THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

"Bring the Book"

Nehemiah 8:1-18

Introduction

1. The walls are up. The doors are restored. The registry of the inhabitants has been provided (7:1-73). With such readiness of the physical situation, what takes place in Israel spiritually? The answer is given in this chapter.
2. The unity of the people (7:73) is extended to the opening verse of this chapter. They all stand as "one man." A glorious return to the Word of God is announced. Give attention to these aspects of the matter:-

1. The Word was DESIRED v. 1.

Whenever there is a revival of heart for the Lord, there is always a renewed interest in the Word of God. The "water gate" may well indicate the matter of cleansing (cf. 2:26), albeit it was a physical gate through which the probably bought the water for the temple use. It is here that the expressed desire for the Word is given. Mark three items mentioned about the Word:

a. Given to Moses

Consistently through this section, the Word is referred to as the "law of Moses." He was the one thru whom it was given, indeed, the word 'hand of" is used in the Hebrew (v. 14).

b. Provided by God

It was Jehovah God Who commanded the Word. What a testimony to the divine authorship of the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). If the whole Bible is not the Word of God, then it is full of holes!

c. Addressed to Israel.

This is a clear statement that the law was given to the nation Israel (cf. Ex. 19:1-6). It is also a declaration that God has His Word for men and not just a record!

2. The Word was DECLARED. vv. 2-6

a. Stated

A number of verses show that Ezra actually got the Word of God out to the people: "brought, read, opened". It is thrilling to know that Ezra responded to a desire of the people like this (Psa. 81:10). He was the scribe called of God for this purpose.

b. Approved

The leadership associated with Ezra agreed to what was being done. This is shown by their presence with him on a specially built platform for 14 persons (v.4).

c. Prayed.

Ezra led in prayer and the entire congregation responded (v. 6). They stood up when the Word was written. Whether this was during the entire reading is not clear, altho some practice this today as a result of this text.

NOTE: The reading of the Word like this was commanded by the law (Deut. 31:10-13). God has His purpose for reading outlined there: to hear, to learn, to fear, to observe, to do (v. 12). What a need for this today!

3. The Word was DEFINED. vv. 7, 8, 9, 13.

a. By reading

The word "distinctly" comes from the root meaning to "spread out, separate, distinguish." It is the same word from which the noun Pharisee is gained. Clearness of message is surely indicated.

b. By explaining.

The two words in the Hebrew rendered "give sense" really mean to "give understanding or wisdom." It suggests that the truth of the Word was provided with exegesis.

c. By applying.

It is not enough to merely know the text; it must be utilized. This seems to be the thot of "cause to understand." The receiving of the Word so that it becomes a part of one's life--that is the sense here (cf. vv. 9, 13 for the same phrase).

4. The Word was DIGESTED

4. The Word was DIGESTED vv. 9-18.

a. In providing joy. vv. 9-12

At first the reading of the Word brought sorrow to their hearts (v. 9). Later, however, it became their joy (v. 10) and this made them rejoice (v. 11). This is what the Word will do for anyone who accepts its message in truth.

b. In providing obedience. vv. 10-18

What the Word of God said about the feast of taber nacles was now heeded. The reading of the Word is not enough; it should be obeyed (James 1:22-25). So great was the thrill of the Word that the people did more than they were expected(v. 18). They read it more than that required (cf. Deut. 31:10-13).

Conclusion Those who truly get right with the Lord and are established get into the Word. What an illustration is provided here. God give us such a heart for Himself!