**EZRA READS FROM THE BOOK OF THE LAW**

Nehemiah 8:1-18

Key Verse 18

Day after day, from the first day to the last, Ezra read from the Book of the Law of God. They celebrated the festival for seven days, and on the eighth day, in accordance with the regulation, there was an assembly.

**Introduction**



Completing the rebuilding the wall would not mean that the people of Israel became God’s people automatically. The true people of God are those who have a right relationship with God, not those who live in the walled city of Jerusalem. In today’s passage, God restores them as the people of God, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation through the word of God. The true restoration comes to them when they hear and observe the word of God and find what to do through the word. May God bring us complete restoration as we hear God’s word sincerely and obey it in our daily life.

1. Read verses 1-6. After completing the wall, what did the people want to do? (1) What did Ezra do? (2-6) What can we learn from their responses? (3b, 6b)

1-1, Read verses 1-6.

all the people came together as one in the square before the WaterGate. They told Ezra the teacher of the Law to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded for Israel. **2** So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. **3** 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. **4** Ezra the teacher of the Law stood on a high wooden platform built for the occasion. Beside him on his right stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah and Maaseiah; and on his left were Pedaiah, Mishael, Malkijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah and Meshullam. **5** Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. **6** Ezra praised the Lord, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, “Amen! Amen!” Then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

1-2, After completing the wall, what did the people want to do? (1)

***all the people came together as one in the square before the WaterGate. They told Ezra the teacher of the Law to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded for Israel.***

* According to chapter 7:73b, “The priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the musicians and the temple servants, along with certain of the people and the rest of the Israelites, settled in their own towns,” the wall of Jerusalem was completed, the gates were closed and the guards were posted(7:3) and all the Israelites settled in their towns.
* However, all the people came together as one in the square before the WaterGate. They asked Ezra to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses.
* The people came voluntarily by themselves and asked Ezra the Bible teacher to teach the word of God. They had a great hunger and thirst for the word of God.
* They had been exiles to the Persian Empires and then were sent back to their homeland. Since the exile, for 160 years, they had had no access to God’s words.
* Although they were the Israelites, inwardly they lost their identity as God’s people. They thought, acted, lived like Persians. They were secular and godless.
* But through rebuilding the wall, they experienced God’s help and power for the first time. Ezra arrived in Jerusalem at the year of 458 BC. After 13 years(445 BC), the people picked up great desire to study the Bible.
* They could realize God’s presence among them as they rebuilt the wall. They realized that God was no longer the God of their forefathers but their own God personally. They longed for being God’s people and God would be their God. So they really wanted to know God’s words and to live according to his words.
* The Book of the Law of Moses is the five books of Moses from Genesis to Deuteronomy, the first five books of the Bible. God’s words are written in these books that show us who God is and who man is.
* Through these books God spoke his people how to have a right relationship with God and how to live as God’s people.
* However, after Moses and Joshua’s times, the Israelites gradually left God’s words out of their lives and as a result they lived like godless people.
* They couldn’t know God’s purpose and God’s hope for their lives. They didn’t know God’s promise for them. They became spiritually blind like pagans.
* Without God’s words it is impossible to know our life purpose, our eternal hope and the right way to live.
* God’s word is the word of life and the word of truth. God’s word is a lamp for our feet, a light on our path (Ps 119:105). It is the word spoken by God to people of all generations. It is spoken to us as well.
* Without God’s word, we can only see human life only from human perspective. But God’s words show us the spiritual world. God’s words enable us to see our life from God’s perspective. Spiritual reconstruction, therefore, begins when his people listen to God’s word with a great hunger and obey it.

1-3, What did Ezra do? (2-6)

***So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. 3 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. 4 Ezra the teacher of the Law stood on a high wooden platform built for the occasion. Beside him on his right stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah and Maaseiah; and on his left were Pedaiah, Mishael, Malkijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah and Meshullam. 5 Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. 6 Ezra praised the Lord, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, “Amen! Amen!” Then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.***

* The Bible teacher was Ezra the priest. Ezra devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.
* Ezra brought the Bible before the assembly. The assembly here is unique. Instead of gathering in the temple courts, they gathered in the square. The assembly included not only men but also women and even children who could understand.
* Ezra stood on a high wooden platform built for the occasion. And beside him, 13 priests stood as if they stood at the presence of God. Ezra read the Bible aloud before the WaterGate.
* At least 5-6 hours—from daybreak till noon. I am amazed by the Bible teacher Ezra’s six hour stand-up Bible study. Ezra went on and on, because he was filled with God’s heart for these spiritually thirsty people.
* The people were wandering like lost sheep because they didn’t hear the words of God. Ezra knew that when God’s people lost the word of God, they lost their God, their heart, their life-purpose and their hope and everything.
* He knew that when they heard God’s word, their life would be restored. Their broken hearts would be healed by God’s unfailing love.
* Their aimless life would stop, and they would love God and live as God’s people. So, Ezra didn’t give them humanistic advice but just God’s words that would lead them to God’s love and blessing.

