

THE GREATEST BIBLE CLASS IN HISTORY

Nehemiah 8:1-8

INTRODUCTION:

1. Swarms start with a queen bee; floods start with raindrops; epidemics start with an upset stomach; world wars start with one death; AND NATIONAL REVIVALS BEGIN WITH ONE CONVERTED HEART!
2. "So King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom" (2 Chronicles 9:22). "And the LORD God of their fathers sent *warnings* to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending *them*, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, till there was no remedy" (2 Chronicles 36:15-16). WHAT HAD BROUGHT GOD'S NATION TO ITS KNEES?
3. "There is no truth or mercy Or knowledge of God in the land" (Hosea 4:1)
4. God had said, "I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine of bread, Nor a thirst for water, But of hearing the words of the LORD" (Amos 8:11).
5. Bible Teachers, are the saints' next line of defense, for, "So the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD which He had done for Israel...When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the works which He had done for Israel" (Judges 2:7,10) Their unbelief matched Pharaoh's (Exodus 1:6-8)!
6. WHY ARE TEACHERS SO IMPORTANT TO THE LORD'S CAUSE? They must develop for the future: The Teacher, The Teaching, The Taught. (2 Timothy 2:2)

DISCUSSION:

1) DEVELOP THE TEACHER – Nehemiah 8:2, 4, 5 - "So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the congregation...So Ezra the scribe stood on a platform of wood which they had made for the purpose...And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people..."

a) Ezra 7:10 - "For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel"

i) Great teachers are learners first, even Jesus Christ! (John 5:19-20; Hebrews 5:5-10; Acts 1:1; John 6:44-45; Matthew 28:18-20)

ii) "Apply yourself to the whole text, and apply the whole text to yourself"
-- J. A. Bengel

iii) "Lay hold on the Bible until the Bible lays hold on you"

-- Will H. Houghton

iv) "I did not go through the Book. The Book went through me."

-- A. W. Tozer

b) What if the people gathered, the Bible was on the pulpit, BUT NO ONE SHOWED UP TO OPEN THE BOOK!!?? What if Ezra: "had company," "was out of town," "couldn't get away from his job," "was coaching a little league ball game," or "had a family member sick"???" *HOW MUCH RESTORATION WILL THERE BE WHEN GOD'S PEOPLE DON'T CARE THAT GOD'S WORD IS KNOWN?????*

2) DEVELOP THE TEACHING – Nehemiah 8:8 - "So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense." The work of the Bible Teacher:

a)Read the Word:

i)**Completely** – verse 3 "from morning to midday"

(1)Longer than a sermon;

(2)Slower than a "sit-com;"

ii)**Convincingly** – verse 3 "and the ears of all the people..."

(1)Stood in silence out of respect for God

(2)e.g. President's "State of the Union" or Announcement of Gulf War;

(3)Some quote commentators, "restoration movement men,"
"theologians," BUT SEEM TO CARE LITTLE ABOUT WHAT GOD SAID!

(4)*AVOID SECTS & CULTS -- LISTEN ONLY TO GOD!*

(5)This is NOT "bibliolatry" - BUT respect for that Word which represents God cf Exodus 3:5; 19:12, 17, 20-25; 40:34-35; John 10:30

iii)**Clearly** – verse 8 - "So they read distinctly"

(1)"Distinctly" is a Hebrew word meaning "to split up, separate," either the words, pauses, or audience;

(2)This was done because they spoke Aramaic/Ashdod (Nehemiah 13:24) but the Scripture was in Hebrew;

(3)And/Or because they were unfamiliar with hearing God's Word.

b)**Relate to Its Meaning** verse 8 - "they gave the sense";

i)Acts 8:30-31 - Ethiopian needed more than a "page-turner;"

ii)Matthew 13:10-11 - Even parables are more than "playthings"

(In Bible Classes, we provide "take homes" for the hand, but not the heart; we're more concerned with cutting paper than cutting to the heart; children may become adults who think "mustard seed" is for wearing on a necklace; OR children learn how to plant a garden but not sow the seed of God's Word!)

iii)John 16:12 - "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now" ("Truth is like an onion -- peel it and weep" -jtpII)

c)**Realize Its Power** verse 9 -"For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the Law;"

i)**They Did Observe:**

(1)Holy Day verse 9-11 (cf Leviticus 23:24); Caring

(2)Happy Days verse 12; Sharing

(3)Humble Dwelling verse 13-17; Daring

(4)Heartfelt Doing verse 13-16; Baring

ii)**We Should Realize:**

(1)"The Bible is the cornerstone of liberty."---Thomas Jefferson

(2)"There is no solid basis for civilization but in the Word of God."

---Daniel Webster

(3)"The more profoundly we study this wonderful Book, and the more closely we observe its precepts, the better citizens we will become and the higher will be the destiny of our nation."

---William McKinley

3) **DEVELOP THE TAUGHT** – verse 8 - "they gave the sense and helped *them* to understand". ***We should not rest until we teach:***

a) All the Word to;

b) All the People in;

c) All the World.

CONCLUSION:

1. Wars, floods, famines, droughts, earthquakes, volcanoes, cyclones, tidal waves, tornadoes, hurricanes, crime & corruption, immorality, sicknesses, and deaths CAN MERELY BE GOD PLOWING HARD HEARTS TO PREPARE FOR SOWERS TO SOW THE SEED.
2. The "noble and good heart" (Luke 8:15) will receive it and obey.
3. This is ***not*** a "mission impossible" BUT "Your job, should you choose to accept it, is to teach the Word of God believing It has the power to change hearts, NOT our teaching materials and methods! This opportunity may self-destruct in our life-times."
4. "Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14)