RESPONSE OF EMOTION
vv. 9-12

a. Provoked
Those listed include Nehemiah (Trishatha or Governor), Ezra (Priest/Scribe), and the Levites (set apart for the service of the sanctuary and subordinate to the priests, Num. 8:6; Ezra 2:70). These taught or caused the people to understand. Three times the people are told the day is "holy unto the Lord" (vv. 9, 10, 11).

b. Indicated
Two words are employed to show the deep response of the people. They "wept" (v. 9) and were "sorry" (v. 10).

c. Directed
Rather than expressing sorrow, the people are instructed: 1) Mourn not (v. 8). 2) Weep not (v. 9). 3) Hold your peace (v. 11). 4) Grieve (v. 11 verb for "sorry") not. Contrariwise, they were to: 1) Go. 2) Eat. 3) Drink. 4) Send gifts.

Amazingly, Scripture reports the people did what they were told (v. 12). Reason? Because they "understood" what they had been caused to know (KJV "declared").

RESPONSE OF OBEDIENCE
vv. 13-18

Note: Following the emotional response of the people to the words of the law of God, it is recorded that a select group of "the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests, and the Levites" met with Ezra the Scribe "to understand ("consider") the words of the Law" (v. 11). From this "Bible study" with Ezra on the "second day" of the seventh month, the group "discovered" the commandment to observe the "Festival of Booths" (Feast of Tabernacles). What about this feast? Look at its major aspects:

a. It was Historical
1) Recorded. Nehemiah clearly confirms this for he notes that as Ezra read the Word, the information about the feast was found (vv. 14, 15, 18). It is good to see "it is written" for this is the form we follow! Not what man says, but what God declares!

2) Timed. Like the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), this feast was celebrated in the seventh month (v. 14). This is what the law concerning it required (Lev. 23:33, 34, 39, 41). It was the month of beginnings, but also of completions as is the meaning of number seven (cf. 7 days of creation). This is the crown of the other six feasts of the Lord, being the seventh one (Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement, Tabernacles).

3) Detailed
a) Sacrifically. (Lev. 23:33-38). It was wrought by fire (v. 36) and included sacrifice (vv. 37, 38).

b) Naturally. This feast was related to the ingathering of the fruit (Lev. 23:39-40), hence, it is also called the Feast of Ingathering (Ex. 23:16; 34:22). In this connection, the booths were constructed from the trees (Neh. 8:15). It was a time of great joy (Deut. 16:15; Neh. 8:17). The Hebrew for "gladness" (v. 17) means to rejoice with a merry and cheerful countenance. Think of doing this for eight days (v. 18)! This was to be done "before the Lord" (Lev. 23:40).

c) Memorially. Only Jews were expected to keep the feast (Lev. 23:42). It was a fitting testimony to their wilderness journey for 40 years when God walked in a tent amongst them (2 Sam. 7:6). This is probably why the feast was now kept after the captivity in Babylon. They had celebrated the feast since Joshua's day, but had not done so in the booths (cf. 2 Chron. 8:13; Ezra 3:4; cf. Neh. 8:17).

d) Abundantly. Details are not given here as to what was included in the feast, but it does say it was "according unto the manner (ordinance)" (v. 18). This may be a reference to instructions given elsewhere (Num. 29:12-38). This is the largest display of the burnt offerings of any of the feasts: 70 bullocks! What a display of the provision of the Lord!

b. It was Typical
1) Implied. (Mark 9:5). The word "tabernacles" is the word for "booth" or "tent." It spoke to Peter of the presence of the Lord at the transfiguration of Christ in His glory and Kingdom (Matt. 16:28 - 17:13). This is what the Feast of Tabernacles marks: the coming of our Lord in His presence with the nation Israel in the Kingdom (Ezk. 48:35).

2) Explained. Just as Israel returned from captivity and celebrated with great joy in the booths, so it will be in the final regathering of the nation for Kingdom blessing (Isa. 11, 35; Jer. 31). Then the nation will enjoy its true Sabbath-rest in the land with the Lord (Zech. 14:11). This follows Yom Kippur which speaks of cleansing (Lev. 23:26-32; Zech. 3:1-7; 13:1). It will be experienced during the Millennium or thousand year reign of our Lord on earth. Hallelujah! The feast will be celebrated again during the Millennium as a memorial to His blessings upon the nation (Zech. 14:16, 18, 19).

Conclusion. The public reading of the Word of God moved the people. Thank God for such a spiritual response! It not only touched the people, it caused them to obey! That is what the Word is all about. Read Psalm 119 for an appropriate commentary. To God be the glory forever and ever. Amen!