

“And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel.” (**Nehemiah 8:1**)

The people gathered on the first day of the seventh month It was called the feast of trumpets or the **Sabbath day**. a set aside a day of rest, a **sacred assembly**, a **Holy gathering**.

Surely this was the **first public Bible-reading!** This is the beginning of the revival of religion that occurred at this time. When will the people be again as hungry for the Word of God as these Jews who stood in the open space from early dawn till the scorching noon? **What reverence for the Word!** *When Ezra opened the Book, all the people stood up. What holy worship! When he blessed the great God, all the people answered, Amen, amen!* **What an example to us this day!** *They clearly expounded and gave the sense, so that they understood.* There was great searching of heart! *The people wept when they heard the words of the law.* **This was something like the breath of revival a wonderful work of God.** We note when God works and when true revival comes **the Word of God** is always associated with the work. **One of God’s chosen instruments of Revival is His WORD.** It happened in the open air in the Steet that was before the Watergate. In the New Testament we see the Lord borrowing Peters boat. Where Jesus is, that place is more Holy than any other place in all the city.

The congregation literally hungered for the Word of God. What a delightful privilege to minister to such a people. This was a feast of thanksgiving to the Lord and they were greatful and all knew that it was God who had helped them build the wall it was his doing and they desired to give thanks for the successful and speedy completion, in spite of the many enemies trying to stop them. This gratefulness urged them or prompted them to hear the Word of God.

The word of God was clearly read in an audible voice that everyone could hear, furthermore it **was expounded clearly** comparing like **scripture with scripture** so the people could grasp a richer understanding and knowledge of God. Reading is good, and preaching good, but expounding brings the reading and the preaching together, and makes the reading the more intelligible and the preaching the more convincing. *“So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading.” (Nehemiah 8:8).*

When the Lord Jesus spoke “he gave the sence”. *To fix conclusively and with authority.- that they may receive the idea being communicated. (Set forth the meaning)*

Matthew 5:21-22 (NKJV) 21 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' **22** But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.

The Lord also expounded the scriptures concerning Himself. Showing how all the scripture is interconnected *“And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”* Luke 24:27. When He expounded the scriptures to the disciples on the road they said - *"Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?"*

It's said that Ezra read the word (the Law of God), and the Levites stilled the people not with any words of their own but with the living word of God. Oh what quietness and confidence there is in the knowledge of God Knowledge He cares for m,e. the Levites expounded the glorious truth , and told how it may be applied to their lives. Either one after another they expounded - or in small groups of people. But they expounded. Remember Men and woman and children had come, A great number more than could have ever fitted into the Temple. There was a desire to come, no one forced them, it was of their own free will. **The congregation literally hungered for the Word of God.** What a delightful privilege to minister to such a people. I think of the verse, *“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”* (Matthew 5:6). The Word of God satisfies , calms troubles hearts, grants peace in the storm, Oh it is such a source of divine life and peace. As King David said *“More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.”* (Psalms 19:10)

Reading the scriptures in public assemblies is a source of great blessing, whereby **he is honoured** and **his church edified.** In Nehemias day they gave many hours together on the reading and expounding of the word of God: From morning till noon. We have just seen how Ezra read the Word of God Publicly. Even when our Lord was on the earth - *“So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood*

up to read.” (Luke 4:16). The Apostle Paul instructed his letters to be read publically. “Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.” (Colossians 4:16). The Book of Revelation opens with the words- “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.” (Revelation 1:3)

The public reading of Scripture is an essential element of Christian worship for God’s Children. Indeed, it is perhaps the most foundational element of worship because all other elements of worship (such as prayer, praise, preaching, and the sacraments) come in response to the hearing of God’s Word.

One of the keys to receiving instruction from Gods Word is REVERENCE. The Jews here displayed great reverence and respect, and also great spiritual hunger and love for God’s word and for Ezra. **For when the word of God was opened,** they stood up showing respect for God’s word and for Ezra. Like the standing of a servant before his master, their standing and attentiveness showed that they were willing to do what they had just heard. **We read,** *and the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law.* Neh 8:3. With great attention and a close application of mind.

We must settle in our minds this is God’s word. It is Holy, The Word of God not the word of mere man. it is profitable to obey. *“For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.” (1 Thessalonians 2:13).* The word is not just an ordinary word, His word **is like a fire** and is my word not **like a hammer that breaks the rocks into pieces.** Jer 23:29. Did the Lord not say more blessed than even His mother and brothers are those who hear and keep His word. Luke 11 28. The Word of God endures forever, it never changes its settled forever in heaven. This is why we have faith in it, this is why we reverence it. This is why we trust it.

There is nothing that is able to provide such light for our daily paths of Life. Thy word *is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.* Psalm 119:105

Neh 8:9. This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.

