

Community Builders – Nehemiah 8

# Rediscovering God's Word

# BIBLE TIME



Sunday 05 June 2005

## **Hungry for God's word v1**

With the wall having been built and the community being strengthened, the people wanted to hear God's word and invite Ezra to read it to them.

By the seventh month the people of Israel were all settled in their towns. On the first day of that month they all assembled in Jerusalem, in the square just inside the Water Gate. They asked Ezra, the priest and scholar of the Law which the LORD had given Israel through Moses, to get the book of the Law. Nehemiah 8:1

Today God's word can come to us in a variety of ways,

- through reading the Bible
- through listening to the Bible
- through meditating upon it
- through television broadcasts
- videos etc.

Clearly god's word was no something with which the people were familiar; they were hungry to discover what it said.

Jesus invites us to hunger after the things of God Matthew 5.6.

## **Helping God's Word to be understood**

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

Although Ezra did the reading of the scripture, others helped to make it understandable.

God does not want just a reading of his word but wants us to see how it relates to our lives today. This means learning to apply God's word for us today. To do this we need to recognize what kind of writings we are working with, poetry, history, parables etc. it also means working out how we take the events of the past and apply them to our lives now. A tension exists between holding on to God's word (2 Tim 3.16) which outlives life itself 1 Peter 1.25, and rightly understanding it in the light of our culture.

There is a great danger that we take on a 21century arrogance that can jettison God's word because it does not sit comfortably with us today.

## **Reacting to God's Word**

The writer to the Hebrews tells us that God's word is alive and active

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Because it is living it impacts us in different ways.

### **Sadness**

Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, "This day is sacred 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. Nehemiah 8:9

As the people listened to God's word as it was explained to them, they realized they had sinned; they had let God down, by what they had done and what they hadn't done.

### **Joy**

Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." Nehemiah 8:10

God's desire was not only to bring conviction, but to release joy, because God's people wanted the things of God.

This was to be a day of joy, a day of celebration and the intention was that everyone should be included

### **Obedience**

The whole company that had returned from exile built booths 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.

Day after day, from the first day to the last, Ezra read from the Book of the Law of God. They celebrated the feast for seven days, and on the eighth day, in accordance with the regulation, there was an assembly. Nehemiah 8:17,18

The feast of tabernacles was celebrated and what fun reliving their history and inheritance, what a joy to be back in Jerusalem and to have the walls rebuilt and to know that God was in the centre of their community

Jesus intended us to experience this joy and such joy flows from obedience to him.

If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. John 15:10-11

For us as individuals and as a church family, following God's word out of a love for him releases joy and enables Him once again to be at the centre of our lives.

## **Studies for Small groups – Nehemiah 8**

1. What is it that gives us a hunger for God's word?
2. How are we helped to understand God's word for today?
3. Do we allow God's word to impact our lives? Reflect upon the way in which God's word impacts you and how it impacts us as a Church.