

Study, Obey, and Teach God's Word

International Bible Lesson

Nehemiah 8:1-3, 13-18

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“And Ezra read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law” (Nehemiah 8:3—KJV).

“Ezra read from the book of the law of Moses facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law” (Nehemiah 8:3—NRSV).

Many years before the priest Ezra led some of the Israelites back from captivity in Babylon to Jerusalem he made studying, obeying, and teaching the law of God the most important purpose of his life (see Ezra 7:10). Then, after long years of study and faithfulness, God gave Ezra the honor and opportunity to read and teach the book of Moses to thousands of men, women, and children with understanding as they gathered in Jerusalem. They listened carefully, understood what Ezra taught, and obeyed what God commanded. After Ezra taught them about the festival of booths, a festival to remind them of their wandering in the desert when they left Egypt after years of slavery, they followed Ezra's example and obeyed the law of God by building simple shelters to live in while they celebrated the seven day festival. On each of the seven days during the festival, leaders and people listened as Ezra read and explained how God expected them to obey the Scriptures. Notice, the Spirit of God first influenced Ezra to adopt the right purpose for his life; then, after Ezra had practiced obedience to the law of God, the Spirit of God enabled Ezra to teach the Bible to thousands of people in Jerusalem, where Ezra probably never dreamed he would ever teach anyone. The Spirit of God enabled the people to understand the Scriptures, and the Spirit also encouraged them to obey God's word.

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Thinking Further

1. Why do you think it is important to know that the Law of Moses was given to him by the LORD rather than being a set of laws written by Moses or others with legal training?
2. Why do you think Nehemiah 8:2-3 emphasizes understanding?
3. Why do you think all of the people were attentive as Ezra read and explained the Law of God?
4. Why do you think Nehemiah 8:13 emphasizes that they studied “the words of the law”?
5. How might the nations of the world be different if all political and religious leaders and everyone in every nation studied the words of God's law or the Bible?