The Law had cut them to the heart. The Law that speaks terror to the sinful heart, and thunders the terrible curse. Therefore, they wept, it was a good sign their hearts were tender. They wept to think how they had offended God.

How they were healed and comforted with the words of peace that were spoken to them. Nehemiah the Governor and Ezra the Scribe and priest and all the Levites helped the people understand it was not a day to mourn and weep it was a Holy day a day to rejoice. (Neh 8:9): *Be not sorry* (Neh 8:10); *hold your peace, neither be you grieved*, Neh 8:11. Everything is beautiful in its season; as we must not be joyous when *God calls to mourning*, so we must not frighten and afflict ourselves and be down when God gives us reason to rejoice. **Even sorrow for sin must not grow so excessive as to hinder our joy in God and our cheerfulness in his service.** He hath turned for me my mourning into laughter, and my desolation into joy; he hath led my captivity captive, and made my heart rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

It was a day of gladness and festivity, a day of and rejoicing in his mercies. It was not the season to weep. When we consider Christ crucified how he was despised, how he suffered and died. We may be sad we may weep. But we must think of the Victory of the Cross. What was obtained for us. Its not a time to weep He has obtained the victory. We rejoice greatly in Calverys victory. Redemption has come Pardon is freely given Newlife in Christ Adoption into His family. No its not time to weep. Its time to think what God has done for us. Its time to think of His abundant Grace that flowed toward us who were so undeserving. Because ABUNDANT grace flows. Let Abundant Praise and Thnaksgiving and rejoicing abound.

They commanded them to testify their joy, **to put on the garments of praise instead of the spirit of heaviness.** Be at peace, do not grieve. This is a holy day not a day of sadness and of depression. **It's not the time**, any more than it is time for the bridegroom to weep at his wedding- it's a day of Joy and celebration. The People understood and went their way and rejoiced greatly. In V 12 we see they went away and sent portions, they gave a share away. Perhaps this was also a source of rejoicing- for it is more blessed to give than to receive. There is always a blessed state of rejoicing when we obey what Gods word says. Part of their great rejoicing was in doing what was instructed. People never really rejoice that don't obey Gods Ways. The liberal soul shall be made fat. And he that waters

will be watered Himself. The one who is a blessing to others, will be greatly enriched themselves in both temporal and Spiritual blessings.

Let's just consider and look at the preacher's manner. The way he Ezra and Levites did their work and we would learn wonderful truths.

1. **He Began by Blessing the Lord** (Neh 8:6). He was deeply conscious of the greatness of the occasion, **the greatness of God**, **the greatness of the message**, the great need of the people, and his own great responsibility.
 2. **He Stuck to the Book.** "He read in the book, in the law of God" (Neh 8:8). He well knew that what the people needed, was not his thoughts, but the thoughts of God as written in that book. My thoughts are not your thoughts saith the Lord.
 3. **He Spoke Distinctly** (Neh 8:8). There was no foolish attempt to water down and make the bible acceptable to our way of thinking. He spoke straight, clear and sharp.
 4. **He Explained the Text.** "They read distinctly and **gave the sense.**" This was no formal heartless reading of the word. The soul of the man was greatly exercised, (he had studied the word he had compared scripture with scripture- he had prayed over the word. so that the real meaning of the words might be seen. There would not be so many foolish hearers, if all preachers were as faithful as Ezra to the Word of God.
 5. **He Enforced the Truth.** "He caused them to understand." His business was to make them to understand what the mind of the Lord was. It is not enough that they heard it, they must, as responsible beings, be able, by the exercise of their own minds, to grasp intelligently the thoughts of God concerning themselves.
- Not only are these points for those preaching but they may also be useful to those hearing the Word.** Is what is being preached God Honouring, does it exult Gods greatness – Is what I'm hearing scriptural, is it true to the general tenure of the whole of scripture or is it a verse taken out of context. Is it clear, it right and true. Is the preaching explained with Gods Holy word. Is this word chaff or wheat. Is what I'm hearing likely to produce eternal fruit.

The result of the people hearing Ezra was **they wept their hearts were moved**. They **rejoiced** Understood the word and rejoiced. And then **they ministered to others** and *sent portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared. Neh 8:10 - And they gladly did so (Neh 8:12).*

By the grace of God, we may now eat the fat and drink the sweet, **we rejoice in salvation**, but surely the love of Christ should compel us to remember those who are not saved, and have "nothing prepared." No hope and no future.

"Freely you have received, freely give" (Mat 10:8). Give to them that love of God which has been so freely given to you.

"Also day by day, from the first day until the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day there was a sacred assembly, according to the prescribed manner." (Nehemiah 8:18)

Day by day we stick to His Word a reliable guide to our path, His word never faltering and never changing. More precious than Gold Sweeter than Honey.

True reformations and revivals of living faith have always involved people's minds and **thoughts being directed to particular portion of the truth**, some portion of the **Word of God**, which we have for a time been lost sight of.