

# Ezra Reads the Law

With the wall complete, the people gather to hear God's Word. Ezra reads the Law for hours, the people weep, and then celebrate with great joy as they understand God's Word.

Nehemiah 8:1-18

CHARACTERS: Ezra, Nehemiah, The Levites, All the people

THEMES: God's Word, Revival, Understanding, Joy, Worship

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ALL THE PEOPLE came together as one in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the teacher of the Law to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded for Israel.

The wall was complete. Now it was time to rebuild something even more important—the people's understanding of and commitment to God's Word.

On the first day of the seventh month, Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. 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 stood on a high wooden platform built for the occasion. He opened the book, and all the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. Ezra praised the Lord, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, 'Amen! Amen!' Then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

The Levites—Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, and Pelaiah—instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there. They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people understood what was being read.

This was expository teaching—reading Scripture, explaining its meaning, and applying it to life. The people hadn't just heard words; they understood truth. And that understanding produced conviction.

Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and teacher of the Law, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, 'This day is holy to the Lord your God. Do not mourn or weep.' For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law.

Their tears revealed genuine repentance. They saw how far they had strayed from God's standards. But this was not a day for grief—it was a day for celebration.

Nehemiah said, 'Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.'

The Levites calmed all the people, saying, 'Be still, for this is a holy day. Do not grieve.' Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them.

The next day, the heads of all the families, along with the priests and the Levites, gathered around Ezra to give attention to the words of the Law. They found written in the Law that the Israelites were to live in temporary shelters during the festival of the seventh month—the Feast of Tabernacles. They had not celebrated it since the days of Joshua, hundreds of years before.

So they built shelters and lived in them, celebrating with great rejoicing. Day after day, from the first day to the last, Ezra read from the Book of the Law of God. They celebrated the festival for seven days.

Understanding God's Word produces both conviction and joy. It shows us our sin, but it also reveals God's grace. It calls us to change, but it fills us with the strength to do so. The joy of the Lord—delight in who He is and what He has done—becomes our strength to live for Him.

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