

RECOVERING WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT

Nehemiah 8

Something more is happening—

So on October 2 the wall was finished—just fifty-two days after we had begun. (6.15)

- In an extraordinary accomplishment, the rebuilding of the walls had been completed in just 52 days! Against all odds, the years of inertia, and the conflicts of interest, the people had come together in unity and had accomplished what had long been unthinkable. And in doing so, something deeper had shifted: within their hearts was a deeper desire for God.

Calling and identity—

In October, when the Israelites had settled in their towns, all the people assembled with a unified purpose at the square just inside the Water Gate. They asked Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had given for Israel to obey. (8.1)

- Just days after the completion of the work, the people again came together in Jerusalem with a request: they wanted to hear the Word of God – the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had given for Israel to obey.

- At the heart of the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had given for Israel to obey was this foundational truth: The Lord God had chosen Israel to be His very own.

“You have seen what I did to the Egyptians. You know how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to me. And you will be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation. This is the message you must give to the people of Israel.” (Exodus 19.4-6)

- Every aspect of life, relationships, business, and worship was guided by the Book of the Law and it served to distinguish them from the nations around them. Israel belonged exclusively to the Holy God; they were His alone in covenant relationship and the Book of the Law informed and guided that covenant identity, enabling them to live out their calling as a holy people belonging to a holy God.

- Israel's great failure was their neglect of the Word of God; they thought they could cut corners on obedience. But neglect led to disobedience and disobedience led to uselessness – Israel became unfit to serve God's purposes. In neglecting God's Word, they became like the idolatrous nations around them –something which Moses warned would happen and which ultimately led to the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile to Babylon.

Is the most important, most important to you?

So on October 8 Ezra the priest brought the Book of the Law before the assembly, which included the men and women and all the children old enough to understand. He faced the square just inside the Water Gate from early morning until noon and read aloud to everyone who could understand. All the people listened closely to the Book of the Law. (8.2-3)

- Does the Word of God command your attention?
- Does the Word of God stir your emotions?
- Does the Word of God lead you to obedience?
- Does the Word of God lead to change and commitment?