1-4, What can we learn from their responses? (3b, 5b, 6b)

***And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.***

***as he opened it, the people all stood up.***

***Then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.***

* They listened attentively to words of God. They felt that they were standing before God and God was speaking to them personally.
* But they listened to God’s words for 6 hours attentively. They all stood up and listened to God’s words, loudly saying, “Amen! Amen!” they bowed down and worshiped God with their faces to the ground.
* “Amen!” means “so be it,” or “truly.” The people responded to God’s word, “Amen! Amen!” They agreed and accepted God’s words as the truth and as the genuine way of living.
* They answered to God by saying “Amen!” “Yes, your word is right, and we will obey it.” So, they bowed down and worshiped God with their faces to the ground.
* They had a great deal of hunger and thirst for God’s words. Through the words of God, they could commune with God. They repented of their sins and worshiped God with all their heart, mind and strength.

2. Read verses 7-12. How did the Levites help the people? (7, 8) Why did the leaders instruct them not to grieve? (9-11) What made the people become so joyful (12)?

2-1, Read verses 7-12.

The Levites—Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan and Pelaiah—instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there.**8** They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Nehemiah+8&version=NIV#fen-NIV-12502a)] and giving the meaning so that the people understood what was being read.

**9** Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and teacher of the Law, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, “This day is holy to the Lord your God. Do not mourn or weep.”For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. **10** Nehemiah said, “Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.” **11** The Levites calmed all the people, saying, “Be still, for this is a holy day. Do not grieve.” **12** Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them.

2-2, How did the Levites help the people? (7, 8)

***The Levites—Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan and Pelaiah—instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there.8 They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people understood what was being read.***

* The 13 Levites were Bible teachers. These Levites instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there. They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people understood what was being read. They were coworking with Ezra.
* This assembly before the Water Gate is so beautiful. The people of Israel were thirsty for God’s words. So they came to Ezra and asked him to teach the Bible.
* It gives us living water welling up to eternal life. Without God’s words people stagger and wander because they couldn’t have the light for their souls. Without God’s words, our souls are starved.
* Many students on campus stagger and wander because of the famine of God’s words. They have a deep thirst for the words of God. The problem is that they don’t know that they are staggering and wandering.
* They really need Bible teachers who can serve them with the words of God. Help us to serve with God’s words so that they can understand God’s words, and praise and worship God from their heart.
* May God give all of us compassion and willingness to become Bible teachers for students who have the famine of God’s words and look for Bible teachers.

2-3, Why did the leaders instruct them not to grieve? (9-11)

***9 Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and teacher of the Law, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, “This day is holy to the Lord your God. Do not mourn or weep.”For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. 10 Nehemiah said, “Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”11 The Levites calmed all the people, saying, “Be still, for this is a holy day. Do not grieve.”***

* It shows us the impact of the Bible study. They were weeping as they listen to God’s words. Before God’s words, they could see their sin and its consequences. They deeply realized that they were wretched sinners before God.
* When they were convicted, they neither hardened their hearts but they wept and mourned for their sins. Weeping for sin is a great work of God. It is godly sorrow that leads us to repentance.
* Jesus also said in the Sermon on the Mount, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted” (Mt 5:4). May we have godly sorrow, not hardened heart when God’s words convict us so that the true spiritual restoration can begin among us.
* When people wept and mourned for their sins and wretchedness, God comforted them. Six hour Bible study was over and now Nehemiah told the people to go home and enjoy choice food and sweet drink and have eating fellowship with others joyfully.
* Because of their sincere repentance before God, God forgave them and comforted them by saying through Nehemiah, “Go and enjoy choice food…for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”
* Those who repent their sins sincerely will receive God’s forgiveness, God’s cleansing power and God’s blessing to be children of God. True joy comes from God. We become joyful when God forgives our sins.

2-4, What made the people become so joyful (12)?

***Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them.***

* People were overwhelmed with joy, for they understood the word of God. God filled them with heavenly joy and strength. The more they study and understand God’s word, the more their joy must have increased.
* That day the people of Jerusalem had a great feast eating and drinking and loving and forgiving. They could renew the community of love. It was like new beginning of God’s people renewed in faith.

