city walls had been completed, the Jewish community took part in the ‘Feast of the Trumpets’, one of the seven annual celebrations of the Israelite people. Something extremely noteworthy took place. It was not Ezra, the high priest and scribe, leading the ceremony, who initiated the reading of Scripture, but the people themselves. They had all assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate and told Ezra to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses. They wanted to hear it.

As Ezra read aloud from daybreak till noon, the people listened attentively. That would have been five or six hours straight for seven days. In our day, we complain a lot about short attention spans, but we cannot underestimate the capacity, especially of young people, to hear and retain. There is power in the Word of God, and one of the signs of a work of God is an appetite for His Word. The Levites instructed the people from the Law of Moses, so that they could understand what was being read. This is what preaching is supposed to do. It sets the scene for worship and worship sets the heart for preaching. They are intrinsically linked.

The Word of God must always lead us to God Himself. As it was in Nehemiah's day, when the Book of the Law was read, the people didn't need to apply it. It applied itself. Nehemiah 8:9 says, "For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law." They were greatly moved in their hearts and that is because the Word of God reveals primarily two things: we see God in His righteousness and ourselves in our sin. The people were moved to weeping, confessing their sin and worshiping.

There is a time to weep and a time to grieve our sin, but in a wonderful way, the weeping turns to joy. This is not the joy of being forgiven, but is the joy derived from the Lord Himself who strengthens, energizes and motivates us. It is the most liberating feeling, not only of being cleansed of our sin and forgiven, but clothed in the righteousness of Christ. Reading the Word of God feeds and nourishes our souls like nothing else will.

***PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, for these wonderful events in Scripture that teach us about You, and how much closer we are drawn to You because of it.***

***TO REFLECT UPON: How much time do I spend in the Word of God?***