

LESSONS THIS QUARTER.....LIVE AS GOD WANTS

- 01) 3 Dec (12/10)..... Ezra 1:1-3:13 Seizing New Opportunities
- 02) 10 Dec (12/17)..... Ezra 4:1-6:22 Working w/ Confidence in God
- 03) 17 Dec (12/24).....Ezra 7:1-10:44 Following Godly Spiritual Leaders
- 04) 31 Dec Neh 1:1-3:32 Working Cooperatively
- 05) 07 Jan..... Neh 4:1-7:73Devising Strategies
- 06) 14 Jan..... Neh 8:1-10:39Rededicating Lives
- 07) 21 Jan..... Ps 139:1-24Valuing Every Life
- 08) 28 Jan..... Neh 11:1-13:31Keeping Commitments
- 09) 04 Feb..... Esth 1:1-2:23When Life turns upside Down
- 10) 11 Feb..... Esth 3:1-4:17 When Service is Risky
- 11) 18 Feb..... Esth 5:1-7:10 How Courage Triumphs
- 12) 25 Feb..... Esth 8:1-10:3 What is Worth Celebrating

INTRODUCTION / QUESTIONS / COMMENTS

- Jews have their land, their temple and sacrifices, and their city wall restored – now they make time for God and reflect on the purpose of their existence
- A new era was coming about – God was ceasing to lead by direct revelation: the last of the OT prophets were departing the scene (Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi); cessation of temple fire & smoke that showed God’s approval, and by Urim and Thummin (casting of lots by priests)
- Public reading of God’s word in the OT occurred every 7th Sabbath year at the Festival of Trumpets Deut 31:10-11
 - ♦ The King was to copy & read God’s word Deut 17:14-20
 - ♦ Yet, God’s word was to be taught “diligently”Deut 6:7
- Public reading & exposition of Scripture replaced most animal sacrifices by the time of the final temple destruction (70 AD)

LESSON PLAN

- 1) **God’s Word.....Neh 8**
 - a) Most likely Ezra read portions of Gen – Deut (4-6 hrs) ~240 pgs x 3 min/pg = 720 min = 12 hrs
 - b) 7th month, religious yr – 1st month in civic year, ~Sept
 - i) 1st – Festival of Trumpets/New Years Day/Creation
 - ii) 10th – Day of Atonement Lev 23:27
 - iii) 15th – Festival of Tabernacle or Booths... Lev 23:24
 - c) Two Bible Sessions in 2 days – and the events were planned (podium built, people listened intently)
 - i) People’s Bible Reading & Leader’s Bible Study
 - ii) Teach the Teachers concept
 - d) **What benefit is there to reading long passages of Scripture?** – better understanding of the context = less problems with misinterpretation & misapplication.
 - i) Illus. One preacher to another – “you can take any single bible verse and develop a 1 hr sermon on any issue you want”
 - e) This half-day reading & repenting wasn’t meant to be a weekly practice – but something to memorialize this restoration period, to reconfirm their purpose, and to recommit their lives
 - i) Periodic solemn assemblies, revivals, etc, are OK
 - ii) Purpose wasn’t to attract new numbers but to refocus & re-establish God’s people & purpose
 - f) Emotions were evident – humility (v6); weeping (v9); joy (v10); quietness (v11); feasting (v12)
 - g) God’s word, after it brings about honest repentance, should be followed by joy & gladness
- 2) **Confession & RepentanceNeh 9**
 - a) Planned Repentance (fasting – humility)..... v1,2
 - b) Another Bible reading session (3-4 hrs)v3a
 - c) Followed by 3-4hrs of worship..... v3b

- d) Longest Prayer in the Bible..... vv6-38
 - Praise, acknowledgement of sins, & recommitment
- 3) **Recommitment in Writing..... Neh 10**
 - a) Worship followed by leaders committing in writing
 - i) Avoid foreign marriages v30
 - ii) Keep the Sabbath & Sabbath Year holy v31
 - iii) Additional yearly financial pledge..... v32
 - iv) Commitment to service v34
 - v) Recommitment to honor the tithe v35
 - vi) Recommitment to maintain the House of God... v39
 - b) Why a commitment in writing? Why not a verbal, or a raising of the hand? And why just the leaders?
 - We are only as good as our leadersLk 6:40
 - God takes no pleasure in vow-breakers (fools).Ecc 5:4
 - c) More on the Tithe
 - i) The Tithe took care of 10% of the population (Lev) whose day job was to serve in the House of God
 - ii) 10% is a good ratio for church management
 - (1) Most churches average 3% giving
 - (2) ...and most churches typically have 3% of their households make up the church staff
 - (3) Would you have more church challenges if you have 1 full time servant serving 10 families (10%) or 1 full time servant serving 30+ families (3%)?

CONCLUSION

- Reading of God’s word should be a top priority for us – along w/ prayer and obedience.
- Ignorance of God’s word makes us powerless and short of being what God wants us to be.

SUPPORTING PASSAGES

- Ec 5:4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow.
- Lu 6:40 The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.

...some Bible Facts	
†	<i>The Bible can be read aloud in 70 hours.</i>
†	<i>There are 8,674 different Hebrew words in the Bible, 5,624 different Greek words, and 12,143 different English words in the King James Version.</i>
†	<i>Number of books in the Bible: 66; Number of authors: 40</i>
†	<i>Chapters: 1,189; Verses: 31,101; Words: 783,137;</i>
†	<i>Number of promises given in the Bible: 1,260</i>
†	<i>Commands: 6,468; Predictions: over 8,000</i>
†	<i>Fulfilled prophecy: 3,268 verses; Unfulfilled prophecy: 3,140</i>
†	<i>Number of questions: 3,294</i>
†	<i>Longest name: Mahershalhashbaz (Isaiah 8:1)</i>
†	<i>Longest verse: Esther 8:9 (78 words)</i>
†	Longest prayer: Nehemiah 9:6-38
†	<i>Shortest verse: John 11:35 (2 words: "Jesus wept").</i>
†	<i>Middle books: Micah and Nahum</i>
†	<i>Middle verse: Psalm 118:8; Middle chapter: Psalm 117</i>
†	<i>Shortest chapter (by number of words): Psalm 117</i>
†	<i>Longest book: Psalms (150 chapters)</i>
†	<i>Shortest book (by number of words): 3 John</i>
†	<i>Longest chapter: Psalm 119 (176 verses)</i>
†	<i>Spacing between words became common in 7th century A.D.; The system of chapters was introduced in A.D. 1238 by Cardinal Hugo de S. Caro, while the verse notations were added in 1551 by Robertus Stephanus – after the advent of printing; and rules of punctuation became common in the mid 1600's</i>