

Nehemiah 8:9-18

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 21 January 2026

Preacher: Billy Joe Calvert

[0:00] Amen. 13 beside him.

And he would read from the law. And the Levites were scattered among them. Explaining the law. Or giving the sense. Interpreting it. Because he was reading it to them in the Hebrew. Many of them did not speak the Hebrew dialect.

Because they had been born. Into what we refer to as the Babylonian captivity. So they were speaking Greek. And Persian. And things of that nature. So they were explaining and giving the sense.

And the people were hearing the word read to them. And there was a hunger for the word. And they were worshiping and rejoicing. So I want you to see this evening. Starting in verse 9. The impact of the word.

What impact did the word have upon the people? Many people will tell you. That the events laid out. In Nehemiah chapter 8. Set the course of history. Not only for the nation of Israel.

[1:20] That would continue until the time of Christ. But even up until our day. It is here that we get the practice. Of reading and expounding. Expounding or explaining. Exactly what is contained within the word of God.

It is here that we get so many practices. That existed. Even until the time of Christ. So that when Christ showed up on the scene. There were synagogues. And all these places. Where people would gather together.

To hear the word read. Our Lord himself took advantage. Of those synagogues. He would go into there. And if you remember. They handed him the scroll of Isaiah.

And he would open up the scroll of Isaiah. And read. And he would say today. This word has been fulfilled in your hearing. Paul himself. Would take advantage. In his missionary journeys.

Of the synagogues. That were scattered throughout the Roman Empire. That were probably. A direct result. Of what takes place. In Nehemiah 8. Because Ezra.

[2:17] Begins what is called. The school of scribes. And they would go around. To the Jewish people. Wherever they were living. And establish synagogues. In which. In the synagogue. The practice of reading the word.

And explaining the word. And being a teacher of the word. Was lived out on a daily basis. Though. The nation of Israel. The Hebrew people. Understood.

That God went silent. For 400 years. They continued this practice. Of just reading what they had. And explaining it. To one another. So much so. That Jesus took place in it.

Jesus learned. Jesus taught there. Paul taught there. Every early. Missionary journey. Went through. That avenue. Because the word. Has an impact. On the people. And it is an enduring impact.

But we find here. Starting in verse 9. The impact it had. On these people. It says. Then Nehemiah. Who was the governor. And Ezra the priest. And scribe. And the Levites.

[3:12] Who taught the people. Said to all the people. This day is holy. To the Lord your God. Do not mourn. Or weep. For all the people. Were weeping. When they heard the words.

Of the law. Then he said to them. Go. Eat of the fat. Drink of the sweet. And send portions. To him who has nothing. Prepared. For this day is holy. To our Lord. Do not be grieved.

For the joy of the Lord. Is your strength. So the Levites. Calmed all the people. Saying be still. For the day is holy. Do not be grieved. All the people. Went away to eat. To drink.

To send portions. And to celebrate. A great festival. Because they understood. The words. Which had been made. Known to them. Then on the second day. The heads of the father's. Households. Of all the people. The priests. And the Levites. Were gathered to Ezra the scribe. That they might gain insight. Into the words of the law. They found written in the law. How the Lord had commanded.

[4:06] Through Moses. That the sons of Israel. Should live in booths. During the feast. Of the seventh month. So they proclaimed. And circulated a proclamation. In all the cities. And in Jerusalem. Saying go out to the hills.

And bring olive branches. And wild olive branches. Myrtle branches. Palm trees. And branches of other leafy trees. To make booths. As it is written. So the people went out.

And brought them. And made booths for themselves. Each on his roof. And in their courts. And in the courts. Of the house of God. And in the square. At the water gate. And in the square. At the gate of Ephraim. The entire assembly.

Of those who had returned. From the captivity. Made booths. And lived in them. The sons of Israel. Had indeed. Not done so. From the days of Joshua. The son of Nun. To that day.

And there was great. Rejoicing. And he read. From the book of the law. Of God daily. From the first day. To the last day. And they celebrated the feast. Seven days. And on the eighth day.

[5:00] There was a solemn assembly. According to. The ordinance. I want you to see. The impact. Of the word. If you remember. In the first verse. Of the eighth chapter.

