

Nehemiah - Israel Returns to Worship God - Sunday AM 05/17/20

Introduction:

The last time we met was on March 15th. Who knew at that time it would be two months before another assembly here at Lilac Road? A lot has happened during this time and many more sermons will be preached on lessons learned during this time but I want us to think about the events in ***Nehemiah 8***.

I) **Background.**

A) **God punished Judah for her unfaithfulness.**

1. 606 BC King Josiah dies earlier and now Babylon comes and conquers Jerusalem, the 1st captivity (Daniel and his companions taken to Babylon).
2. 598 BC Judah rebels against Babylon, Jerusalem conquered 2nd time (Ezekiel taken into captivity).
3. 587-586 BC Judah again rebels and is destroyed by Babylon.

B) **God promises a remnant would return**

1. After 70 years.
 - a. Babylon would be punished by God. ***Jeremiah 25:11*** ***'And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 12 'Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity,' says the LORD; 'and I will make it a perpetual desolation.***

- b. The Jews would return from captivity.

Jeremiah 29:10 For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place.

- 2. During those seventy years their worship was different.
 - a. They still worshipped God as seen in Book of Esther. (Feast of Purim, ***chapter 9***).
 - b. No temples sacrifices
 - c. Levitical priesthood (?)

C) The return

- 1. 535 BC Cyrus, King of Persia allows the Jews to return.

Ezra 1:1 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, 2 Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. 3 Who is among you of all His people? May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem.

- 2. To rebuild was a big task. Eventually they rebuilt the temple.

Ezra 3:11 And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD: "For He is good, For His

mercy endures forever toward Israel." Then all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. 12 But many of the priests and Levites and heads of the fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first temple, wept with a loud voice when the foundation of this temple was laid before their eyes. Yet many shouted aloud for joy,

3. Then around 440 BC Nehemiah returns with a group to Canaan. To rebuilt the walls of the city.

II) The Revival in *Nehemiah 8*

A) The people came together

Nehemiah 8:1 *Now all the people gathered together as one man in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate;*

1. Notice this was not a meeting called together by the leaders but by the people. For 70 plus years the people had not meet together as one people as they did at this time.
2. One thing that last two months has proved is how much we miss each other.
3. We are told to assemble together and not forsake the assembly of ourselves together, ***Hebrews 10.25***.

B) They read from the law of God.

Nehemiah 8:1b *Now all the people gathered together as one man in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate; and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded Israel. 2 So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly of men and*

women and all who could hear with understanding on the first day of the seventh month.

1. If their ancestors had been as interested in God's word as they were, the captivity might have been averted.
2. We must always be centered on God's word.
 - a. Our study, **2 Timothy 2:15** *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*
 - b. Our daily practices, manner of life.

C) They heard with understanding- read plainly, the word of God is written so as to be understood. **Ephesians 3:4 by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ,**

1. They helped them understand the reading. **Nehemiah 8:8** *So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading.*
 - a. Words need defining
 - b. Context of the passage needs to be set, who is talking, to whom, etc.
 - c. Application needs to be made.

D) They worshipped together.

***Nehemiah 8:6* And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. Then all the people answered, "Amen, Amen!" while lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the**

LORD with their faces to the ground.

1. There is an important attitude in worship- humility. To bow down to, show adoration toward, be submissive requires humility. Cannot be a boastful worshipper or arrogant in approaching God.
2. Worship is God centered activity. While it is good for all of us to be here today and see one another the purpose is to worship God.
3. Worship can get side tracked by concentrating too much on what we want, entertainment, or be useless because of an improper attitude.
4. Emphasis in religion has been less of God and more of man
 - a. Resulting in weaker Christians
 - b. Some have seen this and come up with their own solutions
 - i. House church movement
 - ii. Dim lights, emotionalism, etc.
5. Jesus often criticized the Pharisees because they did things to be seen by men, or worshipped without their hearts being involved, or added to the word of God by their traditions.
6. We need to make sure we are not guilty of those same things.

E) They rejoiced

Nehemiah 8:11 So the Levites quieted all the people, saying, "Be still, for the day is holy; do not be grieved."12 And all the people went their way to eat and drink, to send portions and

rejoice greatly, because they understood the words that were declared to them.

1. Serving and worshipping God should never be some tiresome task or sad occasion.

***Psalms 122:1 NKJV 1 <<A Song of Ascents. Of David.>>
I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go into the house of the LORD."***

2. We get to stand in the presence of deity.
3. Obedience to God's word should cause us to rejoice. ***Acts 8:39 Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing.***

Conclusion:

There is lot we can learn from this experience and like I said before more lessons to be preached but today we can rejoice as we come together and be glad we are in God's presence.