



## THE PEOPLE AND THE BOOK Nehemiah 8:1-18

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All was not well in Jerusalem. Great progress had been made in restoring the city, but the people sensed that there was something missing in their lives. They rightly assumed it was a spiritual issue. So they called for the "Torah" to be read to them.

### I. The People Were Settled in Their Homes, Unsettled in Their Hearts.

- A. Their homes were not luxurious but necessities were being provided.
- B. The walls were not impregnable but they offered some security.
- C. The Temple was certainly lacking but it provided some spiritual life.

**BUT**

- D. Economic disparity was creating divisions in the society. *Nehemiah 5*
- E. Leadership conflicts added to the disquiet. *Nehemiah 6*
- F. Marital conflict was tearing the culture apart. *Ezra 9*
- G. Life in restored Jerusalem left much to be desired for the settlers.
- H. Economic, political and societal reforms were not satisfying their deepest longings.
- I. Then they remembered the forgotten Book—the Torah—and called for it to be read.

### II. The Time Was Right, Leaders Were Ready; the Book Was Brought, People Were Attentive.

- A. An electric atmosphere—praise, bowed heads, prostrate bodies, worship. vv. 6, 7
- B. A teachable moment—enunciation, interpretation, clarification, application. v. 8
- C. Learning about God's ways, origins, privileges, responsibilities, opportunities, failures.
- D. The result—anticipation, attention, apprehension—repentance. v. 9

**BUT**

- E. Repentance does not always indicate a change of heart.
- F. But, obedience in the place of disobedience frequently does.
- G. The people were instructed to stop grieving and start obeying—they did! v. 10
- H. They began to focus on the Lord and rejoice in Him—and were empowered. v. 10
- I. A richer appreciation of the Lord led to deeper repentance and changed lives. *Nehemiah 9*

### Points to Ponder:

- Do I connect inner dissatisfaction with spiritual malnutrition?
- Do I exhibit a hunger to know, embrace and do God's Word?
- Do I find myself regularly in a place where I can hear the Word, explained and applied?
- Do I recognize definite life changes as a result of my attending to God's Word?
- Do I see the connection and the difference between the Old and New Testaments?