It tells us. That it is the first day. Of the seventh month. When the people asked. That Ezra would get the word. And read to them. That festival. If we were to go look it up. In the book of Leviticus. It was the festival of trumpets.

The festival of trumpets. Was a day of preparation. In which the trumpets. Would sound. There would be a celebration. And they would be preparing themselves. For what was going to take place. Nine days later. And that would be the day of atonement. Following the day of atonement. On the fifteenth day. Of the seventh month. Was the festival of booths.

So the seventh month. Was a very impactful. And important month. And God used the festival of trumpets. To arouse an interest. In his word. Because the people.

[5:53] Who had come back from captivity. Had probably. If never. If ever. Celebrated the festival of trumpets. And really. Were doing so. Because it was something. They were supposed to do.

And this curiosity. Was used. By God. To stir their hearts. To have a desire. To know. Why do we do this? And so they open up the word. And they begin to read the word.

Or to hear the word. And they. They begin to have the word. Taught to them. And they are explaining the word. And then the word. Has an impact. On their life. And there's an impact. That lasts.

It does not make them perfect. We really. Don't find perfect people. In the book of Nehemiah. Because it will not be very long. Before we read. That Nehemiah has to rebuke. And chastise. Some of these people. But yet it does lead them. To do a number of things. When we get to the ninth chapter. We will find that they enter into. Again. Another covenantal agreement. With the Lord God. And they sign their names to it.

[6:49] It changes. The course of their direction. Really. What it is doing. Is fulfilling the purpose. Of Nehemiah. He did not come. To rebuild the walls. He came. To be used by God.

To rebuild the people. He and Ezra. Are building the people. Of Israel. Because it is the people. That God will use. To bring about the Messiah. For the redemption. Of all mankind.

The first impact. That we see of the word. Here is there is a realization. Of sin. There is a realization. Of sin. When the word is read. And the people are gathered together.

Men and women. And all who could understand. The children. Of discernment age. And they would stand. And listen to the word. Being read for six hours. And as the word was read.

And the Levites were interpreting. And explaining the word to them. We know that they comprehended it. Because of how they responded. It tells us now. For the first time.

[7:44] In the eighth chapter. That Nehemiah is present. Nehemiah. The governor. This is a Persian title. The word governor. Has been translated. From a Persian title. And this is the first time. In the book of Nehemiah.

That this official title. Is used of Nehemiah. He has been appointed. By the king. To be the overseer. And governor. And ruler. Of the city of Jerusalem. And he is there.

As a royal representative. In the political world. But he is also there. As a advisor. With Ezra. And the Levites. And now we find. That Nehemiah.

Ezra. And the Levites. Have to tell the people. To quit weeping. They tell them. This is a day. Of rejoicing. For they were. Mourning. And weeping.

And this is natural. Because they had just. Heard. The law. Read to them. And the law. Has but one. Intended purpose.

[8:40] The purpose of the law. Is not the redemption. Of man. The law's purpose. Is to highlight. Man's failures.

It is to show us. Our desperate need. Of a savior. The bible is so different. Than every other. Christian. Quote unquote book.

Or not even every other. Christian book. Every other religious book. It is so different. Because every other. Religious book. In all the world. Will tell you. And we'll get into this. When we get to the bible class. Will tell you.

How you can make your life better. It will tell you. The steps you must take. To improve your life. And how. If you do these. In a sufficient manner. Maybe. You will be accepted. And find your way. To some type of paradise. Every other religion. In the world. Who has a holy writing. Tells you that. The bible does not. The bible tells you. How you have fallen short.

[9:35] How you will never live up. How you are in desperate need. Of someone else. It is a book. That reveals your failures. It is a book. That reveals your shortcomings. And it is a book.

That breaks your heart. Because you are looking. Into the face of a holy God. And a holy standard. In which you cannot attain. And it is because the bible. Is not about what you can do. But it is about what he does for you.

It is a great rescue story. It is not how you can improve your life. And so when they hear the word. For the first time. They are mourning.

And weeping. And they are broken. Friend listen to me. You do not know how much you need a savior. Until you know how far you have fallen. I remember probably the greatest quote.

