

Nehemiah 7-8 – Thursday, September 28th, 2017

Nehemiah 7 -- 1 Then it was, when the wall was built and I had hung the doors, when the gatekeepers, the singers, and the Levites had been appointed, 2 that I gave the charge of Jerusalem to my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the leader of the citadel, for he was a faithful man and feared God more than many. 3 And I said to them, "Do not let the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot; and while they stand guard, let them shut and bar the doors; and appoint guards from among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, one at his watch station and another in front of his own house."

- Nehemiah in his leadership gifting is as diligent and vigilant concerning the attack of the enemy after victory, as he was prior.
- This speaks to the importance of never letting your guard down when it comes to the attack of the enemy in spiritual warfare.
- The truth of the matter is that we're all prone, whether we're in leadership or not, to sort of rest on our laurels after a victory.

4 Now the city was large and spacious, but the people in it were few, and the houses were not rebuilt. 5 Then my God put it into my heart to gather the nobles, the rulers, and the people, that they might be registered by genealogy. And I found a register of the genealogy of those who had come up in the first return, and found written in it: 6 These are the people of the province who came back from the captivity, of those who had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away, and who returned to Jerusalem and Judah, everyone to his city.

- Here again we see the leadership gifting of Nehemiah in prudently assessing the few numbers of the Israelites within the city.
- This because, they were vulnerable to attack by virtue of their size as a people, which is why he deems it necessary to do this.
- Even though the wall and gates were now completed, Nehemiah wisely discerned that they needed to come together as one.

- What follows beginning in verse seven on through the rest of the chapter to verse 73 is a listing of all their names and numbers.
- It's interesting to note that only about two percent of all the Jews carried away into Babylonian exile came back to Jerusalem.
- This may explain in part why it's the second time we have this list recorded, the first being in Ezra 2 in that they're noteworthy.

- While we won't take the time to read through all the names and their numbers, I do want to point out something very important.
- It's that of the building the wall physically being more about the building of God's people spiritually, which is why we have this.
- This is what God did in building this church such that it was more about God building us up as His people in this His church.

Nehemiah 8 -- 1 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.

- What Nehemiah does here is in effect respond to the people who know that a physical wall means nothing absent God's Word.
- In other words, unless there's a spiritual wall of protection, any physical wall of protection is rendered useless in protecting us.
- What we're about to see in this chapter is the power of God's Word to bring about a revival of God's people, by God's Spirit.

J. Edwin Orr famously defined revival in this way, "The Spirit of God working through the Word of God, in the lives of the people of God."

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. 3 Then he read from it in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate from morning until midday, before the men and women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. 4 So Ezra the scribe stood on a platform of wood which they had made for the purpose; and beside him, at his right hand, stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Urijah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah; and at his left hand Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam. 5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. 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. 7 Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law; and the people stood in their place. 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.

- Here we have what I like to call a Biblical template for teaching in the sense that it's the reading, explaining and the applying.
- Actually, this is why and even how I learned to simply teach the Bible simply. Simply read it, then explain it, then simply apply it.
- Sadly, there are many today who don't teach the Bible they merely teach from the Bible, and in so doing, rob the people of God.

1 Timothy 4:13 - Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

9 And Nehemiah, who was the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn nor weep." For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the Law. 10 Then he said to them, "Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."

- Perhaps it goes without saying but this well known verse is a favorite for many a Christian by virtue of the truth found within it.
- I've both taught this and heard this taught and every time I do, God as He's always so faithful to, brings it to live in a fresh way.
- Recently it came by way of a teaching I heard that opened it up in a whole new way, as sorrow drains strength joy creates it.

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. 13 Now on the second day the heads of the fathers' houses of all the people, with the priests and Levites, were gathered to Ezra the scribe, in order to understand the words of the Law. 14 And they found written in the Law, which the LORD had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month, 15 and that they should announce and proclaim in all their cities and in Jerusalem, saying, "Go out to the mountain, and bring olive branches, branches of oil trees, myrtle branches, palm branches, and branches of leafy trees, to make booths, as it is written." 16 Then the people went out and brought them and made themselves booths, each one on the roof of his house, or in their courtyards or the courts of the house of God, and in the open square of the Water Gate and in the open square of the Gate of Ephraim. 17 So the whole assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and sat under the booths; for since the days of Joshua the son of Nun until that day the children of Israel had not done so. And there was very great gladness. 18 Also day by day, from the first day until the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day there was a sacred assembly, according to the prescribed manner.

- This is one of those chapters that I love to end with because it's a beautiful picture of God's people responding to God's Word.
- I would suggest this is a perfect example of taking heed to the Word of God as evidenced by the obedience of God's people.
- This is what James talked about concerning the doing what God's Word says as opposed to merely listening to God's Word.

James 1:22–25 (NIV) — 22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. 23 Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror 24 and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. 25 But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.