Hearing God's Word *with* Understanding

Nehemiah 8
1 And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel.

So, all the people (in Jerusalem, and likely others in Judea) gathered together as 'one man', which means they were *united* (#259) in their desire *to hear* God's Word! And that's *why* they asked Ezra (which means *aid*, i.e. *help*, #5830-5833) to bring the 'book' (which was *a scroll* back then) of the Law of Moses, i.e. the Law that the Lord (*Yehovah*, #3068, i.e. YHVH) commanded (#6880) to Israel. As Moses told Israel (shortly before his death), "*Behold, I have taught you* ***statutes and judgments****, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should* ***do so*** *in the land whither ye go to possess it.* ***Keep*** *therefore and* ***do them****; for* ***this*** ***is your wisdom*** *and* ***your understanding*** *in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say,* ***Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people****. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And* ***what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law****, which I set before you this day? Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently,* ***lest thou forget*** *the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons*" (Deut 4:5-9).

So, God's Law (yea, all of His Word) is *what* gave Israel *wisdom*, and *understanding*… when they obeyed it! And to this very day God's Word (and righteous Laws) is *what* gives wisdom, and understand, to **all** people (nations and individuals alike) who obey it *from the heart*. But, *because* their ancestors (Israel) did **not** obey God's Law, they were taken captive – first to the Assryians (the northern ten tribes of Israel and *some of* Judah, Benjamin and Levi) and then later to the Babylonians (the rest of Judah, Benjamin and the Levites). And this fact was *undoubtably* on the minds of the people at this time. So, when the people (who came back from Babylonian captivity) gathered together, they *truly desired* to understand what God's Law instructed them to do, so they *could* live in peace and prosperity. And, since God's Word was *not* readily available to them (i.e. it was *not* printed in mass, as the Bible is today) and, *because* most people (*especially* the common people) could *not* even read at that time, the *only* way they could hear God's Word was if someone read it to them. So, this is *why* all the people came together '*as one man*' (with a desire) to hear God's Law read to them. And notice that they gathered into the 'street' (*avenue* or *area*, #7339) of the "Water Gate". As we learned when studying chapter 3, this gate is *symbolic of* **God's Word** ***quickened*** (made alive) *in our heart and mind,* by the Holy Spirit *within us* (Heb 4:12), i.e. **His written Word** ***coming to life within us*** (Eph 1:17-23; 3:16-21, etc.). So, it was *very* befitting for them to gather at the "Water Gate" to hear God's Law read to them…

Nehemiah 8
2 And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.
3 And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.

So, at the request of the people, Ezra (who was a priest *and* a scribe, Ezra 7:11) brought God's Law *and read it* to the people. And this *was* the duty of the priests back then (Deut 17:11; 31:11-13, 33:10, etc.), as it is written, "*When all Israel is come to appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose, **thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing**. Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that **they may hear**, and **that they may learn**, and **fear the LORD your God**, and **observe to do all the words of this law**: And that their children, which have not known any thing, **may hear**, and **learn to fear the LORD your God**, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it*" (Deut 31:11-13). So, back when only the priests (scribes) had copies of the Law of Moses and, when many could not read anyhow, *this* is how they 'studied' the Bible! And, it's important to recognize that it was **God's Word** that was to be read, *and taught,* to the people… ***not*** emotional stories nor 'traditions of man'! And herein is a *vital* lesson for us today. For, it is **still** *the duty* of all who are Christian leaders (priests, ministers, preachers, pastors, etc.) to teach God's Word 'without spot' or 'blemish' - which is to say, *without* adding to it **or** taking away from it (i.e. *perverting* it in any way - https://t.me/BestStudyBible/305). As Jesus so well warned, 'traditions of man' do *not* help the people *because* they make God's Word of '*none effect*' (Matt 15:6; Mark 7:14), i.e. *invalidated* (#208, Gr) in the minds (and hearts) of the people! Thus, God's Word does *not* benefit anyone when it's *not* taught accurately; for, *only* when God's Word is taught to the people - *without* it being twisted, or perverted - can people *truly* understand what's being said [https://t.me/BibleStudyDownload/212].