That I have ever read. On how do you share the gospel with someone. And you have to forgive me. For I cannot remember who said it. But I do know. He was an eminent bible scholar.

[10:30] And great expositor of the word. And could preach greater sermons. Than I will ever dream of preaching. I have read his sermons. And he said. If I was given an hour. To share the gospel.

With someone on a train. I will tell you how I would do it. I would spend the first 45 minutes. Going through the law. And I would spend 45 minutes. In the law.

Showing that individual. How they do not live up. To the standard of the law. And how they fall woefully short. And once the law. Has broken their spirit. I would spend the next 15 minutes. Introducing them to the savior.

Who redeems them. Because until we know. How bad we need a savior. We do not realize. How great he is. If we come. And we say.

Well we have it all together. Jesus. We need you to do the rest. That is not. The bible's teaching. The bible's teaching is. When we hear it. And we see it.

[11:25] It breaks us. It causes us to mourn. And to weep. And to beat our chest. Like the. Publican. Who's praying. Next to Jesus. Saying woe is me. For I am a sinner.

That's the outcome of the law. That is all the law can do. People have said. Well when I read the old testament. It doesn't make me feel good. You're exactly right. It's not supposed to. But what it does. Is it is pointing us. We're on this side of the cross. We're on this side of the empty tomb. We're on this side. Of the church age. And what he is doing. Is pointing to. Our need.

Because we find the fulfillment. Of that need. In Jesus Christ. Be. Certain. That when we share the word.

We're sharing. All the word. Because. We don't get to the second. Outcome. Until we get to the first. [12:24] The first one is. There was a realization. Of sin. Why were they mourning. And weeping. It says. For they understood. What was told them. They got it.

They didn't think. They were okay. They realized. We have done wrong. It is a realization. Of our sin. But don't stop there.

For the word of God. Does not stop. In highlighting our sin. It leads us. To the second one. That is a recognition. Of God's goodness. It is a recognition. Of God's goodness.

They say. This is. A day. Of rejoicing. I said it. This morning. And. My wife.

Knew. Who quoted. So she told me. That was a good quote. By this individual. But my favorite quote. Of. Adrian Rogers. Is to rejoice. Is a choice. Adrian Rogers.

[13:21] Said that quote. For the first time. He said. When he started pastoring. Now. If you don't know. Anything about. Adrian Rogers. Adrian Rogers. Was born in Florida. He grew up in Florida. He. He went to Bible college. In Florida. His first pastorate.

Was Cape Coral Florida. And he was pastoring. A church in Florida. And was doing wonderful. And then a church. In Memphis Tennessee. Reached out to him. And said. God's called you to Memphis. And he said. Y'all are wrong.

I'm going to stay in Florida. And they kept pastoring him. And kept bugging him. And said. God has called you to come to Memphis. He said. I like Florida. And he said. So I finally surrendered. And I accepted the call. To come to Memphis.

Now. At that time. Bellevue was in downtown Memphis. The old R.G. Lee building. It was. You know. Downtown Memphis. And he said. I accepted the call. To pastor church in Memphis. In February.

And I just left Florida. And I remember walking outside. Going. This is miserable. Because it's Memphis in February. He said.

[14:14] And the Lord put it on my heart. To rejoice is a choice. And you get that from scripture. Because look at what it says. It says. Do not mourn or weep.

For this is a day of rejoicing. This is a holy day. It was the festival of trumpets. It was to be a day of celebration. And it was a celebration for what?

The preparation to the day of atonement. Sin is highlighted by the law. But the law reveals that we need atonement. And the covenant relationship with God.

Assures the atonement. It is looking unto the day of atonement here. When they blow the trumpets. And shout with celebration. They say. Don't mourn. Though your sins.

Had made you red. He will wash you as white as snow. It is a day of recognizing. That God is good. Even in spite of our failures.

[15:12] They are told. It says. Go and eat of the fat. And drink of the sweet. And send portions to him who has nothing prepared. I love by the way. One Bible scholar said this. I have to claim this. I have to hold on to it.

Because of my taste buds. I love this. It says. You know. This verse flies in the face of all those people. Who tell you. You can't eat anything good. Because it says.

