

**Title:** Be Still, O People of the Book!

**Passage:** Nehemiah 8

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Draft Summary:

I. Be Still Under God's Word, O People of the Book (v. 1-8)

II. Be Still on God's Holiday, O People of the Book (v.9-12)

III. Be Still as We Wait for Him to Return, O People of the Book. (v.13-19)

Key Truths:

- Mind is the mouth, heart the stomach, the will the muscle
  - We eat by the mind, digest by the heart, we work out by the will.
- Today, many people still do not have the Bible in their own language.
  - Pray for people today and in the future generations to bring God's Word to be understandable to people.
- God does not turn sweet until sin is sour.

Possible Discussion Questions:

- What point(s) in the sermon did the Lord most impress upon you?
  - What effect does the holiness of God have on you - repent or run?
  - What next steps will you take in response to the sermon?
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## **EXPOSITION**

### **Introduction**

#### **Overview**

I. Be Still Under God's Word, O People of the Book (v. 1-8)

II. Be Still on God's Holiday, O People of the Book (v.9-12)

III. Be Still as We Wait for Him to Return, O People of the Book. (v.13-19)

### **I. BE STILL UNDER GOD'S WORD, O PEOPLE OF THE BOOK (v. 1-8)**

#### ***Nehemiah 8:1a***

***And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate.***

- “All the people”
  - the rebuilding of the wall was really about the resurrection of a nation.

***Nehemiah 8:1b***

***And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the LORD had commanded Israel.***

- What did they come to hear?
  - The Book of the Law of Moses
    - God’s timeless Word.
- The first 5 books of the Bible.
  - Genesis: God who created all things
  - Exodus: God who rescued His beloved people.
  - Leviticus: God who is holy and invites His people to worship Him.
  - Numbers: God who conquers and rescues His people.
  - Deuteronomy: God who loves us and saves us again and again from what is required of us.

***Nehemiah 8:2a***

***So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly,***

- Ezra
  - Scribe and priest
    - Sharp with the Word, soft with the soul

Ezra 7:6a

this Ezra went up from Babylonia. He was a scribe skilled in the Law of Moses that the LORD

***Nehemiah 8:2b***

***both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month.***

- men/women = those 13 and above
- All who could understand what they heard = children
- first day of the seventh month = crown of the year (all key holidays)

***Nehemiah 8:3***

***And he read from it 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.***

- Ezra read God's Word clearly in the middle of the city.

Matthew 11:11

Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

- God's Word was read all day.
- Mind is the mouth, heart the stomach, the will the muscle
  - We eat by the mind, digest by the heart, we work out by the will.

1 Corinthians 1:18

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

***Nehemiah 8:4***

***And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiyah, and Maaseiah on his right hand, and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left hand.***

- The proclamation of God's Word is clear - front and center.
- A plurality of Israelite leadership stood with Ezra.

***Nehemiah 8:5***

***And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood.***

- The preacher was audible and above all.

***Nehemiah 8:6***

***And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.***

- Ezra exposed God's Word.
  - Worship is about God (not songs but about Him alone).
    - God reveals Himself through His Word.

- The response?
  - People answered “amen, amen”
  - People lifted up their hands
  - People bowed with faces to the ground.
- Worship of God is revered.
  - We must worship God as He has set before us.

***Nehemiah 8:7***

***Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law, while the people remained in their places.***

- 26 total leaders were teaching before 20 to 30,000 people.
- The people were attentive and still.

***Nehemiah 8:8***

***They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.***

- At this time, the Torah was 1,000 years old written in Hebrew.
  - But their language had been changed to Aramaic so they needed people to interpret what God’s Word says.
- Today, many people still do not have the Bible in their own language.
  - We need people today and in the future generations to bring God’s Word to be consumable/understandable to people.
    - Exposition of God’s Word
      - Not topical but what God’s Word said as it is.
- Contrast: Topical preaching limits knowledge to the speaker’s knowledge.
  - Expository preaching unleashes

**II. BE STILL ON GOD’S HOLIDAY, O PEOPLE OF THE BOOK (v.9- 12)**

***Nehemiah 8:9***

***And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, “This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep.” For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law.***

- Seventh Month of Calendar
  - Advent calendar for Jesus
    - Crown Him King
    - Repent
    - He Saves
    - We party
- Why the tears?
  - The purpose of the Law: shows us we are lost in our sin.
    - They sorrowed over their sin.
- Where do we turn in our sin?
  - Does holiness make us repent or run?
    - God's holiness does not drive sinners away from Him but rather drove Him to save sinners

Numbers 14:18

The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and the fourth generation.'

- God saves because of His holiness.
  - God does not turn sweet until sin is sour.

***Nehemiah 8:10***

***Then he said to them, "Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."***

What is Joy?

Luke 15:7

Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

- Great joy in the salvation of sinners.
- Caution: when distracted by depression or anxiety, it is a cloud between us and God.
  - We become uncertain to who God says He is.

***Nehemiah 8:11***

***So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be quiet, for this day is holy; do not be grieved."***

- A holy day is a holiday.
  - Not to be sad when God is happy.

***Nehemiah 8:12***

***And all the people went their way to eat and drink and to send portions and to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them.***

- Are you still sad about sin?
  - Be glad that it is forgiven sin.
- Every repentant day is a holiday
  - Another day where turned from self and turned to God who is merciful and gracious.

**III. BE STILL AS WE WAIT FOR HIM TO RETURN, O PEOPLE OF THE BOOK (v.13-18)**

***Nehemiah 8:13***

***On the second day the heads of fathers' houses of all the people, with the priests and the Levites, came together to Ezra the scribe in order to study the words of the Law.***

- True revival
  - Revival leads to study of God's Word.

***Nehemiah 8:14-15***

***And they found it written in the Law that the LORD had commanded by Moses that the people of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month, and that they should proclaim it and publish it in all their towns and in Jerusalem, "Go out to the hills and bring branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees to make booths, as it is written."***

- A nation-wide collective camping outing.
  - Booth = not a simple tent but rather an elaborate shelter
- Why have people leave the safety of the city?
  - Testimony that God alone is their protector and provider.

Psalms 20:7

Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.

### ***Nehemiah 8:16***

***So the people went out and brought them and made booths for themselves, each on his roof, and in their courts and in the courts of the house of God, and in the square at the Water Gate and in the square at the Gate of Ephraim.***

- They read/heard the Word of God and obeyed.
  - This is faith. Already doing what it says.

### ***Nehemiah 8:17***

***And all the assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and lived in the booths, for from the days of Jeshua the son of Nun to that day the people of Israel had not done so. And there was very great rejoicing.***

- In captivity, the Israelites had not followed the Law.
  - disobedience wants to forget what a misery is a life of sin is.
- Contrast: following God's Word brings "very great rejoicing."
  - True joy is found in true obedience.

### ***Nehemiah 8:18***

***And day by day, from the first day to the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. They kept the feast seven days, and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly, according to the rule.***

Deuteronomy 16:13-15

"You shall keep the Feast of Booths seven days, when you have gathered in the produce from your threshing floor and your winepress. You shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are within your towns. For seven days you shall keep the feast to the LORD your God at the place that the LORD will choose, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you will be altogether joyful.

- Find true, lasting joy in God alone.

Hymn: It is Well with my Soul

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come

Let this blest assurance control

That Christ (yes, He has) has regarded my helpless estate  
And has shed His own blood for my soul

And Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight  
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll  
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend  
Even so, it is well with my soul