

“THE PEOPLE GATHERED TOGETHER AS ONE MAN”

Nehemiah 8:1-12

This text, about Jews who have returned to the promised land following decades of foreign captivity, presents a superb example of humble people worshipping in reverence and receiving the word of God in obedience.

I. “THEY TOLD EZRA... TO BRING THE BOOK”

A. Nehemiah 8:1-2

It is outstanding that Ezra did not have to gather the people to hear the word, much less to beg them to show up, or pester them about it. Rather, the people told **him** to bring the book!

B. Acts 10:33

It is a preacher’s absolute delight to have people gathered and ready to listen to the gospel proclaimed.

II. “FROM MORNING UNTIL MIDDAY”

A. Nehemiah 8:3_a

The reading that the people demanded lasted about six hours. People complain about long sermons and don’t even show up for every assembly, but many of the same people sit through movies and sporting events for 2-3 hours at a time. It’s not that people don’t have attention spans, but that they are losing attention for what is holy.

B. Acts 20:7

It’s true we don’t know what time Paul began his message, but it’s doubtful that a midnight ending time would be worth mentioning if it was not to indicate the sermon had some length.

III. “THE EARS OF ALL THE PEOPLE WERE ATTENTIVE”

A. Nehemiah 8:3b

Despite 6 hours of reading, their ears were open! They weren't admiring the cute baby in the pew in front of them or thinking about where to go for lunch after church.

B. Matthew 13:23

Fruit-bearing is predicated on hearing.

IV. "EZRA STOOD ON A PLATFORM... WHICH THEY HAD MADE FOR THE PURPOSE"

A. Nehemiah 8:4-5a

The people were considerate to the needs of preaching. A platform was built to elevate the speaker above the crowd so as to be seen and heard. It is reasonable for a church to provide a platform, a lectern, a microphone and amplifier, a laptop and a big screen TV, or any other appropriate materials for the preaching to be effective.

B. 2nd Kings 4:8-10

The Shunemite woman and her husband provided Elisha the prophet with lodging and a place to study. Since there is a lot of preparation that goes into preaching, it is a good not only to have a place to preach from, but also a place to focus and study.

V. "ALL THE PEOPLE STOOD UP"

A. Nehemiah 8:5b-6

They kept a respectful posture. This is not to insist on the congregation standing during an exhortation, but to be mindful that slouching and such might reflect a casual mindset not conducive to reverence.

B. 1st Kings 8:12-14; 2nd Chronicles 34:29-32

If Americans stand for the National Anthem, then we can understand why Israel stood when the Temple was dedicated and when Josiah restored proper worship in Judah.

VI. "ALL THE PEOPLE ANSWERED, 'AMEN, AMEN!'"

A. Nehemiah 8:6

Without interrupting, the people were verbally supportive of the content being spoken!

B. Deuteronomy 27:16-26

When the Law was presented to Israel before they entered the promised land, they were required to say, "Amen," and not just for the positive, happy parts, but explicitly for the curses!

C. 1st Corinthians 14:16

If we can understand and agree with the prayers being said in church, then we need to affirm them aloud.

VII. "THEY GAVE THE SENSE AND HELPED THEM TO UNDERSTAND"

A. Nehemiah 8:7-8

There was more than mere reading. What was read was explained intelligibly.

B. Ephesians 5:17

Christians are under command to understand the Lord's will.

C. Acts 8:30-31

Sometimes, that takes guidance from someone with better comprehension.

VIII. "ALL THE PEOPLE WEPT WHEN THEY HEARD THE WORD"

A. Nehemiah 8:9

Worship like this had not occurred in 70 years. Unsurprisingly, they were overcome with emotion!

B. 2nd Kings 22:11

The same thing happened when Josiah heard the Scripture after it had been lost for years.

C. 2nd Corinthians 7:11

Godly sorrow is good. It moves us to right action.