Go and eat of the fat. That is. You know. The not too healthy stuff. And drink of the sweet. Go have you something tasty. And something that is wonderful. And something that is enjoyable.

For this is a day of celebration. And give to those who don't have anything prepared. Be able to share with those around you. And make sure that everybody celebrates.

Why? For though our sins have condemned us. The God we are in covenant relationship with us. Has provided a way.

[16:05] Of atonement. He has made a way that our sins could be forgiven. He has made a way that our sins could be cast aside. Now. For the nation of Israel. It was coming just nine days later.

For us. We know that it is not something that is repeated. Year after year after year. After the book of Hebrews says. Jesus doesn't have to be slain every year. We don't have to come. Before the altar on the day of atonement.

And have Christ crucified once again. For he is the lamb slain before the foundation of the world. For all time. He is the perfect sacrifice. And it is the way of cleansing.

Though the law brings conviction and brokenness and mourning and sorrow. The reality of God's covenant relationship with us. Helps us to recognize that he is good.

Even in spite of the fact that we are not. And we rejoice. There is a time to weep over sin. But we dare not weep.

[17:00] We dare not weep with sorrow. Over redemption. For that is a time of rejoicing. That is a time of celebration. That is a time of recognizing that God has done what we could not do.

And when we are told to rejoice. And always again I say to rejoice. That is a command right? Too often we walk around in sorrow that has cast us down.

Friend don't hang out in the law forever. Read the law. Be reminded of how much you need grace. But run to the cross and find rejoicing. For today is a day of celebration and rejoicing.

For he is holy and it is his day. Kenneth Swan who led singing down in Normandy. First Baptist Normandy for 35 years. He had this little song.

I am not going to sing it to you. If you have ever sung it you can never forget it. It is called Smile A While. We sing it every Sunday for our fellowship song. It would make me want to beat my head against the wall. Just to be honest with you. I was just a pastor. I was like brother Kenneth we need to quit singing that one every now and then.

[18:00] But I love what he would say. I love him dearly okay. I love him dearly for he was the guy who told me I was too young to pastor. I would never be his pastor. Then I became his pastor and he said boy I can't get rid of you.

And then you know anyway so I love him. But he used to make this comment before he sang that song. He said you know if you have the joy of the Lord in your heart. Why don't you notify your face about it. I said wow.

Way to go brother Kenneth. Now he was one who dealt with depression. He's the one who dealt with sorrow. He dealt with a lot of things on his own. And he would just constantly remind us to rejoice was a choice. And we're commanded in scripture.

Why? For we know that God is good and he has redeemed us in spite of us. Are we desperate sinners who deserve condemnation and judgment?

Yes for the law says so. But we've went to the Lord on the day of atonement right. He has atoned us and cleansed us. And the word of God says to quit weeping and quit being mournful.

[18:59] Today is a day of celebration. Rejoice. There is the realization of our sin. But there is the recognition of God's goodness. Number three.

What other impact does the word have upon us? It creates within us a desire to return and no more. It creates a desire to return and no more.

They had a one day revival if you will. On the first day of the seventh month. Ezra read. And everyone was gathered together as one man. And it tells us that they went home and they celebrated.

Why? Because they understood the words which had been made known to them. It tells us in verse 12. The reason they went back home and celebrated is because they understood the word.

For the first time in their life they understood it. Ezra is fulfilling his purpose. Nehemiah is fulfilling his. Ezra chapter 7 says what? Ezra's purpose was to hide the word in his heart that he may practice it and that he may teach it.

[20:02] And now he is teaching it to those around him. And they understand the word so they're rejoicing. But the impact of the word is not measured in what it does in the moment. The impact of the word is measured in what it does moving forward.

Several years ago I was at a luncheon. It's called Mojo, Men of Jesus Organization. I got invited. We were there. And I was with some other men.

They were businessmen. And they were a varying group of men across different denominations. And I was like the only Baptist there. Okay? So I didn't fit in. There were some Pentecostals. Actually the guy who invited me was a Pentecostal.

