

INTRODUCTION: In this chapter 8 of Nehemiah we have a very refreshing change in the program. The change comes in the form of:

1. An urgent appeal to the Word of the Lord as revealed in "the book of Moses."
2. There is something like the breath of a revival in it, in that it is the people themselves who cry out for it. Verse 1
 1. The sword and the trowel were both needed but in addition they need the word of edification.
3. The whole scene is very impressive as well as suggestive. From the story let us look at:

1. THE PREACHER

1. "They spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book" verse 1. Not just any book! What book?
 1. "The book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel" Verse 1.
 2. Ezra the preacher came and he "stood upon a pulpit of wood." Neh. 8:4
 1. A pulpit built in the public square for open-air work...so all the people could see.
 2. The secret closet, or the market square, or the Christ-possessed boat of Peter on the lake was a holier place than the God-forsaken temple at Jerusalem.

2. THE HEARERS...THE PEOPLE THEMSELVES

1. The crowd made up of "both men and women: all that could hear with understanding." V.2.
2. They hungered for the word of God. Matt. 5:6
 1. They were attentive.
 1. "From the morning until the midday...the ears of the people ^{were} attentive unto the book of the law. Verse 3
 2. They were more interested in the book than in the preacher.
 3. They sought not the man, but the message.
 3. They were reverent.
 1. When Ezra opened the book to read, "all the people stood up". Verse 5
 4. They were responsive.
 1. "And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their face to the ground. V.6

3. THE PREACHER'S MANNER

1. He began by blessing the Lord.
 1. "And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God." V-6
2. He was conscious of at least four things:
 1. He was aware of the greatness of God.
 2. He was aware of the greatness of the message.
 3. He knew something about the great need of the people.
 4. He was conscious of the great responsibility resting upon him in teaching the people God's word.
3. In view of these responsibilities Ezra:
 1. He stuck to the book: "He read in the book of the law of God." V-8
 2. He spoke distinctly: "So they read in the book of the law of God distinctly." Verse 8
 3. He explained the text: "So they read in the book of the law of God distinctly and gave the sense." Verse 8
 1. Likely there would not be so many senseless hearers, if all preachers were as ready as Ezra, to stick to the book; To speak distinctly; and explain the text in light of God's word bearing upon it.

THE EFFECT PRODUCED BY SUCH PREACHING AND HEARING

1. "THEY WEPT: "For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law." Verse 9
 1. It was such reading as brought conviction to the heart and melted down the stubborn will.
2. THEY REJOICED: "All the people went their way...to make great mirth...because they had understood the words that were declared unto them." Verse 12
3. THEY MINISTERED: "They were to eat the fat and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared." (V-10)
 1. Jesus said, "Freely ye have received, freely give." Matt. 10:8
 1. Give to the needy: The love of God, the story of Jesus and his shed blood for remission of sins.

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