

The Bulletin

Meeks St. Church of Christ

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“Are You Listening to God?”

By Brian Meade

In **Nehemiah 8:1-8**, we have the occasion when God’s people were back in their homeland after many years of captivity in Babylon. Through the leadership of such men as Zerubbabel, Nehemiah, and Ezra the people of Israel had been allowed to rebuild the walls and the temple in Jerusalem. And in this reading, they are being taught the Law of God for the first time in many years. They had endured the loss of their city and country in exile in a foreign land, but now they are back, and it was as if God gave them (and He did by His Providence) another chance to listen to Him. That is the very reason why God allowed another nation to overcome and enslave them— is because they stopped listening to God!

And as we read the text of Nehemiah chapter eight, you can see the complete change of heart in the attitude of listening to God. It was a 180 degree change from stubbornness, arrogance, and defiance to readiness to listen, humility, and compliance.

As the chapter begins, *“And all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the Lord had given to Israel. Then Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of men, women and all who could listen with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month. He read from it before the square which was in front of the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of men and women, those who could understand; and all the people were attentive to the book of the law.”* (Nehemiah 8:1-3 NASB)

Notice that all were ready to hear what God had to say from the book of the Law by Ezra’s reading, as verse 3 says *“and all the people were attentive to the book of the law.”* Also note that they didn’t seem to mind being there for a while to do so, the text tells us they were *“before the square which was in front of the Water Gate from early morning until midday.”* (vs. 3)

The word *“attentive”* (in verse 3) is an adjective that describes the people and means *“Paying close attention to something.”* (Oxford Dictionary) This says a lot about the people of God in their desire to know God and His ways again.

Not only that, notice their deep respect for God’s word when *“Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. Then Ezra blessed the Lord the great God. And all the people answered, “Amen, Amen!” while lifting up their hands; then they bowed*



low and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground." (Nehemiah 8:5-6) Shouldn't that kind of reverence for God and His word be our goal today?

We read in verses 7-8, "*.....the Levites, explained the law to the people while the people remained in their place. They read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading.*" The people not only heard the Law of God being read to them, but the meaning of it was explained to them as well; that's what good Bible study is all about! It does no one any good to just read the text without understanding what God is saying to us. But the goal was not only to hear and understand— but to do and practice it as well (James 1:22-25). God's word needs to be the guide of our lives!

How Important is it to Listen to God?

It is how we come to faith in God and our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 10:17). It is how we follow Jesus (John 10:27). We cannot follow someone without listening to their words for us to obey. We are taught to live by God (Ephesians 4:21). We must never stop listening to God, if we want His fellowship (Proverbs 28:9). And we will be ultimately be saved in the day of Judgment because we made the right decision to listen to God. Notice what God said about how important it was for His people, the Israelites, to listen to Him in Isaiah 55:3, "*Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live....*"

Jesus used the expression "*He who has ears to hear, let him hear*" eight times in the gospel accounts (Matthew 11:15; Matthew 13:9; Matthew 13:43; Mark 4:9; Mark 4:23; Mark 7:16; Luke 8:8; Luke 14:35).

Jesus uses very similar language eight times to the churches in the book of Revelation, when He says, "*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*" (Revelation 2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:29; 3:6; 3:13; 3:22; 13:9 is without the last phrase) What is the significance of Jesus' expression in both places? It shows the great need to pay close attention to what is said and heed the warnings and admonitions that are vital to our spiritual life in God!

What Keeps Us From Listening to God?

So if it is just that important & beneficial to our salvation to listen to God, why is it that many do not pay close attention to Him as they should?

(1) We Are Distracted By Other Things.

We live in a world that has so many things vying for our time. Many spend their time busy with school work or in their job making a living. When they are not doing those important things, they can easily find a 1,001 distractions in entertainment, recreation, or leisure time. The Devil would love for us to spend all our extra time in nothing more than watching television, movies, listening to music, going fishing, camping, or sporting events, hobbies, and other activities of life. As we may know, there is nothing wrong with them, if done in a wholesome, pure way and in moderation.

But when they keep us from what is most important in listening to God— they become a distraction from hearing Him! The Bible teaches us in Luke 8:12, that Satan comes along to those who hear the word and steals it out of their hearts before they obey it. Mark 4:19 says, "*but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.*" The reason why many fail to attend church services to hear God's word spoken to them or to read their Bibles on a regular basis— because they have other things more pressing to them. May it never be to the child of God who wants to go to heaven!

(2) We Don't Like What Is Being Said.

Could it be that many in the world today have long stopped listening to God because they simply don't like the message God has given to man? They don't like to hear about repentance from dead works (Hebrews 6:1) and living a righteous life before God (Titus 2:11). Because many love the pleasures of sin and don't want God's message, "*This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.*" (John 3:19-20)

(3) We Aren't Willing to Do What God Says.

One great barrier to listening to God is the fact that we know that once we start listening to God, we will have to do what He says. Jesus said to some of this very kind in Luke 6:46-47, "*Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do*

not do what I say? “Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them....” It reminds me of the man who was afraid to study the Bible because he knew he would have to make changes in his life to be obedient.

(4) We Listen to the Wrong Message.

When men listen to the doctrines, commandments, and creeds of men (Matthew 15:7-9)—they are NOT listening to God. The message of Calvinism, Lutherism, liberalism, radicalism, or denominationalism is not the same as the message of the cross (1 Corinthians 1:18-22). We need to hear God’s word alone without addition or subtraction! Only then are we listening to God.

News and Notes: Sick and recovering: Tim Harris Sr, Tim Harris Jr, Chad Harris, Martha Norvell (Mississippi Care), June Lawson (Lisa Busby’s Mom), Clois Wright, Debbie Keplinger, Gaddy Hall, Janis Johnson, Daniel Holloway, Tammy Kilgore (Jerry’s niece), Betty Hurst, Peggy Harville (cancer), Linda Harris, Karey Trimble.
Katie Ward Coburn is home in Booneville.
Remember the family of Pam Zeanah, who passed away.

Our Gospel meeting will begin April 21st—26th with Allen Shepherd. (flyers available)

Those Who Serve:

Sunday Morning 9:00 A.M. Service:

Opening Prayer: Doug George
Preaching: Brian Meade
Sermon #1: “The Dangers of Following the Crowd”

Auditorium Bible Class: 9:35am:

Paul Busby
The Book of Acts (Jason Longstreth)
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Sunday Morning 10:30 A.M. Service:

Announcements: Fred Johnson
Opening Prayer & Scripture Reading: Paul Johnson
Ephesians 2:1-3
Lee Busby
Lord’s Supper: Doug George
Assisting: Paul Busby & Chris Callahan
Preaching: Brian Meade
Sermon #2: “If I Were Following the Crowd”
Closing Prayer: Nathan Meade

Wednesday Evening: 7:00 P.M.

April 17th:

Auditorium Bible Class: Paul Busby
Ezra, Nehemiah, & Esther (Mike Willis)
Page 24, Question #1

Invitation: Doug George
Song Leader: Adam Harris
Closing Prayer: Brian Meade