

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 12/8/10

Series: "Facing the Past, Moving Ahead for God's Honor: Nehemiah"

Current study: Nehemiah 8:13-18 "Tune Up Time"

We're to look at the account of a celebration this evening. I mean a *huge celebration*. It was one of the biggest celebrations in a thousand years in Israel, and that's no exaggeration but Bible truth.

Nehemiah 8:17 says, "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." Do the math. Joshua lived around 1400 BC. The celebration in Nehemiah 8 took place around 450 BC. That's just under 1,000 years. And Nehemiah says that the Israelites had not celebrated the feast of booths like this in that time period.

Why such a celebration? Why such joy? And how can we experience this joy? Let's bring those questions to our study of Nehemiah 8.

Every so often our cars need a tune up. It's inevitable after the normal wear and tear of use. If the vehicle is going to continue to operate as intended by the manufacturer, it needs to be tuned up.

People are no different. We need tune-ups. How so?

In Nehemiah 8, God's people experienced a spiritual "tune up." We'll see how.

The Setting:

--The Wall is built...

--There is a lack of people living in the city, a problem which Nehemiah began to address in chapter 7 (by registering the people) and which he will continue to address in chapter 11.

But first, something more pressing. The seventh month came on the Jewish calendar. The seventh month was the month of Tishri and occurred in September/October. It was one of the most sacred months in the Jewish calendar (see Lev 23:23ff.). In chapters 8-9 we discover what happened during this particular seventh month:

Day 1 – verses 1-12 (also mentioned in Ezra 3:1) [which we studied last time]

Day 2 – verses 13-18 [today's study]

Day 24 – chapter 9 (9:1ff.) [next week's focus]

In a sense, God intended for the seventh month to be "tune up" time for His people. On a yearly basis, they were to observe a very special holiday as we'll see.

Review:

Q: What happened on the first day of the month, according to verses 1-12? The people gathered together and asked Ezra to bring out the Book (1). And Ezra read the Book from daybreak till noon (3). The Levites got involved, too, explaining the meaning of God's Word to the people (8).

To summarize, Day 1 was a day for listening to and learning God's Word.

Q: Is it good to listen to God's Word? Yes. Is it good to learn God's Word? Yes. But something else is vital. What? We need to *live* God's Word.

Listen to it. Learn it. Then *live* it. "Be doers of the Word and not hearers only (James 1:22)." Which is what God's people did on Day 2...

On Day 2...

Two things happened pertinent to God's Word.

I. God's people learned specific truth from God's Word (13-15).

We don't change in the abstract. We change as we learn and then apply specific truths from God's Word to specific areas of need.

This happened with the Israelites. The account answers three questions...

A. Who was involved (13a)?

Unlike the previous day when all the Israelites attended, on Day 2 just two parties were there.

1. *The heads of the families were there.*
2. *The priests and Levites were there.*

Q: Who initiated this meeting? We're not told specifically, but I get the idea these folks got a taste of something on the previous day, and now they want more!

B. Why were they there (13b)?

1. *It wasn't to discuss man's opinions.*
2. *It was to give attention to the words of God's Law.*

Q: What does it mean to "give attention" [KJV "understand"] to God's Word? It's good to read it, but we must go further. God didn't give us His Word to entertain us, but to transform us.

It's good to learn it, but it's essential to live it. It's great to hear it, but it's mandatory to do it.

E.g.—Matt 7, what's the difference between the wise man and foolish man? The foolish man hears it but doesn't do it.

C. What happened (14-15)?

In their study of God's Word, they discovered something, two things in fact...

1. *They discovered a sin of omission (14).*

Q: What is a sin of *omission*?

Q: What did they learn they needed to do (which hadn't been done for some time)? They were supposed to be living in booths.

See: Numbers 29:12ff. – commands about the Feast of Tabernacles

--15th day (12)

--last for seven days

--bring offerings (on the first day, 13 bulls, 2 rams, 14 lambs; some grain offerings and a goat)

--more offerings on successive days (one less bull each day until on day 7 when 7 bulls are offered)

--the commands are very specific!

Here's the problem. Nehemiah and his people look at God's Word, and what do they discover? They haven't been doing what God commanded.

Let this sink in...

Key: One act of obedience does not excuse another act of disobedience.

2. *They discovered what they needed to do about it (15).*

Q: They proposed steps to address the problem. What steps? First, make the Word known. Then, collect branches to make booths.

Q: Again, why did they decide to do this?

But good intentions mean little, until what? So after learning specific truth...

II. God's people took steps to apply truth from God's Word (16-18).

Here's how...

A. They took specific steps to obey God's command (16-17a).

1. *They collected branches.*

2. *They built booths.*

Q: Where? In several locations...

3. *They lived in the booths.*

B. They experienced great joy (17b).

Q: Why do you think their joy was so great? There is great joy whenever we obey God's Word. Give examples...

C. They kept reading God's Word (18).

1. *Ezra read.*

Again, I get the sense the people couldn't get enough!

2. *The people celebrated.*

3. *On the final day, there was an assembly.*

Why an assembly? Because that's what Numbers 29:35 said to do!

Implications: We learn the following lessons...

1. *We see the importance of obedience to God's Word.*

According to verse 18, how many days did they meet? For 7 days, not 6 nor 12 days, but 7. Why? Because God said so. It's a matter of obedience.

Why be baptized? Why give the first portion of our income to the Lord?

Why seek and grant forgiveness to people? Why spend time in God's Word?

Why come to church? We do these things because we *feel* like it? No. Because

God commands these things.

Discuss: How can we learn to be more obedient to God?

2. *We see the importance of remembering God's previous works.*

That was why they lived in booths. To remember what? God's rescue mission with Israel.

Discuss: Think for a moment of some of the works God has accomplished in your life, times when He rescued and helped you. Make a list. It will no doubt begin with the day He rescued you from your sins and saved your soul, but don't stop there. He's delivered us many times since then and we ought to remember.