

## RESPECT FOR THE BIBLE

Sermon by Mark S. Aites

### TEXT: NEHEMIAH 8:1-12

#### INTRODUCTION:

1. There are very few things as precious to me as the Word of God.
2. There was a time in this country when many felt that way.
  - 1) In the book, *Rebirth of America*, it is noted: "Shortly after the birth of this great nation it was brought to the attention of the newly formed congress that there was a shortage of Bibles."
  - 2) It was so important to them that a special committee was assigned to undertake the task of importing Bibles.
  - 3) 20,000 Bibles were brought into the United States from Holland, Scotland, and other countries.
  - 4) But 3 years later there was a request for more Bibles. One man petitioned congress to help and he began printing Bibles in the City of Philadelphia.
3. Today the Bible remains one of the best sellers.
4. Many homes in fact have more than one copy of the Bible.
5. My expression of concern is that many, even though they own a copy, do not respect the Bible like they should.
6. The Psalmist had the right attitude (**Psa. 119:11-16, 33, 105**).
7. Our text from **Neh. 8** should remind us of the preciousness of God's Word.

#### DISCUSSION:

##### I. THE DESIRE.

- A. **Neh. 8:1-2**
- B. Our story opens with God's people in the city of Jerusalem.
  1. Our time frame is in the seventh month; a new year and time for a fresh start.
  2. The people assembled in one place and they were of one purpose and one mind.
- B. And a wonderful desire among the people is voiced to Ezra: "*to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel.*"
  1. We take note of their attitude; that they wanted to hear the Word of God. (**cf. Matt. 5:6**).
  2. **Psa. 119:131, 174.**
- C. Such longing reminds me of those who have preached the gospel of Christ in foreign lands.
  1. I have a number of friends who have told me about preaching in Russia; they continue to tell me of how that the souls there long to hear the Word of God.
  2. I have another friend who has been an elder in the church; who frequents Trinidad.
    - 1) He informs me that if you preach less than 3 hours that the people will be upset. And they sit on the ground; some even on narrow benches.
    - 2) And yet in contrast, in this country the push is on to limit the amount of

time in the proclamation of the gospel.

3. I know of one extreme case where a man preaches for a denomination who only preaches for eight minutes.
4. What a delight it is when people hunger and thirst for the words of the living God.

## **II. THE ATTENTION.**

- A. **Neh. 8:3.**
- B. From morning until the middle of the day, perhaps as long as 6 hours, Ezra read the Word of God; and according to verse 7, the Levites helped to explain it.
  1. It is amazing to me that throughout all of this, the people continued to pay attention.
  2. That's a wonder to me since it's hard to keep the attention of my brethren for 30 minutes.
  3. In reality, a lot of this has to do with one's attitude in the assembly.
  4. We should always be attentive to what God has to say; the salvation of our souls depends upon it.
- B. We can read from the Bible; we can teach and preach from the Bible; we can have classes in order to study the Bible more in depth; but if we don't pay attention to what is said in the Word, then how is it going to benefit us?
  1. **Acts 17:11-12.**
  2. Investigation and study made the difference.

## **III. THE RESPECT.**

- A. **Neh. 8:4-6.**
- B. Here we are shown an example of people who had a deep and abiding reverence for the Word of God.
  1. As Ezra opened the Word of God, notice, "*all the people stood up.*"
  2. How many churches have you been in where "*all the people stood up*" when the Word of God was read?
- B. Just think of the souls that could be saved if men would reverence the Word of God as these people did.
  1. We would have a lot more people making statements like the apostle Paul did: "*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*" (**Acts 9:6**).
  2. Those kinds of questions come about when we are confronted by God; and that occurs today through the written Word, even today as people are "*pricked in their hearts*" (**Acts 2:37**).
- C. We have good reason to respect and reverence the Word of God.
  1. **Heb. 4:12; 1 Pet. 1:23.**
  2. God's Word continues to endure and is just as applicable to men today as it was when it was written.
  3. God's Word is also worthy of our reverence and respect because it is inspired of God (**2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21**).
  4. God's Word is worthy of our reverence and respect because it tells us

