

We will now begin the eleventh lecture on the Book of Ezra and the Book of Nehemiah. / Today we will begin with Nehemiah chapter 8. /Verses 1-12 /will be titled, “The Square Before the Water Gate.”

/In verses 1 and 3 is “the square before the Water Gate.” /The name of this gate was the Water Gate. /It was most likely a passageway where people carried water back and forth. /There was a square before the Water Gate, and what example of faith did the people display?

/Construction of the city wall was completed on the twenty-fifth day of the sixth month in 444 BC under the leadership of Nehemiah. /Construction of the city wall was completed on the twenty-fifth day of Elul. /Then all the people settled in their towns.

/Then the people assembled in the square before the Water Gate in the seventh month.

/On what day does verse 2 say the people gathered in the seventh month? /Verse 2 says that people gathered on the “first day of the seventh month.” /The people assembled in the square before the Water Gate on the first day of the seventh month.

/The building of the city wall was completed in fifty-two days, and the people assembled in the square. /They most likely gathered on the first day of the seventh month, about five days after they settled into their towns. /No one told them or commanded them to assemble.

/They were all moved in their hearts and voluntarily gathered in the square before the Water Gate. /God brought all the people together. /In verse 3, /when was the Law read to the people?

/Read verse 3. /He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.

/Ezra read the Book of the Law from daybreak till noon. /When did the people gather before the Water Gate? /Some could have arrived the day before. /Some came early in the morning. /However, they were not forced to gather.

/They were not reluctant. /They were not dragged there by others. /The Book of the Law was read from daybreak, /which shows that they hurried to gather there. /They came voluntarily.

/They gathered in one heart. /This was extremely precious. /The people gathered at the square before the Water Gate on the first day of the seventh month, /and why did they gather? /Chapter 8 give us two reasons.

/First, /the people gathered because they thirsted for the Law, /God’s Word. /They had not heard the Law before. /They never read the law so their hearts were frustrated.

/They longed for God's word and hence, they gathered at the square. /No one told them to come, but they came. /How can we know this? /The answer is in verse 3. /From when until when was the Book of the Law read aloud?

/The Law was read from daybreak until noon. /The Book of the Law was read from 6 a.m. to 12 noon. /Verse 5 also says, /the people stood up when the Book of the Law was opened. /This shows that the people longed for God's Word.

/In verses 8-9, /the leaders taught the people, /and it says that the people wept when they heard God's Word. /The people wept, which shows that their hearts were softened and they longed for God's Word.

/Verse 12 further says, /the people now understood what was read to them. /Here we can see again how much the people longed for God's Word.

/In verse 13, it says, /they wanted to learn more about the Law. /The people gathered at the square before the Water Gate for a reason. /They gathered with thirsty and longing hearts for God's Word.

/They needed to assemble at the square before the Water Gate. /They listened to the Law for six hours, but they were not bored. /They also stood up when the Law was opened. /The people wept when the Law was interpreted for them.

/The people understood the Law and wanted to learn more. /They gathered at the square before the Water Gate because they were thirsty for the Law. /The second reason why they gathered /was because they wanted to celebrate the feast.

/When does verse 2 say /that they gathered? /They gathered on the first day of the seventh month. /That day was the first day of a new month. /It was a new day. /The first day of the seventh month was the Feast of Trumpets. /There were many feasts in the seventh month. /The tenth day of the seventh month was the Day of Atonement.

/A week from the fifteenth day of the seventh month was the Feast of Tabernacles. /The people gathered at the square before the Water Gate because they wanted to celebrate the feasts.

/In verse 17, /it says that they did not grandly celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles from the days of Joshua until now. /In verse 18, /Ezra read from the Book of the Law every day. /The people wanted him to read to them from the Book of the Law.

/They wanted to hear the Law every day. /They wanted to return to the Law when they assembled at the square. /They wanted to live by the Law. /They wanted to celebrate the feasts as the Law said they should.

/Today, we too must gather in the square before the Water Gate in heart. /We must gather

and learn the Bible and study the Bible. /We must return to the Bible. /We must live according to the Bible. /This is how we can faithfully celebrate the feasts in the Bible.

/The people lived in the square before the Water Gate. /The people of Nehemiah's time wanted to hear from the Law. /They longed for God's Word. /Where must our faith live?

/We too must live in the square before the Water Gate. /We must open our ears to the Law. /We must weep when we hear the Bible. /We must tear our clothes and repent. /We must make resolutions, cut off sins, and turn away. /That is how we can live in the square before the Water Gate.

