

NEHEMIAH
WATERGATE REVIVAL

Friday, October 9

Reading: Nehemiah 8-9

Nehemiah 8:8 *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. 9 Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, "This day is sacred to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep." For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. 10 ...Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."*

Ezra now reenters the story. He had arrived in Jerusalem 14 years before Nehemiah and the effects of his spiritual strengthening of the people are evident. Despite some lingering problems, the people built the wall amid much danger. They trusted in God's protection and followed God's leader Nehemiah. Now, with the wall completed, it was time to continue to rebuild the people's spiritual lives.

The people gather at the Water Gate and ask Ezra to read to them the Book of the Law. The timing was perfect! The first day of the seventh month was the Feast of Trumpets. This was a day of rest and preparation for the feasts to come later in the month (Leviticus 23:24). Ezra read for five hours as the people stood in respect for God's Word. Because many of the people had been born in Babylon, they did not understand the Hebrew in which the Scriptures were written, so the Levites explained what God's Word said so everyone could understand.

The Word of God brought the people to tears over their sin. Ezra, Nehemiah, and the leaders encouraged the people to have joy in the Lord. One reason for this joy (not mentioned here) is that the 10th day of the month would be the Day of Atonement when the sacrifice would be offered to cover their sins (Leviticus 16:1ff; 23:26-32).

The word of God had brought a spirit of revival. The people confessed their sins and then celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles (15th - 22nd day). This feast remembered how God had provided for the Israelites in the wilderness and celebrated how God was providing for them in the present (this was harvest season). After a week of celebration, the people once again come humbly before God in repentance and praise.

LESSON ONE: Notice how God's Word affected the hearts of the people.

- [1] They had a thirst for God's Word (8:1-3).
- [2] They began with a spirit of worship (8:5-6).
- [3] They understood what God's Word meant (8:8).
- [4] They responded with their minds and emotions (8:9-12).
- [5] This led them to repentance, obedience, and a greater desire to know God's Word (8:13-18).

Our response to God's Word must be more than an emotional experience. It must change our hearts and minds. Only then can true revival occur!

LESSON TWO: The prayer of Nehemiah 9 is a good example for us to follow:

- [1] LOOK UP in adoration and praise (9:5-6),
- [2] LOOK BACK to learn from the past how to thank God for His work (9:7-31),
- [3] LOOK INWARD through confession and repentance (9:32-37),
- [4] LOOK FORWARD by making a commitment to obey God (9:38).

Use this outline to write your own prayer and sign your commitment to follow the Lord.