- of sin and the love of God in sending Jesus to die for our sins (**Rom. 5:8**).
6. God's Word is worthy of our reverence and respect because it is the means by which we are saved (**Rom. 1:16-17; James 1:21**).
    - 1) The answer to the question: "What must I do to be saved?", is found only in the Bible!
    - 2) It is the Bible that tells us of the necessity of faith (**Heb. 11:6**); repentance (**Luke 13:3,5**); the need to confess the Christ (**Rom. 10:9-10**); and the importance of being baptized for the forgiveness of sins (**Acts 2:38**).
  7. God's Word is worthy of our reverence because it will serve as the standard in the Judgment (**John 12:48**).
- D. When we think of the importance and blessing of having God's Word in our possessions we should be grateful and thankful, and reverence it!
1. How ironic it is that in ancient times the Bible was on scrolls; some of them as much as 27 feet in length when unrolled; so it was not practical for people to possess a copy of God's Word.
  2. They learned of God's Word in the synagogue.
  3. Through the centuries men longed for the time that they could have a printed Bible as we know it. Far too many had to rely upon the word of a "religious" teacher, and they may have been taught error and not known it.
    - 1) This is why we encourage people to check out what we are saying so they know that it comes from scripture.
    - 2) This is why we give book, chapter, and verse for verification.
  4. Now the Bible is available in mass quantities. Almost every home has at least one copy, but many do not respect those copies likely because it is so readily available.
  5. When the copies of scripture were few in number, people longed for it, but when it came into abundance, it lost its appeal.
  6. As a result, scripture occupies on a night stand or on a bookshelf; perhaps even in a box in the basement; and all the time the owner does not realize the power that is contained in those words!
- E. We should thank God for the treasure that we have been blessed with (**2 Cor. 4:7**).
- F. As we think of those who struggled over the centuries to hear and obtain a copy of God's Word, I pray that you may never take for granted what has been entrusted to you.

#### **IV. THE RESPONSE.**

- A. **Neh. 8:7b-9.**
- B. Not only was the law read, but if you notice, **vs 7** indicates that the Levites explained what had been read so that the people could better understand the law (**cf. Rom. 10:17**).
  1. When Philip talked to the Ethiopian, he opened with a question (**Acts 8:30-31,35**).
  2. The Levites were serving as preachers or heralds of God's Word, just as

- many of us who preach the Word do so every Sunday.
- B. Having heard Ezra read the words of the law, and the Levites explain it, that the people might better understand it, note, *“For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.”*
1. Again, by means of God’s Word the people were being convicted of their sins.
  2. And we do know something of the sins of the people in Nehemiah’s day:
    - 1) They had not obeyed the marriage restrictions set forth in **Deut. 7:1-6**, and they intermarried with the nations around them (**Ezra 9-10; Neh. 13**).
    - 2) They had failed to keep the sabbath (**Neh. 13**).
    - 3) They had forsaken God’s House (**Neh. 10**); a strong indictment of the priests!
  3. With God’s Word having been preached, they were now aware of their sins, which led to a change.
    - 1) Today: a change cannot take place until we realize our sins.
    - 2) **Isa. 53:6; 59:1-2; Rom. 3:10,23; 6:23**.
- C. As you read on in the story from Nehemiah, you find that the people rejoiced; and the reason is given in **vs 12**.
- D. And even better, on the second day the people again heard the Word of God and they responded in obedience.
  1. Even today this is the kind of response that one prays and hopes for.
  2. Even the angels of heaven rejoice (**Luke 15:10**).
- E. One of the key things that needs to be pointed out is what led to this obedience, the fact that they prepared their hearts to receive God’s Word.
  1. They wanted to hear the Word. They were hungering and thirsting for it.
  2. They wanted to know the will of God and were prepared to comply with it.
  3. They were not like Solomon’s son Rheboam, of whom the Bible gives a sad commentary (**2 Chron. 12:14**).

**CONCLUSION:**

1. God wants souls who are willing to prepare their hearts to receive His Word.
2. He wants souls who will reverence and respect what His Word says, and obey it!
3. If you are not a Christian, I pray that you would open and prepare your heart to receive God’s Word so that you may know what is necessary to be saved.