

Bible Revival (1)

Text: Nehemiah 8:1-6

Introduction:

1. Nehemiah 1-7 (Rebuilding the Walls); 8-13 (Reviving the People)
2. Illustration: Imagine if preacher started sermon at 10:30am on Sunday morning and didn't finish until 4:30pm in the afternoon.
3. Chapter 8-10 document a period of spiritual revival in the nation of Israel.
4. 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
5. We will note 6 aspects of this back to the Bible movement across 2 lessons:

I. The Request for the Book (Vs. 1-2)

A. Their Assembling for the Word (Vs. 1)

1. The location: Water Gate
 - a. Water a symbol of the Word (Eph. 5:26; John 15:3)
 - b. Water a symbol of the Spirit (John 7:38-39)
 - c. Note: The only gate where nothing is recorded about it having been built or repaired. Speaks of the perfectness and indestructibility of the Word of God.
2. The unity: As one man
 1. Note the phrase “all the people” reoccurring throughout the chapter (Vs. 1, 3, 5, 6, 9, 11, 12, & 13)
 2. They were in “one accord and one place”. This desire for the Word of God was a desire shared by the whole congregation.
 3. Psalm 133:1 *“Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”*

B. Their Appetite for the Word (Vs. 1-3)

1. The Thirst in the people (Vs. 1)
 - a. Request for the reading of the law came from the people
 - b. Bring the Book! When you get up in the morning; bring the Book; when you go to bed at night, bring the Book; when you gather for family meal time, bring the Book; when your on break at work, bring the Book; when your driving in the car, bring the Book; when you come to church, bring the Book; read the Book; meditate on the Book; memorize the Book; study the Book; saturate your life in the Book; Bring the Book!
 - c. Butler: “The dearth in our churches of good pulpit ministries is not only the fault of deficient pastors but also the fault of congregations that have not been interested in the Word and are now getting their wish which is a form of judgment from God.”

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“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD.” (Amos 8:11)

2. The Teacher for the people (Vs. 2)
 - a. Ezra had arrived about 14 years prior to Nehemiah
 - b. Ezra 7 describes the spiritual credentials of this man – *“For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.”* (Vs. 10)
 - c. N.T. pastors & teachers are God’s gift to the body (Eph. 4:11-12)

II. The Receptivity to the Word (Vs. 3)

A. The Amount of Teaching (Vs. 3a)

1. Started early in the morning (lit. “from the light”) and finished at midday. Approx. 6 hours! Rebuke to short sermon lovers!
2. Illustration: Hunger for the Word in persecuted & third world countries
3. Whole families present – men, women and children

B. Their Attentiveness to the Teaching (Vs. 3b)

1. “ears were attentive unto the book of the law” = lit. means “their ears were unto the law” They were listening carefully and eagerly to God’s Word as it was read and taught. They were hanging on every Word!
2. Their focus was upon the Word of God primarily, not the man.
3. 1 Thess. 2:13 *“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.”*
4. Challenge: When the Book is opened, are our ears open and attentive? How do we approach the preaching of God’s Word?
 - a. Do we hold the Word of God in such high esteem that we have a spirit of reverence when it is opened?
 - b. Do we receive the Word as coming straight from God or have we made the preacher our focus?
 - c. Do we come to church when God’s people are assembled to hear the Book?
 - d. When the preaching is taking place, how do approach it? E.G. body language, presence in the room, distractions (phones, each other)

III. The Reverence for the Book (Vs. 4-6)

A. The Position of the Book (Vs. 4)

1. Ezra stood on a raised platform above the people. ‘pulpit’ comes from same word translated ‘tower’ in Neh. 3:1, 25, 26 & 27. The

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clear purpose of this structure was to facilitate the declaration of the Word.

2. Note: The way we structure our church auditoriums often conveys our emphasis.
3. This was not to exalt Ezra but for the purpose of good sight and sound
4. Psalm 138:2 *“I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for **thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.**”*
5. Leaders of Israel stood alongside Ezra (6 men on his right and 7 on his left) Their standing with Nehemiah demonstrated their support of the Word of God. Note: So long as your preacher is reading and teaching from the Book, stand with him!

B. The Posture of the people (Vs. 5)

1. Respect for the Word of God conveyed in their body language.
2. Note: The way we dress and carry ourselves in church important

C. The Preparation for the Book (Vs. 6)

1. Ezra offers a prayer of thanksgiving to God
2. The people respond with “Amen, Amen” indicating they agreed with what was prayed
3. The people bow down and worship the LORD with their faces to the ground.
4. This was heart preparation – thanksgiving to God for the Word and humble worship.

Conclusion:

1. How is our spiritual appetite for the Word of God?
2. What is our mindset when we come to church?
3. What is our attitude to the public reading and preaching of God’s Word?