

RENEWING YOUR WORSHIP

Nehemiah 7:73-8:18

Introduction: What does it take to have a genuine "revival" around here? Just what is a "revival" in the first place? What does a "revival" do? Why is there ever a need for "revival?" What happens after a "revival?" Is it finding something that should have never been lost in the first place? Today "revival's" last as long as three or four days at the longest with services lasting as long as two hours, but usually it's an hour per night of "revival" services. Years ago "revivals" used to last for weeks and the services lasted for hours. What has happened? Do people just not need reviving or renewing? In the Book of Nehemiah a very unusual revival occurred and God's people had a fantastic renewal experience with God. What happens at a genuine revival?

I. THERE IS ATTENTIVENESS TO GOD'S WORD (7:73-8:8)

1. The people wanted the preacher to read and explain the Bible while they stood for hours and even days, eager to learn what God required of them. Can you imagine that happening around here today? It would indeed be an unheard of thing, but not at this time in Israel's life.
 - The people wanted to hear and learn from God's Word with a sincere desire to do whatever God's Word required.
 - They learned that they were doing exactly what God had commanded some 1,000 years before that day.
 - Thousands of men, women and the others who could understand, stood and listened as God's word was read and explained. Wow! Can you just imagine that happening here today?
 - What does it take today to get a crowd to a church service? Entertainment!
2. Who was involved during those great days of reading God's Word?
 - Men, women, youth, anyone who were old enough to understand the priests and the other leaders. In our time it would be pastors, deacons, teachers, staff members.
3. How could anybody be so interested in hearing Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers being read? These books are what were being read to the people who listened with so much interest.
 - Simple! There is so much richness in God's Word that people simply don't recognize it. precious truths are missed because some passages of scripture are ignored and passed over.
 - Will the day ever come in our time when Church congregations spend hours a day in God's Word and then beg their pastors to preach longer?
 - This actually happened in Nehemiah's day and the people were not bored, rather they lifted their hands, bowed their heads and cried, "Amen, Amen..."
 - May God grant us, today, a longing of the heart for His Word and may we be moved to worship Him as never before.

II. THERE IS THE JOY OF THE LORD (8:9-12)

1. Hearing the Word of God read caused the people to see their many sins and transgressions, therefore grieving them deeply and to realize how both they and their ancestors had turned away from God and His Word.

- The people were deeply moved to confess their sins and take steps of recovery which was/is the right thing to do, but perhaps just not right then, but later.
 - The people were commanded to eat the best foods, drink sweet and refreshing drinks, share with those who didn't have, to have a good time, to celebrate and to be happy.
2. Before we can repent, confess our sins and take steps of recovery from such, **we must be convinced of God's goodness.**
 - If we confess our sins, unconvinced of God's goodness, forgiveness and restoration, we will not be genuine in our confession and repentance and turn from those sins.
 - What will it take to turn us with eagerness and joy toward the Lord is the deep confidence that He is absolutely good and that His ways are those that are best for us.
 3. Holiness and Happiness go together! They do not conflict with one another. Holiness is not some sort of sanctified separation and detester of joy or walking around as if one lost his/her best friend.
 - There is much misunderstanding about "holiness" today. For most, "holy" is something drab, dull, unpleasant, boring and lifeless....quite the contrary. It is exciting, invigorating.
 - God is infinitely Holy and holiness and richness of life go together. We need to know God as He is, not as people think Him to be. God is always good, give thanks.

III. THERE IS CELEBRATING BY OBEDIENCE (8:13-18)

1. God's people need, must learn from God's Word.
 - God's leaders have a special responsibility and obligation to lead God's people in God's ways, therefore emphasis must be shifted from the congregation to the spiritual leaders who must themselves submit to more instructions from God to understand what God reveals.
 - The leaders learned that that same date, the 7th month was the month that the Feast of Booths was to be celebrated but hadn't been celebrated in over 1,000 years (since Joshua).
 - The people responded 100%. They learned they were to build booths from branches and bushes and live in them for a certain period, reminding them of the Exodus and that they had been redeemed from slavery and that God had provided for them (their ancestors) during those years.
 - They were to celebrate, do no regular work, rejoice and to end the time with a Holy convocation or solemn assembly before God in thankfulness for God's kindness to them in spite of their failure to keep His commandments the past 1,000 years.
2. Ezra read out of the Book of the Law of God every day from the first to the last during the 7 days and on the 8th day there was an assembly where the people rededicated themselves to God.

CONCLUSION:

1. Have YOU ever been "moved" in any way during the reading of God's Word?
2. Have YOU ever realized some failure in your life as God's Word was being read/explained?
3. Have you ever gathered with other Christians to celebrate the privilege of being a Christian?
4. Are you willing to obey God's Word as quickly and willingly as the people of Nehemiah's day?