

Radiant Church, October 17, 2021
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Nehemiah 8 God's Word Forms God's People

Nehemiah 8:1 *And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the LORD had commanded Israel.*

The people have been redeemed from exile (like their ancestors were from Egypt)
The people ASK Ezra to read God's Word to them (like Moses did for the Israelites in Exodus)

Nehemiah 8:2-3 *So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law.*

“All who could understand” = children included
Everyone was “attentive” (We're attentive to what we care about)

Nehemiah 8:4-6 *And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiyah, and Maaseiah on his right hand, and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left hand. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people and as he opened it all the people stood. And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, “Amen, Amen,” lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground.*

This public reading of God's Word was a planned event
The priests were with Ezra, perhaps handling the scrolls for him
Perhaps a show of unity and purpose of the leadership

Nehemiah 8:7 *Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law, while the people remained in their places.*

Perhaps some of the people couldn't understand Hebrew, only Aramaic
So the Levites gathered people into smaller groups to translate and/or explain what was said from God's Word

Nehemiah 8:8 *They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.*

They read...clearly, meaning they read what was in the Law, not adding to or subtracting or minimizing anything that was read.

Nehemiah 8:9 and Nehemiah, who was the governor, and 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 or weep." For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law.

Our sin is great!
God's Word reveals our sin against God

Nehemiah 8:10-12 then he said to them, "Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be quiet, for this day is holy; do not be grieved." And all the people went their way to eat and drink and to send portions and to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them.

God's grace is greater than our sin!
God's Word reveals God's heart for His Creation, and for His people

Nehemiah 8:13 On the second day the heads of fathers' houses of all the people, with the priests and the Levites, came together to Ezra the scribe in order to study the words of the Law.

The Dads needed to learn, so they could teach their own households
Fathers had not previously been leading their families

Nehemiah 8:14-16 And they found it written in the Law that the LORD had commanded by Moses that the people of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month, and that they should proclaim it and publish it in all their towns and in Jerusalem, "Go out to the hills and bring branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees to make booths, as it is written." So the people went out and brought them and made booths for themselves, each on his roof, and in their courts and in the courts of the house of God, and in the square at the Water Gate and in the square at the Gate of Ephraim.

The "Feast of Booths" was to be observed yearly, to remind them how God had provided for their ancestors in the Sinai desert after Egypt, and before entering the Promised Land

The people were encouraged to remember how God had been faithful in the past, so they could trust Him for their present and future

Nehemiah 8:17 *And all the assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and lived in the booths, for from the days of Jeshua the son of Nun to that day the people of Israel had not done so. And there was very great rejoicing.*

“Not since the time of Joshua” is probably hyperbole, to make the point that the people through the recent centuries had not obeyed this command

Nehemiah 8:18 *And day by day, from the first day to the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. They kept the feast seven days, and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly, according to the rule.*

The eighth day was “solemn” (to address their unworthiness toward God)

We have not been called by our Savior to live with indifference, but to live with deference to Him

Haystack Revival (1806) 5 students from Williams College

4 lessons learned (as also seen in subsequent revivals):

God uses people in the middle of nowhere to plead for the souls of people everywhere

God uses people who are young to stir up people of all ages

God uses people who are few in number to gather a countless harvest

God uses invisible and seemingly insignificant events to accomplish His great purposes

No “revival” in the history of Western Europe or North America has ever happened apart from the Word of God

To worship is to respond to God’s Word

About Himself

About how He created us to be

About how we have sinned against Him

About how He is always ready to forgive us, but how it also cost the death and resurrection of Jesus to do so

About who we now are, and how we are to live

Not for our glory, but for His glory

And about how God is making all things new, restoring all things

For His glory