Now (going back to Neh 8:2), notice that both men *and* women were at the "Water Gate" to hear God's Word - yet, we're also told '*all that could hear with understanding*' were there too. The word '**hear**' here means ***to hear intelligently*** and, is often used with implication of *attention, obedience*, etc. (#8085). And then the word '**understanding**' (and 'understand' in vs 3) means ***to separate mentally*** (or distinguish), i.e.(generally) ***understand*** (#995). So, this is *likely* referring to the children that were *old enough* to understand (*with intelligence*) what was being taught. However, it could *also* include those who were *not* of Israel. And further, notice that all the 'ears' of the people were 'attentive'. The word 'attentive' actually is *not* in the manuscripts (#9999) but, the translators added it because it **is** implied. And, while the word 'ear' does mean *an ear* (#241), it means *more than* just hearing in a *physical* sense, i.e. it means *understanding* too. And we know this because, in Ezek 12:2, God pointed out that Israel often did *not* have 'ears to hear'

(nor 'eyes to see') *because* they were rebellious. So, when people have rebellious heart (i.e. do *not* have a desire to understand God's Word) they do *not* have 'ears to hear' nor 'eyes to see' *the truth*! That's why Jesus often said (after making an *important* point in His teachings), "*He that hath ears to hear, let him hear*" (Matt 11:15, 13:9, 43; Mark 4:9, 23, 7:16; Luke 8:8, 14:35). His point was that, *only* those who were not rebellious hearted (i.e. who *wanted* to hear the truth) would understand the point to the teachings. And, if they didn't understand (but wanted to), they *would* come to Him and ask, just as the apostles frequently did (Matt 13:36, 15:15; Mark 4:10; Luke 8:9). This is *why* it's important for us to **Ask, Seek and Knock** when we study God's Word [https://t.me/BibleStudyTruth/2600]!

Now, notice also that it was the *first* day of the *seventh* month, when God's Word was read to the people. And this day was actually a "*a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation*" (Lev 23:24). So, it was a day when Israel was to 'blow trumpets' for a memorial, a holy convocation and to rest from their works. And blowing the trumpets was *spiritually* significant for teaching God's Word to others, which is *exactly* what was happening at this time, i.e. God's Word was being taught *from the morning to mid-day*! Yet, the 'blowing of the trumpets' is (in the prophetical sense) also *symbolic* of how God's elect are to *warn people* (of the world) that Satan (i.e. the antichrist - https://t.me/BibleStudyDownload/345) **is *soon coming*** to the earth and **will** be *pretending to be God* (2 Thess 2, Rev 12-13, etc.), which you can learn more about in the study on **The Appearance** [https://t.me/BibleStudyDownload/440]…

Nehemiah 8
4 And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam.

So, Ezra the 'scribe' (who was able to *read and write*, #5608) stood upon a 'pulpit' (a *rostrum*, #4026) made of wood, *especially* for this purpose. This enabled the people, standing around, to be able to see, *and hear*, him better. Yet, he was *not* alone - for on his right hand stood Mattithiah (which means *gift of Yah*, #4993), Shema (which means *something heard*, #8087-8088), Anaiah (which means *Yah has answered*, #6043), Urijah (which means *flame of Yah*, #223), Hilkiah (which means *portion of Yah*, #2518) and Maaseiah (which means *work of Yah*, #4641). And then, on his left hand stood Pedaiah (which means *Yah has ransomed*, #6305), Mishael (which means *who (is) what God (is)?*, #4332), Malchiah (which means *king of* (i.e. *appointed by*) *Yah*, #4441), Hashum (which means *enriched*, #2828), Hashbadana (which means *considerate judge*, #2806), Zechariah (which means *Yah has remembered*, #2148) and Meshullam (which means *allied*, #4918). Now, notice how many of the meanings of these names have 'Yah' in them? This is a shortened version (#3050) of God's Sacred name [https://t.me/BibleStudyTruth/946], which is *Yehovah* (#3068). And those whose names don't have 'Yah' in them are *still* of a 'godly' nature

too. This is *very* befitting for men who were priests of God and, shows their parents had great reverence for the Lord (YHVH). Also, notice that there were (all together) fourteen priests on the 'podium' (*including* Ezra) which, in Biblical numerics means *Deliverance* and *Salvation*… and *hearing* God's Word **IS** what brings about salvation! As it is written, "*How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and* ***how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard****? and* ***how shall they hear without a preacher****? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things*" (Rom 10:14-15; Isa 52:7)! Further, the fact that these priests were on Ezra's 'right hand' and on his 'left hand' is also symbolic. For, as Jesus pointed out, those are *positions of power* given to those who serve God *faithfully*. And, pertaining to the (soon coming) Kingdom of God (i.e. when Jesus returns), it's *only* God Almighty (YHVH) who has a right to decide *who* are given those positions of authority (Mark 10:35-40) …

