

## **Nehemiah 8:1-18 – Study Leader’s Questions**

1. *Based on Nehemiah 8:1-8, list at least four important lessons we can learn about teaching and studying God’s Word.*
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  - d.
2. *What effects did the message have on the people (Nehemiah 8:9-10, 17)?*
  - a.
  - b.
3. *What day and month was this and why was this day special (Nehemiah 8:2, Leviticus 23:24)?*
4. *What did the leaders tell the people to do instead of grieving (Nehemiah 8:9-10)?*
5. *The joy of the Lord (Nehemiah 8:10)*
  - a. *What is the joy of the Lord?*
  - b. *How do you get it?*
  - c. *Why is it your strength?*
6. *Why did the people celebrate the feast of Tabernacles or Booths?*
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
7. *What was different in the observation of this feast at this time?*

## Nehemiah 8:1-18 – Answers to Questions

See Dr Ruckman's commentary *The Books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther* pp 33-48, 274-284 and the *Ruckman Reference Bible* p 705.

1. *Based on Nehemiah 8:1-8, list at least four important lessons we can learn about teaching and studying God's Word.*

Studying and teaching of God's word requires:

- a. Nehemiah 8:1, 2, "***the book...brought***" (the originals won't do)

***"And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month"*** Nehemiah 8:2.

You need to have "***the book of the law***" Nehemiah 8:3 and receive it as such. Paul brought it to the Thessalonians, who did so.

***"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"*** 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

Note in passing this extract from *The Answer Book* by Dr Sam Gipp, his emphases and capitalizations.

*Question #23:*

*Is it "heresy" to believe the King James Bible is perfect?*

*Answer:*

*No.*

*Explanation:*

*It is amusing yet appalling that a King James Bible believer, who **BELIEVES** the Bible to be inerrant, is called a "heretic" by people who **claim** to believe that the Bible is inerrant.*

*"Heresy", according to Webster, is "an opinion or doctrine contrary to the truth or to generally accepted beliefs."*

*It is "generally accepted" that the Bible is the perfect word of God. I have often told people, "I don't believe that the King James Bible is the inerrant word of God. I believe that the **BIBLE** is the inerrant word of God. But if you ask me to **give** you a copy of that Bible, I'll hand you a King James Bible."*

*Critics of the King James Bible **believe** that the "Bible" is the inerrant word of God. **BUT**, ask them to **hand you a copy** of that inerrant Bible that they "believe" in, and you will find that **it doesn't exist anywhere on this earth!***

*We King James Bible believers simply believe what they **CLAIM** to believe. And for that we are called "heretics."*

*Actually the "heretic" label is designed more to scare young adherents away from the inerrant Bible, than to honestly define the name callers feelings. It is hoped by the Bible critic that the fear of being labelled a "heretic" will discourage zealous Christians from **REALLY** believing what Bible critics **claim** to believe.*

*In fact, if it is generally accepted by fundamentalists that "the Bible is the inerrant word of God" and the Bible critic can find a mistake in **every** Bible that you put in his hand, then...who really is the heretic?*

Be careful what you bring to the congregation. Only one Book should be brought.

- b. Nehemiah 8:2-3, *“the book...opened”* (the originals won’t do)

*“And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up”* Nehemiah 8:5.

*“Ezra...was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given...For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments”* Ezra 7:6, 10 because only God can open *“the book of the law”* Nehemiah 9:3 to you.

Even if men do *physically* open *“the book of the law of God”* Joshua 24:26, Nehemiah 8:18 and study it, human wisdom and education cannot *truly* open *“the book of the law of God”*. These are the only occurrences of the expression *“the book of the law of God”* in scripture.

*“It is sealed...to one that is learned”* Isaiah 29:11 because *“thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent”* Luke 10:21.

*“And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof”* Revelation 5:5.

Let God open the Book and your eyes to it.

*“Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law”* Psalm 119:18.

- c. Nehemiah 8:6, *“the LORD...worshipped”*

*“And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground”* Nehemiah 8:6.

*“I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name”* Psalm 138:2.

Exalt *“the royal law according to the scripture”* James 2:8, as God does.

- d. Nehemiah 8:3, *“the book...read”* (the originals won’t do)

*“And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law”* Nehemiah 8:3.

*“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so”* Acts 17:11.

Be like the Bereans and do what the Lord says.

*“Search the scriptures...they are they which testify of me”* John 5:39.

Note also Nehemiah 8:18 *“Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God...”* Nehemiah 8:18 refers specifically to the period of the feast. *“The book of the law of God”* should nevertheless be read *“day by day from the first day unto the last day”* *“till he come”* 1 Corinthians 11:26.

- e. Nehemiah 8:3, *“the ears...attentive”*

*“And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law”* Nehemiah 8:3.

Your attitude *“unto the book of the law”* determines your prayer life. Be careful how you approach *“the royal law according to the scripture”* James 2:8.

*“He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination”* Proverbs 28:9.

- f. Nehemiah 8:7, 8, *“the sense”* given with *“the reading”* (the originals won’t do)

*“So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading”* Nehemiah 8:8.

Even if through *“a ready scribe”* like Ezra, only *God* can give *“the sense”* and cause *“to understand the reading.”*

*“Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures”* Luke 24:45.

James 1:25 will then come to pass with the above principles in operation, along with Isaiah 54:13.

*“But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”*

*“And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children.”*

2. What effects did the message have on the people (Nehemiah 8:9-10, 17)

- a. Nehemiah 8:9-10 shows that they *“wept, and mourned”* like Nehemiah had, in part for the same reason, having seen their disobedience to *“the book of the law”* as he had.

*“And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven”* Nehemiah 1:4.

