

Nehemiah Sermon #17

Nehemiah 8

In every genuine revival in history, two major thrusts have always appeared. First, there has always been proclamation of the Bible, *God's Word*; second, there has always been the responsive mobilization of the believer, *God's people*.

Strange as it may sound, a revival does not relate directly to the unsaved.

You cannot revive the lost. You can revive the saved.

. . . living, vibrant Christianity.

Tucked away in the old Book of Nehemiah is the first recorded revival of God's people.

I've entitled today's sermon, "Bring the Book."

Nehemiah 8:1

Let us stand for the reading of God's Holy Word.

Nehemiah 8:1-6

Let us pray.

You may be seated

Bring the Book

Vs. 2e

This was on the first day of the seventh month, which was the Jewish equivalent of our New Year's Day.

The seventh month was a special time in the Jewish calendar because the Jews celebrated the Feast of Trumpets/Labor Day on the first day, the Day of Atonement/Sin Day/Good Friday on the tenth day, and the Feast of Tabernacles/Booths (commemorated the travelings in the Wilderness) from the fifteenth day to the twenty-first day (Lev. 23:23-44).

It was the perfect time for the nation to get right with the Lord and make a fresh new beginning.

This large crowd of vs. 1 may have numbered somewhere between thirty to fifty thousand people

As we read vs. 1-12, the "people" dominate these verses.

The word "people" occurs thirteen times, and I want you to notice the kind of spirit they had.

Vs. 1b

Cooperative spirit – same thought, same mind

The people in Acts were one heart, one mind, one accord – unified purpose

We need to be unified – unity in truth, not unity without truth

They spoke unto Ezra to "Bring the Book."

Unify ourselves around the Bible

The people called for a “Bible conference” and invited Ezra the scribe to be the speaker.

If you are going to call for a preacher, he must believe the Bible from Genesis to Revelation – Biblically sound preachers.

So, Ezra makes his first appearance in the book of Nehemiah.

Ezra was the ideal man to conduct this service.

Ezra had come to Jerusalem about fourteen years before Nehemiah had arrived and had already sought to bring the people back to the ways of the Lord.

Ezra 7:10

Ezra not only was a diligent student, but he made sure he applied God’s truth to his own life before he tried to get others to respond in obedience.

He had “set his heart to *practice* it” – do it.

He didn’t ask people to do something he was not doing himself.

When the people asked him to “bring the book,” you can imagine how much this request must have thrilled Ezra.

He had watched the people rebuild the walls against impossible odds.

He had watched them respond with enthusiasm to Nehemiah.

But how much more excited he must have been when the people themselves—after the wall was rebuilt—gathered on their own in front of the Water Gate and asked him once again to read from the Law of God.

There was a mood of responsiveness, shown not only in the people’s flocking to Jerusalem as one man, but in their call for Ezra to read out the Scripture to them.

What the people called for, and what Ezra produced, was no new manifesto but the foundation articles of the faith.

We don't need something new – just bring the old Book!

God's people need to cry out for the Book and demand that the preachers . . .

The people asked for the Book!

They are hungry for the Word of God

They wanted to hear it.

NOTICE Nehemiah 8:1e

Secondly this book was credited with full divine authority (**Vs. 1e**)

Infallible, without error, able to cut to the heart – all of it is inspired

This Book is no ordinary book – let us never forget that.

If God is to work in and through His people, then they must respond positively to His Word; and this chapter describes three basic responses: understanding the Word (8:1-8), rejoicing in the Word (vv. 9-12), and obeying the Word (vv. 13-18).

The whole person—mind (understanding), heart (rejoicing), and will (obeying)—must be captive to God's truth.

Notice the various ministries that Ezra performed for the people during this special conference.

1. He brought the Book (Neh. 8:1-4).
2. He opened the Book (vs. 5-6)
3. He read and explained the Book (vs. 7-8)

Ezra and the other men did not have a course in homiletics or public speaking, but they *believed* it was the Word of God, and they *read* it like it was the Word of God.

A “people of the Book” – when God’s people get away from loving, reading, and obeying the Word of God, they lose the blessing of God and the power of God.

Preach out of the Book – this Book is what brings us together.

Everything we do, think, is from this Book.

It’s our defense – armor. It’s our offense – sword.

They asked for the Book.

A steadfast church must be built on the Word of God.

This Book is always right.

Don’t ever apologize for this Book.

Don’t ever compromise this Book.

Doesn’t matter what the scientist, archeologist, scoffer, atheist, humanist, religious person down the road says.

Hold fast to this Book!

Church people must read, listen, memorize, believe the Word of God to be a strong church.

Preachers are to live the Bible and impart this Bible and the people out to be excited about coming to church because they know they will hear from the Bible.

There are not a lot of things we will give you at Medora, but one thing you can always count on—we will give a healthy dose of medicine from the Book

Church people ought to be found faithful in attendance

We have a luxury that they did not – we have our own personal Book.