Nehemiah 8
5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up:
6 And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

So, now we're given *more* details about what verses 2-3 tells us. If you've noticed, all these verses (in chapter 8) *begin with* the word 'and', which is actually a 'figure of speech' (i.e. a *Polysyndenton*, apx. 6) used to *emphasize* the fact that *each* sentence is *important* and *emphatic*. The same thing is done in the first chapter of Genesis too. So, whenever Ezra opened the book (i.e. unrolled the scroll) in sight of the people (and they could see him *because* he was on the 'podium'), *all* the people *stood up*. This was done to show *great* reverence to the Lord (YHVH) our God (ex: Judges 3:20; Job 29:8, 37:14, etc.). And additionally, whenever Ezra 'blessed' (*as an act of adoration*, #1288) the Lord (Yehovah, #3068, i.e. YHVH) God (who is the *only* 'great' God *because* He's the *Supreme* God, our Creator, #430) all the people 'answered' (*responded*, #6030) by saying 'AMEN' *twice* (for emphasis). Now, the word '**Amen**' means ***sure***, ***faithfulness*** and, ***truly*** (#543). And, the way it's used here is another figure of speech (*Epizeuxis*, apx 6) to give *strong confirmation* to what was said, as well as to emphasize *great* solemnity.

Yet, they *also* lifted up (raised, #4607) their *open* hands (#3027), which is also a sign of *great* respect to God (YHVH). However, it *also* indicates they were *acknowledging* that God *alone* has power over *all* His creation. We still do this today and, much for the same purpose. And then they also bowed down to worship the Lord (YHVH) which, of course, is yet *another* way to *outwardly* show one's love, adoration, and respect for our Heavenly Father (our Creator). So, the people were showing (in an outward way) their *sincere* desire to hear God's Law *and* to worship Him. And, as wonderful as that was (and still is today), what *truly matters* ***most*** to our Heavenly

Father, is that our outward worship is accompanied with our inward worship. And, what that means is that we *earnestly* strive *to obey* Him! The 50th chapter, in the great book of Psalms [https://t.me/BibleStudyBooks_Psalms/592], explains this point *very* well….

Nehemiah 8
7 Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place.
8 So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.

So, aside from the thirteen men (likely all priests) who stood beside him on the 'pulpit', there were thirteen *more* Levites: Jeshua (which means *he will save*, #3442), Bani (which means *built*, #1137), Sherebiah (which means *Yah has brought heat*, #8274), Jamin (which means *the right hand*, #3225), Akkub (which means *insidious*, #6126), Shabbethai (which means *restful*, #7678), Hodijah (which means *majesty of Yah*, #1938), Maaseiah (which means *work of Yah*, #4641), Kelita (which means *maiming*, #7042), Azariah (which means *Yah has helped*, #5838), Jozabad (which means *Yehovah-endowed*, #3107-3075), Hanan (which means *favor*, #2605) and Pelaiah (which means *Yah has distinguished*, #6411). And all these Levites "*caused the people to* ***understand*** *the law*", which means they helped them to ***mentally separate*** (*distinguish*) (#995) God's Laws. And verse 8 explains *how* they did so. For the word '**read**' means ***to call out to*** (#7121) while the word '**distinctly**' means ***to separate*** or (figuratively) ***to specify*** (#6567). And the word '**sense**' means ***intelligence*** (#7922) while '**understanding**' again means ***to separate mentally*** (or *distinguish*), i.e. ***to understand*** #995). So, while Ezra simply read the Law of God, there were others who helped the common people to *understand* what it meant. And, this was *incredibly* important (*and helpful*) because, *many* of them were probably *not* as familiar with the Hebrew language, as they were the Babylonian language. The *Moffett Bible* renders this as: "*they read from the book, from the law of God,* ***translating as they went*** *and,* ***explaining the meaning****, so that the people understood what was read*".