3. Read verses 13-18. What did the heads of the families, priests and Levites find in the Law while they were studying the Law of God? (13-15) How did they obey the Word of God (16,17)? What did Ezra do during the Feast of Booths? (18)

3-1, Read verses 13-18.

**13** On the second day of the month, the heads of all the families, along with the priests and the Levites, gathered around Ezra the teacher to give attention to the words of the Law. **14** They found written in the Law, which the Lord had commanded through Moses, that the Israelites were to live in temporary shelters during the festival of the seventh month **15** and that they should proclaim this word and spread it throughout their towns and in Jerusalem: “Go out into the hill country and bring back branches from olive and wild olive trees, and from myrtles, palms and shade trees, to make temporary shelters”—as it is written. **16** So the people went out and brought back branches and built themselves temporary shelters on their own roofs, in their courtyards, in the courts of the house of God and in the square by the WaterGate and the one by the Gate of Ephraim. **17** The whole company that had returned from exile built temporary shelters and lived in them. From the days of Joshua son of Nun until that day, the Israelites had not celebrated it like this. And their joy was very great. **18** Day after day, from the first day to the last, Ezra read from the Book of the Law of God. They celebrated the festival for seven days, and on the eighth day, in accordance with the regulation, there was an assembly.

3-2, What did the heads of the families, priests and Levites find in the Law while they were studying the Law of God? (13-15)

***13 On the second day of the month, the heads of all the families, along with the priests and the Levites, gathered around Ezra the teacher to give attention to the words of the Law. 14 They found written in the Law, which the Lord had commanded through Moses, that the Israelites were to live in temporary shelters during the festival of the seventh month 15 and that they should proclaim this word and spread it throughout their towns and in Jerusalem: “Go out into the hill country and bring back branches from olive and wild olive trees, and from myrtles, palms and shade trees, to make temporary shelters”—as it is written.***

* People found God’s instructions for the feast of the Tabernacles. Then they immediately obeyed God’s words.
* They remembered God’s grace of deliverance from Egypt. They also remembered God’s care in the wilderness.
* Leviticus 23:33-43 reads, *The Lord said to Moses, 34 “Say to the Israelites: ‘On the fifteenth day of the seventh month the Lord’s Festival of Tabernacles begins, and it lasts for seven days. 35 The first day is a sacred assembly; do no regular work. 36 For seven days present food offerings to the Lord, and on the eighth day hold a sacred assembly and present a food offering to the Lord. It is the closing special assembly; do no regular work. 37 (“‘These are the Lord’s appointed festivals, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies for bringing food offerings to the Lord—the burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings required for each day. 38 These offerings are in addition to those for the Lord’s Sabbaths and[e] in addition to your gifts and whatever you have vowed and all the freewill offerings you give to the Lord.) 39 “‘So beginning with the fifteenth day of the seventh month, after you have gathered the crops of the land, celebrate the festival to the Lord for seven days; the first day is a day of sabbath rest, and the eighth day also is a day of sabbath rest. 40 On the first day you are to take branches from luxuriant trees—from palms, willows and other leafy trees—and rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days. 41 Celebrate this as a festival to the Lord for seven days each year. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come; celebrate it in the seventh month. 42 Live in temporary shelters for seven days: All native-born Israelites are to live in such shelters 43 so your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in temporary shelters when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.’”*

3-3, How did they obey the Word of God (16,17)?

***16 So the people went out and brought back branches and built themselves temporary shelters on their own roofs, in their courtyards, in the courts of the house of God and in the square by the WaterGate and the one by the Gate of Ephraim. 17 The whole company that had returned from exile built temporary shelters and lived in them. From the days of Joshua son of Nun until that day, the Israelites had not celebrated it like this. And their joy was very great.***

* The significance in this event is that the people immediately obeyed. They became the people of God. They are those who hear the word of God and obey it.

3-4, What did Ezra do during the Feast of Booths? (18)

***18 Day after day, from the first day to the last, Ezra read from the Book of the Law of God. They celebrated the festival for seven days, and on the eighth day, in accordance with the regulation, there was an assembly.***

* Not just one day, but day after day they had studied the bible for 7 days. Wonderful Bible conference for 7 days changed them into a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

**Conclusion**

Worship is both conviction and response to the Words of God. It is not a concert, a comedy to make the audience laugh, or a ritual. It is a communion with the Living God. Listening to His word and finding our sins. Spiritual revival and heavenly joy come when people hear and accept God’s words sincerely with Amen and obey them immediately. May we be men and women of God who study the Bible sincerely so that we can experience God’s spiritual revival work in us. May God raise many Bible teachers among us continually. **One word: Amen Amen**