/In verse 1, /when the people gathered in the square, they did not discuss politics. /They did not discuss economics. /What did they want Ezra to bring?

/The people wanted Ezra to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the Lord had commanded for Israel. /They wanted Ezra to bring the Book of the Law of Moses. /To whom was the Book of the Law given to? /It was given to Ezra.

/Ezra had the Book of the Law. /Ezra was a scholar and a priest /according to Ezra 7:11. /He was a scholar and a priest. /Ezra 7:10 says that Ezra was a very special person.

/Ezra studied the law /and taught the Israelites. /Ezra returned 14 years earlier to Judah. /He returned during the second return. /Nehemiah returned in the third return, 24 years later.

/Ezra brought the Book of the Law with him when he returned from Babylon. /This happened 2,500 years before the time in today's passage. /Typography was not developed then. /There were only parchments at the time.

/Hence, not everyone had a copy of the Book of the Law. /People were not able to read the Book of the Law. /They were not able to hear from the Law. /Thus, the people asked Ezra to read from the Law. /The Israelites received grace.

/They gathered at the square /so that they could return, /obey, /and celebrate the feasts according to the Bible.

/In verse 2, /Ezra brought the Book of the Law /when they gathered on the first day of the seventh month in the square before the Water Gate. /The men, women, and all who were able to understand assembled in the square. /They sent someone to bring Ezra.

/Ezra then arrived at the square with the Book of the Law. /It was the time of the Feast of Trumpets. /It was a new month. /Psalm 107:9 says, /"for he satisfies the thirsty /and fills the hungry with good things."

/God satisfies the thirsty souls. /God fills the hungry souls with good things. /The same goes for us today. /We must be thirsty in our souls. /We must be hungry in our souls.

/We must thirst for God's Word. /We must have the heart to learn more and more from the Bible. /We must have the heart to live according to the Bible.

/When the people gathered with such hearts, /Ezra brought the Book of the Law and testified to God's Word to those who would listen.

/In verses 3-6 /are the examples of one who read and one who listened. /First, /Ezra was an example of one who read. /For how long did Ezra read from the Book of the Law? /How long does verse 3 say that Ezra read?

/Ezra read from daybreak till noon, for six hours. /Where did he read from? /Verse 4 says that he read from a high wooden platform. /Ezra stood and read for six hours. /There were people who helped Ezra as he read.

/There were six men who stood on his right. /There were seven men who stood on his left. /A total of thirteen men helped Ezra. /They helped Ezra as he read the Law.

/Their names include /"ah" and "el." /The "ah" indicates Yahweh, /and "el" indicates Elohim. /Their names had relations to God's name.

/This was possibly because they were born into families that feared God. /They received religious education from a young age. /They helped Ezra as he read from the Bible by standing on his right and left.

/God always uses such people. /God uses those who believe in him from a young age, /who grow up in families that fear God, /and who receive training in their faith.

/Therefore, we too must fear God /and receive thorough training in our faith. /We must have faith that is related to God's name.

/God put these thirteen faithful men by Ezra's side. /God put these noble believers by Ezra's side. /How did Ezra describe God?

/In verse 6, /Ezra called God, the great God, /the God who receives praises. /God is a great God. /In Deuteronomy 10:17, /Moses too called God, the great God.

/Nehemiah 9:32 says, /God is the great God. /Jeremiah 32:18 says, /God is a great God. /Our Father God is a great God. /He is God of heaven and earth.

/God is eternally worthy of all praise. /"Praise" means to worship and glorify God. /What must we give in return to God? /We must give him praises. /We must worship and glorify God.

/Second, in verses 3 and 6 /is the example of those who listened. /Where did the people sit and listen to the Book of the Law, and for how long? /The people sat in the square

before the Water Gate from 6 a.m., and listened for six hours.

/Acts 17:11 says, /the Bereans received the message with great eagerness. /In this way, the people sat and listened to Ezra read from the Bible for six hours. /We must repent before God's Word.

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/When Ezra opened the Book in verse 5, all the people stood up. /This was an attitude of reverence for God. /This was also humble faith of respect for God's servant.

/Verse 6 /shows an attitude of serving God. /The people lifted their hands in verse 6. /Then they responded, "Amen! Amen!" /Then they bowed down with their faces to the ground. /The people worshiped the Lord. /They showed an example of those who listen.

