

READING THE WORD OF GOD

The early Christians did not have the New Testament scriptures, but those from a Jewish background were quite familiar with the Old Testament ones. Public reading of the scripture was common.

When the seventh month came and the Israelites had settled in their towns, all the people assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded Israel.- Nehemiah 8:1

So on the first day of the seventh month, the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law. - Nehemiah 8:2-3

When Ezra had opened the Book, everybody raised their hands and worshiped the Lord! This showed the hunger and appreciation the people had for God's Word. -Nehemiah 8:6

They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read. - Nehemiah 8:8

It was 24 days later that the Israelites gathered again for prayer and fasting. They confessed their sins and the wickedness of their fathers.

They stood where they were and read from the Book of the Law of the Lord their God for a fourth of the day, and spent another fourth in confession and in worshiping the Lord their God. - Nehemiah 9:2-3 NIV

King Solomon's Big Failure

Solomon accumulated chariots and horses; he had 1400 chariots and 12000 horses. - 1 Kings 10:26

King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter - Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. They were from nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites. 'You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods'. Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. He had 700 wives of royal birth and 300 concubines, and his wives led him astray. As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God as the heart of David his father had been. He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord; he did not follow the Lord completely, as David his father had done. - 1 Kings 11:1-6 NIV

On his deathbed, David had charged Solomon to be strong and show himself as a man and to observe what the Lord required, which was to walk in His ways and keep his decrees and commands, as written in the law of Moses. - 1 Kings 2:2-3. Solomon not only forgot this charge to him but also ignored the clear instruction that God had given Israel for all future kings.

Be sure to appoint over you the king the Lord your God chooses. He must be from among your own brothers. Do not place a foreigner over you, one who is not a brother Israelite. The king moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the Lord has told you, 'You are not to go back that way again.' He must not take many wives, or his heart will go astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold. When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the priests, who are Levites. It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees.
- Deuteronomy 17:15-19

Solomon has been called one of the wisest men who ever lived. In some aspects this is true, but in other ways he was extremely foolish. He disobeyed the instruction to read God's Word every day as a reminder of what God wanted in his life. It is not hard to look at Solomon's life and wonder.....how could you be so stupid? However, as I look back at my own life, I could say the same thing. I should have read the book of Proverbs more often and followed its practical wisdom in my life. Of course the rest of the Bible is also very important and relevant too. At the end of Solomon's life he wrote these words:

Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.
- Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

Our next message will elaborate on how to read the Bible effectively. The message is called: Around the Word in Eighty Days.

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