

Nehemiah 8:1-18 – Reading and Hearing God’s Word

The wall was completed just before the seventh month. The people could focus on keeping the appointed days and feasts of the seventh month, like the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Booths. It was the end of the fall harvest. Despite the exiles being back in Judah and Jerusalem with the second temple built, they had not always taken advantage of what God had given them. At least this year, they did observe the Feast of Trumpets and the Feast of Booths. They even did something which they had not done since the days when Joshua led them into the Promised Land.

Read Nehemiah 8:1-8.

Ezra, the priest and scribe, appears in Nehemiah chapters 8 and 12. Nehemiah, the cupbearer, is only mentioned in the Bible in the book of Nehemiah. Ezra was a priest who was described as “skilled in the Law of Moses” (Ezra 7:6). In Nehemiah 8:1, what did they tell Ezra to bring? Where did the people gather? (8:1)

Who gathered to hear God’s Law? When did the people gather? According to God’s Law, what was supposed to happen on the first day of the seventh month? See Leviticus 23:23-25, Numbers 29:1-6. (8:2)

What did Ezra do with the Law of Moses? How long did Ezra read? If Ezra started with Genesis, he would have only been able to read Genesis and Exodus in the span of about 6.5 hours. How did the people respond to the reading of God’s Word? How do you think you would respond to a 6 hour Old Testament reading in a worship service? (8:3)

Verse 4 says that Ezra stood on a wooden platform. The KJV uses the word “pulpit”. What was the purpose of the wooden platform? There were 13 men who stood beside Ezra. Six were on his right and seven were on his left. What happened when Ezra opened the Law of Moses? What did the people do when Ezra blessed Yahweh? (8:4-6)

What did the Levites do in verses 7 and 8? (8:7-8)

At which feast did God require the Law to be read to the people in public? See Deuteronomy 31:10-13.

Read Nehemiah 8:9-12.

Why do you think the people wept when they heard God's Word? What did Nehemiah, Ezra and the Levites tell the people in verses 9 and 10 in response to their weeping? (8:9-10)

How did the Levites calm the people? Does it seem odd that the leaders put a stop to what appeared to be genuine repentance? What did the people do in response to what the leaders told them? (8:11-12)

Read Nehemiah 8:13-18.

The second day of the seventh month was not a feast day. Who gathered on the second day? What was their purpose in gathering? (8:13)

What feast is referred to in verse 14? On which day of the seventh month did the feast begin? Does it seem odd that no mention was made of the Day of Atonement which was on the tenth day of the seventh month? (8:14)

What did the leaders find out from their study of God's Law? See Exodus 23:16; Leviticus 23:34-36,39-43; Numbers 29:12-38; Deut. 16:13-15, 31:10-13. As a result of their study, what did the leaders tell the people to do? (8:14-15)

In verses 16 and 17, how did the people respond to the leaders? Where did they build their booths? (8:16-17)

This was not the first time Israel had celebrated the Feast of Booths since the days of Joshua. When else had they celebrated the Feast of Booths? See 1 Kings 8:2,65; Ezra 3:4. What did they do for this feast that they had not done since the days of Joshua? Why did God command them to live in booths for seven days? (8:17)

What else did they do for the seven days of the feast? (8:18)