Therefore, this is a wonderful 'type' for us living today. For we too cannot understand much at all (if any) of the original language the Bible was written in. So, the duty of Christian leaders is *still* to help people understand what God's Word *really* says because, sometimes the English translation falls a bit short! However, since we have the *Strong's Concordance* available to us today, *anyone* (not just the leaders in a Church) can look up the meanings in God's Word! And thus, this is something Christian leaders should also teach people how to do. As Paul teaches us, we should "*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed,* ***rightly dividing the word of truth***" (2 Tim 2:15). The word '**dividing**' here means ***to make a straight cut***, i.e. (figuratively) ***to dissect*** (expound) ***correctly*** (the divine message) (#3718). So, as we study God's Word we *must* keep the subject, and object, in mind. And, in

addition to that, we should *also* look up words in the original language (via the *Strong's Concordance*) to see what they *actually* mean. And, while it's not necessary to do that with *every* single word (for it's hard to get much studying done that way), we should learn to discern when something *doesn't make sense* (or is not quite clear), and then check out the words in the *Strong's Concordance*. Doing so will not only deepen *your* conviction of what God's Word *really* says, but enable you to share what you have learned *with others*. Additionally, you'll also know how to teach others how to study God's Word *for themselves*, too! And (as a reminder) this is *how* we do 'our part' in 'building up' (and 'repairing') the *spiritual* 'wall' of these latter days, i.e. people's *faith in* God, Jesus Christ, and His Word…

Nehemiah 8
9 And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.

So, now we see *what* happened when the people actually *understood* what God's Word *really* says… the people '**wept**', which does mean ***to weep*** but, can also mean ***to bemoan*** (#1058), i.e. they had *deep grief* over their sins, which resulted in many of them weeping. As Heb 4:12 tells us, "***the word of God is quick*** [living, #2198], ***and powerful***, ***and sharper than any twoedged sword***, *piercing even to* ***the dividing asunder of soul and spirit***, *and* ***of the joints and marrow***, *and* ***is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart***". So, God's Word is not only what helps us to understand when our *words, and actions*, are sinful but, it also causes us to realize when the *thoughts of our mind*, and the *intentions of our heart* are *not* good! And, ***that*** **is the effect of God's Word being taught *accurately*!** If we are not convicted when we study God's Word (at least, 'every now and then'), then we're either *not* understanding it correctly or, *not* studying it *in earnest*. And, that *deep* conviction *should* lead us to repenting earnestly, which also means we must be serious about changing our sins, from the inside (heart and mind) out (our words and actions). So again, when the people heard God's Laws (which was probably the first time some, or many, of them heard it) they were *deeply* convicted! And *that* caused them to be *so remorseful* over their sins *they wept*. However, *because* it was a 'feast' day, it was a 'holy' day unto the Lord (YHVH, #3068) our God (the Supreme God, #430). And that's *why* Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Levites told the people *not* to weep, because…

Nehemiah 8
10 Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for ***the joy of the LORD is your strength***.
11 So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved.

12 And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, ***because they had understood the words that were declared unto them***.

So, after the people were told to stop weeping, they were then commanded to go and enjoy the meal that was prepared for the holy feast day. The word '**fat**' here is being used in a *figurative* sense for ***a rich dish*** (#4924). And, the 'sweet' drink (#4477) likely refers to sweet *wine*. And, they were again told that 'this day' (the feast day, of the *first* day of the *seventh* month) was 'holy' (sacred, #6918) unto the 'Lord', which (the first time it's used in verse 10) is the Hebrew word ***'Adown*** or (shortened) ***'adon*** (#113), which simply means ***sovereign***, i.e. ***controller*** (human or divine). So, this 'title' for God (Yehovah) reminds us that, while there are many sovereign rulers on earth ("lords"), there is only <u>one</u> Sovereign Ruler over **all** the earth. As the *Companion Bible* (in Apx 4 iii [1]) tells us, the 'title' of '*Adown* (or '*Adon*) expresses ***the Lord*** (Yehovah) ***as Ruler in the earth***. And the reason for this is because Yehovah *is our Creator*; and He thus has *full control* over all the earth; no one else is 'above' Him in any way, shape or fashion.