/In verses 7-8 /are people who interpreted the Law so that people could understand. /There were thirteen men. /What was important here? /It was important that the people understand the Law. /It was important that they interpret the Law.

/The church that teaches the Bible /is a precious church. /How did Jesus teach? /Luke 24:32 /says that Jesus opened the Scriptures and taught. /Jesus taught so that people would understand.

/When we teach the Bible, how must we teach? /We must teach so that believers would understand. /We must teach easily to believers. /We must teach so that believers could identify.

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/1 Timothy 4:13 says, /devote yourself to the reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. /2 Timothy 2:24.

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/In verse 9, /the people responded, and Nehemiah encouraged the people. /First, it tells us how the people responded. /What does it say the people did when they heard the Book of the Law? /The people wept.

/When the people heard the Law, /they remembered their sins of failing to observe the Law. /They remembered that they were taken captive to Babylon because they defied the Law and served idols. /The people wept because they thought that all this happened because of their sins.

/It is extremely precious for us to have broken spirits. /We must have broken spirits when we listen to the Bible. /We must have broke hearts. /2 Chronicles 34:19, 27.

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/Second, Ezra and Nehemiah encouraged the people. /The leaders encouraged the people. /In verse 9, they said, /“This day is sacred to the LORD your God. /Do not mourn or weep.”

/This day was the first day of the seventh month. /It was the day of the Feast of Trumpets. /It was a sacred day. /They were not to weep because it was a sacred day. /Isaiah 58:13, 14.

/In verse 10, /Nehemiah told the people to go enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, /give to those who have nothing prepared, /and not grieve. /He encouraged them, saying that the joy of the Lord was their strength. /This is important. /We must have joy through God alone. /We must have joy in God.

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/In verse 12, /all the people celebrated with great joy. /Why were the people joyful? /It was because they now understood God’s Word. /They understood the truth.

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/In verses 13-18, /they kept the “Feast of Tabernacles.”

/Leviticus 23:34 says, /keep the Feast of Tabernacles from the fifteenth day of the seventh month. /They were to bring branches and build booths. /They were to live in the booths for seven days.

/Read verse 15. /and that they should proclaim this word and spread it throughout their towns and in Jerusalem: "Go out into the hill country and bring back branches from olive and wild olive trees, and from myrtles, palms and shade trees, to make booths"-- as it is written.

/The people were to go bring back branches of olive trees from the hill country. /They were to bring branches from olive trees. /They were to take other branches and make booths, as it was written. /Ezra informed the heads of the families to do as it was written in the Bible.

/Verse 16. /So the people went out and brought back branches and built themselves booths on their own roofs, in their courtyards, in the courts of the house of God and in the square by the Water Gate and the one by the Gate of Ephraim.

/The people immediately obeyed. /They obeyed and built booths, even on their own roofs. /They built booths in their courtyards. /They built booths in the courts of the house of God. /They built booths in the square by the Water Gate. /They built booths in places that God chose for them.

/Verse 17. /The whole company that had returned from exile built booths and lived in them. From the days of Joshua son of Nun until that day, the Israelites had not celebrated it like this. And their joy was very great.

/The people built booths and lived in them. /It was important to build booths. /It was also important to live in them. /When they celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles, God allowed them to rejoice, give thanks, and have peace.

/Booths were made so that the people would remember their difficult pasts and be thankful for the present. /The current people were to remember God who saved their forefathers in the wilderness in the past. /They were to throw away complacency and experience difficulties.

/It also means that we are aliens in this world like the booths that were built. 1 Peter 1:17; 2:11; Hebrews 11:9, 10, 13. /Verse 12 said that they were to celebrate with great joy. Acts 2:46. /We too must be joyful with believers.

/Verse 18. /Day after day, from the first day to the last, Ezra read from the Book of the Law of God. They celebrated the feast for seven days, and on the eighth day, in accordance with the regulation, there was an assembly.

/The people celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days. /Ezra also read from the Bible every day. /Ezra read the Bible every day during the Feast of Tabernacles. /He read from daybreak until noon. /It was important to read the Bible every day during the Feast of Tabernacles. /Deuteronomy 31:10-13.

/We must teach and learn from the Bible in the church. /We must diligently teach the Bible to students in Sunday school at church. /We must diligently teach the Bible to our parents and children in our families.

/Here we will conclude the eleventh lecture on Ezra and Nehemiah. /Thank you.