And that was fine. We had a good time. We still fellowshiped. And then all. So doctrine wasn't on the table. But also at the table there was an Amish gentleman. So you talk about a wild group of people.

Okay? So you got some Southern Baptists. Some Pentecostals. Some Presbyterians. And an Amish guy sitting at a table. It sounds like a really good story. Right? And so they were talking about it. They said, hey, brother.

[21:00] In your church, you know, y'all don't really do anything. And they were asking the Amish gentleman. They said, so what does it look like when the spirit moves? And these were my Pentecostal brothers asking. And I'll never forget his answer. He said, we don't judge the movement of the spirit by the reaction of the moment.

But we judge the movement of the spirit by what does your life look like on Monday. And I went, oh, man. That's good. I wrote it down. And I went back to the office.

I got to write that down. And I was like, you know what? He's on to something there. Because impact is not what happens in the moment. But what happens the next day.

And look, it tells us in verse 13. Then on the second day. That's not a festival day, by the way. That's just a work day. The festival of trumpets lasted one day.

There was to be a holy convocation that day. The next day was just a normal day. But on the second day, the heads of the father's household. So not everybody. But the heads of the father's households. Of all the people.

[21:58] The priests and Levites. Were gathered to Ezra the scribe. That they might gain insight into the words of the law. You notice what happened. The first day, they went home.

Having understood what was read to them. And they wanted to know more. And they had this hunger. One thing that I have found. That has run consistent.

Is that when people begin to understand the word. They want to know more. It creates a hunger. And a longing. And a desire. To know more.

And they keep returning back to the word. And they keep going back to the word. And they keep going back to the word. People may tire of our personalities. People may tire of our opinions. People may tire of our takes on things.

But people do not tire on the word. When they become aware of what it is telling them. People have a hunger. There is this craving. This longing within them. And they want to know more. It is a well so deep.

[22:57] That we can never drink it dry. And it is so unlike every other book. That men and women have been coming back to the same book. Over and over and over again.

And yet they have still not plunged to the depths of it. And they still think that there is something else to be known. There is something else to be understood. There is something else. I have read the Bible more than I have read any other book in my life.

I have a number of books in my office that I have read maybe two or three times. I don't know how many times I have read the entirety of scripture. I don't know how many times that I have read portions.

But I probably know less about the depths of this book than any other book on my shelf. But I have a hunger. Because each time we learn something.

We return wanting to know more. We say oh God can I come back. And Ezra was there. And God had put Ezra in his life.

[23:55] In their life. And so they went back the next day. And they went back the next day. And they went back the next day. Why? So that they could know more. So that they could know more. So that they could know more.

Read your church history. Churches found on personalities. And churches found on popularity. May do good for a moment. They may have their day.

But it does not last. Those churches that endure. Those churches that stand strong. Are the churches that are still standing on the same thing the early church did.

It is just on the word. Because it's the one thing that will not wear out. The one thing that you can never run out of. And the one thing that will never go dry.

And the people keep returning it says. To the word. Because they return to know more. The reason I encourage people to read the word. And to study the words. Because I know.

[24:56] Once they begin to grasp it. They will have a desire to know more. And more. And more. It's natural in each and every one of our lives. It is an impact that the word had on the people then.

It is an impact that the word. Why do you think. That over 400 years later. Christ could still walk into a synagogue. And find people opening up the scroll.

Reading from it. And trying to explain it. It started here. God had been silent for 400 plus years. But yet people were still gathering. Unrolling the scroll. Reading from it. And someone was explaining it to give the sense. Same thing. 400 years plus.

And it wasn't until Christ said. Today. This has been fulfilled. In your hearing. And then Paul. Would do the same thing. And that's why we still have church today.

[25:55] Same. Purpose. Same purpose. Fourth and finally. The impact of the word. Not only is there a realization of sin.

Not only is there a recognition of God's goodness. And a return to know more. Fourth and finally. And we see this. There is a response of obedience. Those who really grasp the word.

Respond. In faithful obedience. It says. In verse 14. They found written in the law. How the Lord had commanded through Moses. They found written in the law.

How the Lord had commanded. So this shows us something here. They did not go to Ezra. So that they could say. Ezra teach us something cool. Teach us some good facts.

