

Bible Revival (2)

Text: Nehemiah 8:7-18

Introduction:

1. Nehemiah 1-7 (Rebuilding the Walls); 8-13 (Reviving the People)
2. Chapter 8-10 document a period of spiritual revival in the nation of Israel.
3. Word of God is a central element in true spiritual revival – e.g. Discovery of the Book in Josiah's reign (2 Kings 22:8); Reformation period; Revivals of 18th century
4. Review previous lesson: 1 Request for the Book (Vs. 1-2) 2. Receptivity to the Book (Vs. 3) 3. Reverence for the Book (Vs. 4-6)

I. The Revealing of the Book (Vs. 7-8)

A. The Teaching People (Vs. 7)

1. 13 men plus others assisted Ezra in the teaching of this vast congregation
2. Appears these men may have moved amongst the congregation to help the people understand the Word
3. Eph. 4:11-12 *“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”*

B. The Teaching Process (Vs. 8)

1. The Enunciation of the Word – they read it ‘distinctly’ which means with clearness and clarity. Don’t rush the reading of God’s Word! He may or may not bless your comments on the Word but He will always bless His own Word.
2. The Exposition of the Word – they explained it so that the people could understand it
 - a. 1 Timothy 4:13 *“Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.”*
 - b. 2 Timothy 4:1-4 *“I charge thee before God...”*
 - c. Titus 2:15 *“These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.”*
3. This type of preaching means the preacher is governed by the text. As preachers our job is not to fill our sermons with our ideas, opinions and stories but make sure they are Scripture soaked.
4. To preach like this requires much study and preparation. Ezra was described as “a ready scribe in the law of Moses” (Ezra 7:6). ‘ready’ = skillful, diligent. Preaching is like cooking.

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II. The Response to the Book (Vs. 9-12)

A. Conviction (Vs. 9)

1. They wept as the Scriptures were read, indicating a soft and responsive heart.
2. Illustration: George Whitefield's preaching to the coal miners in England
3. Our hearts are often cold and hard to the Word of God

B. Celebration (Vs. 10-12)

1. "joy of the Lord is your strength" – 'strength' = a fortress, a defense
2. Matthew Henry: "Holy joy will be the oil to the wheels of our obedience."
3. The expression of their rejoicing (Vs. 10-12a)
 - a. Feasting
 - b. Giving
 - c. Illustration: Jerusalem Church - Acts 2:46 *"And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,"*
4. The cause of their rejoicing (Vs. 12b)
 - a. Psalm 19:8 *"The statutes of the LORD are right, **rejoicing the heart**: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes."*
 - b. Psalm 119:162 *"I **rejoice** at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil."*
 - c. Jeremiah 15:16 *"Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart..."*
 - d. Psalm 119:72 *"The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver."*
 - e. The Lord's Day is the best day of the week!
 - f. Note: If the Israelites could rejoice so much over the first 5 Books of the Bible, how much more we who possess the completed canon of Scripture (66 Books within the covers of this blessed Book of books)

III. The Rediscovery in the Book (Vs. 13-18)

A. Study of the Word (Vs. 13-15)

1. The key men of the nation assemble to go deeper into the Word of God.
2. 1 Thessalonians 5:20-21 *"Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."*
3. 2 Tim. 2:15 *"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."*
4. As men, we are to know the Word of God in order to help our wives in their understanding of Scripture (1 Cor. 14:35)

B. Submission to the Word (Vs. 16-18)

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1. Their obedience was full and complete. They were doers of the Word (James 1:21-25)
2. No careless attitude to the detail of Scripture here! No “essential and non-essential” categorization of the Word of God!
3. Feast of Tabernacles had been commemorated since days of Joshua (e.g. Ezra 3:4) but not in the spirit of complete obedience seen here. (Refer Leviticus 23 for laws concerning Feast of Tabernacles)
4. Finney: “A revival is nothing else than a new beginning of obedience to God.”
5. The result of their obedience was great joy (Vs. 17). There is great joy to be experienced in both the understanding and the doing of God’s Word.
6. This dispels the lie of the world and the devil that says a life of obedience to God means a life of drudgery and misery. Because Christ “loved righteousness and hated iniquity” He was “anointed with the oil of gladness above thy fellows” (Hebrews 1:9)
7. John 13:17 *“If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”*

Conclusion:

1. How highly do we value the Word of God?
2. Do we pay attention to the details of God’s commands or do we brush certain aspects aside as “non-essential”?