So, when 'he' (likely Ezra) told the people 'this day' (i.e. the feast day, of the *first* day of *seventh* month, vs 2) was holy (sacred) unto the 'Lord' ('Adown', #113), he was pointing out that their God was the *Sovereign* Ruler over <u>all</u> the earth. Thus, his point that: that's *why* Yehovah is able to forgive our sins! And, while it's not stated they made sacrifices, they *surely* did; for back then (but <u>not</u> today, of course - https://t.me/BibleStudyDownload/329) that's also what they were *supposed to do* during the feast days. And their *faith in* what those sacrifices *signified* (the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who would pay for our sins *once and for all times*, Heb 10:10) is *what* gave them forgiveness from God. And so, that's why 'he' (likely Ezra) told them *not* to be 'sorry' (*remorseful*, #6087) for "*the joy of the LORD is your strength*". The word '**joy**' here means ***rejoicing*** (#2304) and the word '**Lord**' here is God's Sacred (and covenantal) name, ***Yehovah*** (#3068, i.e. YHVH). And then, the word '**strength**' means ***a fortified place*** or, (when used figuratively) can also mean a ***defense*** (#4581). In other words, while it's good for us to be remorseful over our sins, *we shouldn't stay that* way <u>because</u> **our sins are forgiven** *when* we believe in Jesus Christ, which is *what* the blood sacrifices signified (i.e. were a type for). So, when 'he' (likely Ezra) told the people that "*the joy of the LORD is your strength*", he was essentially telling them that their *faith in* Yehovah's forgiveness is <u>*what*</u> gives us *true* peace of mind! As Ps 91:1-4 explains, when we *trust in* our Heavenly Father, we are 'dwelling' *spiritually* in the 'secret place' that He lives in, i.e. His throne! And, when we trust in Him, we will also be under His protection (the shadow of His wings). That's *why* His truth (His Word and Holy Spirit, John 17:17) protects our heart, and mind, from all lies and deception, as well as from negative emotions such as depression. Isa 26:3-4 also well explains this too, when he wrote, "*Thou wilt keep him <u>in perfect peace</u>,* ***whose mind is stayed on thee****: <u>because</u>* ***he trusteth in thee****. Trust ye in the LORD <u>for ever</u>: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is* ***everlasting strength***"!

So, the lesson (from this) for us living today is that: God's Word *should* convict us too! And, even after we've *first* accepted Jesus Christ, we should *still* be convicted by God's Word (again, *at least* 'every now and then') because *none of us* are without sin, no matter *how long* we've been studying God's Word (Rom 3:23). Therefore, we *don't* need to 'be saved' *over and over again* because, Jesus' perfect life, death and resurrection 'saves' us *for all times* (Heb 10:10), *so long as* we continue to believe in Him [https://t.me/BibleStudyDownload/420]. So, when we realize we've sinned, we simply *need to repent* (earnestly) and be *even more determined* to try and stop sinning. And, when we do so, our Heavenly Father *will* forgive us *because* we are *earnestly* repentant, *really do* believe in Jesus Christ, study His Word and, are *sincerely* trying to obey Him. And therefore, we should *not* continue to be remorseful over sins that are repented for. As it is written, "*But **if** we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and **the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin**. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness**. If we say that we have **not** sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us*" (1 John 1:7-10). So, just as these people living in Ezra, and Nehmiah's, day were *to rejoice* over God's forgiveness, *so too should we do*! For, once we have truly repented for a sin, we don't need to *keep* asking for forgiveness – that's truly telling God you don't believe that Jesus' blood was enough to pay for your sins! And when we *really* have faith that God forgives us (because we're earnestly repentant and truly believe in Jesus), we *will* have peace in our mind, and heart, because of the Holy Spirit who *dwells within us*…

*4 **Rejoice in the Lord alway**: and again I say, **Rejoice**.*
5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.
6 Be careful [anxions or worried, #3309] *for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*
*7 **And** the peace of God**, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.***
*8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, **think on these things**.*
*9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: **and the God of peace shall be with you.***
Phil 4:4-9

AMEN.