They went to Ezra. So that they may understand. What they should do. There are things that we go to. To gain information. There are things that we go to.

[26:54] To gain a little insight. That may not have much impact. Upon our life. It may not change how we live. The Bible is not one of those. It is not the way here. Because they went.

Not so that Ezra could. Instruct them. So that they could grow. But so that he can instruct them. So that they would know. How they should live. And it says that they. Found that it was written.

And so they sent this proclamation. That the festival of booths. Is going to follow the day of atonement. They are still. Thirteen days away from that festival. So they have time. Because this is the second day.

Of the seventh month. And that festival is on the fifteenth day. So they have time. They send the proclamation. Out throughout all the land. And all the cities. And in Jerusalem. And they tell everyone to go. To gather in the olive branches.

The wild olive branches. By the way. I mean we can so allegorize the text. And people can do this. But man that's a good one. I don't want to mess up on this one. But the. Let me just stop right here.

[27:48] And get a little. Topical preacher on you. Okay. Not that I mind topical preaching. Sometimes I think there's a place on it. I just don't do it very often. But he says to go gather olive branches. And wild olive branches.

If we want to really allegorize that. Some people say. Well what do you mean by wild olive branches. They didn't know what kind of tree that was. But he says go get the olive branch. And then get that. It's kind of like it.

It's going to be grafted into it. By the way that's us. We're a bunch of wild olive branches. Gathered for the glory of the king. Because it says in Romans chapter nine. You are the wild olive branch. That's been grafted into the family of God.

Which is the natural olive tree. Right. And so we're that thing. It's kind of. The wild olive branch in that text. It simply implies some unknown tree. That's kind of like the olive tree.

But they're not really sure what it is. That's kind of what we are. But we're gathered in. See all these. They weren't just a number of people. It was all of them. So they gather all these leafy branches.

[28:44] And they brought them in. And each one built their hut. If you will. Their booth. And they lived in it. And that festival was to remind

them. Of God's faithfulness in the wilderness.

That they journeyed. And God provided. Of God's faithfulness in the wilderness. And of God's promise. To return. To go to a land. In which they were now back in. But it was also to be observed every year.

To remind them. That God was promising them a better land. We call that eternity. That God was sustaining them. And leading them. To a better place.

And it says that they did so. And they obeyed. It was the heads of the father's household. Who heard the truth. And then they went. And it says. And all those who had returned. So what they learned.

They spread to others. Did not keep that information to themselves. And all those. The entire number of people. Would come back. Celebrate it. And it said.

[29:42] The sons of Israel. Had indeed not done so. From the days of Joshua. Now in case you're. Cross-referencing this. In your Old Testament. And I hope you do. You will find that there are other instances.

In which they celebrate the festival of booths. But the wording here means. They have not done it like that. They had not done it to that extent. Since the days of Joshua.

And again there is this connection. Remember the 13 men. That were with him on the stage. Which will be a connection. To the 13 men. That were gathered with Joshua. When they were getting ready. To go into the promised land. If you count the 12 tribes.

Plus the tribe of Levi. Because he did not have a possession. But he was standing there. And so the tribe of Levi's. The 13 and 13. Were getting ready to lead their people. To take possession of the land.

And so the 13 men. Standing with Ezra on the platform. Were a reminder. That God was bringing us back. To this land. The nation of Israel. And here this connection. They had not done so. In this manner.

[30:36] Since the days of Joshua. Is again just reminding them. That they are re-inhabiting the land. That God had promised them. They were God's people. In the promised land. For his glory.

And the impact of the word. Was that it was shaping them. And molding them. To be the people. Prepared. As we keep saying over and over again. For the coming of the Savior. And he will walk into a setting.

That is still doing this very thing. And he will. Show himself to be the fulfillment of the word. Paul will go from synagogue to synagogue.

Proclaiming Christ. And the forgiveness. Until he leaves from there. And goes into the Gentiles.

These are the foundations. And these are the impacts. That God is using.

To bring forward his message. So that the gospel. Could reach the ends of the world. And we find it. In Nehemiah 8. Verses 9 through 18. Thank you my brothers. Thank you.

[31:34]