Let me encourage you to be in the Book.

How many chapters did you read this week?

Bring your Bible to church?

Vs. 2-3

The Scripture was openly and boldly proclaimed. He read aloud.

This involved the entire community, including young people and children.

First, there was the reading of God's Word.

Exposition begins here—not with the opinion of man, but with the established truth of
God.

This Bible is being relegated to the Communion table in too many churches.

Ecumenical services – reading from the Koran – anything goes.

Use our Bible from cover to cover, Old Testament, too.

Don't cast it out.

When Jesus read, He read the Old Testament. Jesus spoke with authority.

Have ye not read?

We are not in the entertainment business – our job is to preach the Word.

Secondly, they were attentive to the Word of God – vs. 3 – they gave ear.

There was an obvious respect for the truth. People listened attentively.

I want you to notice that it was not to stories, not to power-point visuals, but to the Word
of God.

They are listening carefully – staying focused on the Word of God

Do not day dream, clean your fingernails, pass notes to each other, think about
other things: job, sports, lunch.

We need to be listening intently.

We have come to hear the Word – don't be distracted and don't be a distraction to the Word.

Use the bathroom – use it before or after unless it's an absolute emergency.

Courteous listening – attentive

Pay attention – the Word of God has the power to save souls and to change lives.

Vs. 4

Nehemiah had lost no time – the wall was completed a few days ago and now a sizeable platform had been made for the great occasion.

It was a wooden pulpit or platform – this is the only pulpit you find in all of the Bible.

Ezra stood on the wooden platform (“pulpit”) above the people so they could see and hear him better.

The wall and gate behind him may have served as a sounding board to help project his voice to the vast assembly.

Ezra in the Pulpit

What a sight it must have been!

The pulpit was a platform large enough to accommodate Ezra and his thirteen helpers, and high enough to dominate the scene.

Ezra stood on a platform above the people – vs. 5b – behind the wooden podium. On his right stood six men and on his left stood seven more – 13 people gave him support.

As he opened the Book of the Law (vs. 5), the people stood up to express their reverence for God's Word.

Notice the royal reception given to the Word of God.

“Ezra opened the book,” which, of course, was a scroll – loosened it.

Its opening brought the people to their feet.

The people were actively involved.

Bring your Bible – follow along.

Don’t be passive – be active, be involved!

When Ezra lifted the scroll and unrolled it to the passage he would read, the people who were seated in the square honored the Word of God by standing up.

They knew they would not be hearing man’s words – they would be hearing the very Word of God.

I 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.”*

The people remained standing while the Law was read and explained (**vs. 7e**).

Ezra started his reading and teaching early in the morning and continued through midday (v. 3), which means the congregation stood and listened for five or six hours; and this continued for a week (v. 18).

The people were there to hear God speak and were willing to stand and listen.

Our churches today have a desperate need in their public services to show more respect for the Word of God.

We are commanded to “give attention to the public reading of Scripture” I Tim. 4:13, “Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.”

You know we will *defend* the Bible as the Word of God, but we don't always *treat* it like the Word of God.

Too many people are in too big a hurry to have the meeting end.

In some parts of the world, believers will stand for hours in crowded churches to hear Bible teaching.

In the average American church, the shorter the sermon, the better we like it. Many places advertise – including in the Wichita newspaper – more music, less preaching.

Vs. 6a

Then Ezra prayed

For years he had labored diligently to communicate God's truth to the people.

And now as he looked out over this vast crowd of people, numbering in the thousands and gathered in the Water Gate square, he saw them lift their hands toward heaven as they shouted in response, "Amen, Amen!"

The people affirmed his words by saying "Amen, Amen" (see 5:13), which means "So be it!" "Truth! Truth!"

They didn't worship the Book; they worshiped the Lord who spoke to them from the Book.

Then they fell on their knees—evidently without being prompted—and bowed low with their faces to the ground as they "worshiped the Lord"

All the people responded - it was a united congregation

Educated Amen – not like charismatics – emotional outburst – dishonors the Bible and themselves

Amen – It is not the punctuation at the end of every sentence.
It's not how loud you shout, how high you jump.

They responded :

By saying, "Amen! Amen!" and they affirmed their submission to the authority of
Scripture.

And there is no revival without subjection to God's Word

By bowing down to the ground with a sense of humility, they affirmed their submission
to the supremacy of God.

Submission is not difficult when you know the one who you are submitting to
loves you so much.

No revival without the fear of the Lord.

Bring the Book!

Let us stand for closing invitation.

Preacher, I need revival; I need reviving.
My Christianity seems to have no life.

Rally around this Book – unify ourselves in its truth – like Ezra – we need to do it.

This old Book tells us of Jesus Christ the Savior
It tells us we are sinners and we have no hope – we are doomed.
But God who is rich in mercy – for which He loved us greatly
Made a way of escape by sending His Son to die in our place and to pay for our sins
It was on the cross – He paid the price.