*“We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses”* Nehemiah 1:7.

King Josiah had the same reaction when confronted with *“the words of the book of the law.”*

*“And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes...Go ye, enquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us”* 2 Kings 22:11-13.

King Josiah’s decree based on *“the words of the book of the law,”* not 2 Chronicles 7:14. is the basis for revival.

*“And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant”* 2 Kings 23:3. See also 2 Chronicles 34:19, 21, 31 and the *Ruckman Reference Bible* pp 586, 671-672.

- b. Nehemiah 8:17 shows that they obeyed what **“they found written in the law which the LORD had commanded by Moses”** Nehemiah 8:14. Their obedience **“brought very great gladness.”**

Obedience to what the Lord says will consistently bring **“very great gladness.”**

**“Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart”** Psalm 40:7-8.

3. What day and month was this and why was this day special (Nehemiah 8:2, Leviticus 23:24)?

It was the first day of the *seventh* month, see *Bible Numerics* by Dr Peter S. Ruckman pp 23-27 and the *Ruckman Reference Bible*, Appendix 34, *The Number Seven*. It began **“a holy convocation”** that led up to the **“day of atonement”** Leviticus 23:27 and **“the feast of tabernacles”** Leviticus 23:34.

The particular importance of the first day of the seventh month was that it was the beginning of a period of remembrance of the Lord’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt, by means of their temporary dwelling places.

**“And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days...Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths: That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God”** Leviticus 23:40, 42-43.

The dwelling in booths has a lesson for the Christian.

**“For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come”** Hebrews 13:14.

4. What did the leaders tell the people to do instead of grieving (Nehemiah 8:9-10)?

They told them to have a holiday.

**“Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength”** Nehemiah 8:10.

The expression ‘holiday’ or **“holyday”** occurs twice in scripture.

**“When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday”** Psalm 42:4.

**“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days”** Colossians 2:16.

As Paul states above, **“ye are not under the law, but under grace”** Romans 6:14 but he admonishes the Christian **“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil”** Ephesians 5:15-16. They slip away. Every day should be a remembrance for the Christian that **“For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come”** Hebrews 13:14 and an incentive to make the most of the days left. It is possible, for example, to pray and review scripture verses even during gym workouts!

See Dr Ruckman’s commentary *The Books of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians* p 310 for more suggestions.

5. *The joy of the Lord (Nehemiah 8:10)*

a. *What is the joy of the Lord?*

In Nehemiah's time it was the result and blessing of obedience to God's law and of having a love for God's word.

**"Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD"** Psalm 119:1.

**"Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts"** Jeremiah 15:16.

Today, it is essentially one of ***"the fruit of the Spirit"*** Galatians 5:22.

b. *How do you get it?*

In Nehemiah's time it was by obeying what ***"they found written in the law which the LORD had commanded by Moses"*** Nehemiah 8:14. See point *a* above and *Question 2* point *b*.

Today, it is by being ***"filled with the Spirit"*** Ephesians 5:18, seeking to fulfil Paul's exhortation in Romans 15:13.

**"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost"** Romans 15:13.

As indicated, one way to do that is to keep in mind that ***"For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come"*** Hebrews 13:14 as an incentive to make the most of the days left.

c. *Why is it your strength?*

In Nehemiah's day, it became a source of strength by being associated with God's deliverance, God Himself being ***"the Strength of Israel"*** 1 Samuel 15:29.

**"The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour. Now in the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king's commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them, (though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them;)"** Esther 8:16, 9:1. God's strength gave His people strength to overcome their enemies, which in turn brought God's people ***"joy and gladness"*** Nehemiah 8:17.

Today, it is the effect of being ***"filled with the Spirit"*** and in turn being **"Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness"** Colossians 1:11. Therefore, as Paul urges his readers:

**"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"** Philippians 4:13.

6. *Why did the people celebrate the feast of Tabernacles or Booths?*

- a. The feast was celebrated as a *reminder* of God's goodness to Israel in the land to which He had brought them, like a harvest festival today.

**"Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath"** Leviticus 23:39.

**"For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey; A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass"** Deuteronomy 8:7-9.

**"Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine"** Deuteronomy 16:13.

- b. The feast was celebrated as a *rejoicing* in God's goodness to Israel in the land to which He had brought them.

**"And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates"** Deuteronomy 16:14.

- c. The feast was celebrated as a *reflection* on God's goodness to Israel in the land to which He had brought them, on *why* Israel was in a position to rejoice, e.g. deliverance **"out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt"** Deuteronomy 4:20.

**"Seven days shalt thou keep a solemn feast unto the LORD thy God in the place which the LORD shall choose; because the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice"** Deuteronomy 16:15.

Joyfulness tempered with sobriety appears to be the thrust of the feasts. That is also a good way for a Christian to be.

**"Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness"** Colossians 1:11.

7. *What was different in the observation of this feast at this time?*

Nehemiah 8:17 states ***“And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness.”***

The feast had evidently not been observed ***“since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day”*** i.e. approximately 1,000 years.

The feast was no doubt also a witness to the Jews of Nehemiah’s time of their own deliverance from captivity through Nehemiah and ***“the good hand of my God upon me”*** Nehemiah 2:8, in addition to being a reminder of God’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt, Leviticus 23:43.

Note that the feast of tabernacles continued to be observed up until the time of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth, which was fitting in that ***“the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth”*** John 1:14. See the *Ruckman Reference Bible* p 1382.

***“Now the Jews’ feast of tabernacles was at hand”*** John 7:2.

The Lord’s invitation made at the feast is also still ***“at hand.”*** It stands for the purpose of a reminder, a cause for rejoicing and an incentive for reflection.

***“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink”*** John 7:37.