



World Christian Fellowship

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Nehemiah Session 10

Obeying the Law of God.

Nehemiah 8:13-18, *Now on the second day the heads of the fathers' houses of all the people, with the priests and Levites, were gathered to Ezra the scribe, in order to understand the words of the Law. ¹⁴And they found written in the Law, which the Lord had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month, ¹⁵and that they should announce and proclaim in all their cities and in Jerusalem, saying, "Go out to the mountain, and bring olive branches, branches of oil trees, myrtle branches, palm branches, and branches of leafy trees, to make booths, as it is written."*

¹⁶Then the people went out and brought them and made themselves booths, each one on the roof of his house, or in their courtyards or the courts of the house of God, and in the open square of the Water Gate and in the open square of the Gate of Ephraim. ¹⁷So the whole assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and sat under the booths; for since the days of Joshua the son of Nun until that day the

children of Israel had not done so. And there was very great gladness. ¹⁸ Also day by day, from the first day until the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day there was a sacred assembly, according to the prescribed manner.

Every Jew has been commanded by God to come to Jerusalem 3 times a year to celebrate.

The Three Pilgrimage Feasts:

Feast	Hebrew Name	Purpose	Scriptural References
1. Passover / Feast of Unleavened Bread	<i>Pesach / Chag HaMatzot</i>	Commemorates the Exodus from Egypt and God's deliverance	Exodus 23:14–15, Deuteronomy 16:1–8
2. Feast of Weeks	<i>Shavuot / Pentecost</i>	Celebrates the giving of the Law and the wheat harvest	Exodus 23:16, Deuteronomy 16:9–12
3. Feast of Tabernacles	<i>Sukkot / Feast of Booths</i>	Remembers Israel's wilderness journey and God's provision	Exodus 23:16, Leviticus 23:33–43, Deuteronomy 16:13–15

Deuteronomy 16:16, *“Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the Lord empty-handed.*

These feasts were not only agricultural celebrations but also covenantal gatherings—times to remember **God's faithfulness, renew commitment, and rejoice in His provision.**

Dwelling with God:

The Eternal Joy of Tabernacles

Rediscovering and obeying the command to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles sparked a powerful spiritual revival. This moment is a vivid example of how **obedience to God's Word can awaken joy, unity, and renewal.**

Leviticus 23:33–44:

A Time to Remember and Rejoice

Illustration:

Imagine a family pitching a tent to remember their ancestors' journey but not for leisure. But to honour legacy. That's what Israel did during Sukkot. But in Nehemiah's day, this wasn't just tradition, but it was rediscovery.

Nehemiah

8:

The leaders found in the Law that they were to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. Though it hadn't been observed like this since Joshua's time, they obeyed and **"there was very great rejoicing"** (Nehemiah 8:17).

Revival began with **rediscovered truth** and **obedient hearts**.

V 13, Now on the second day the heads of the fathers' houses of all the people, with the priests and Levites, were gathered to Ezra the scribe, in order to understand the words of the Law.

Spiritual Leadership in Action

The "heads of fathers' houses," along with priests and Levites, represent the spiritual and familial leaders of the community. Their initiative to return the next day to study the Law shows a deep commitment to understanding and applying God's Word—not just hearing it once but digging deeper.

Collective Desire for Understanding

This wasn't a passive listening session. These leaders actively sought insight, showing that true spiritual renewal involves not only emotional response but also intellectual engagement and practical application.

Ezra's Role as a Teacher

Ezra, described elsewhere as a "scribe skilled in the Law of Moses" (Ezra 7:6), becomes the central figure in guiding this deeper study. His presence underscores the importance of

faithful teachers who can explain Scripture clearly and accurately.

Spiritual Reflections

- **Hunger for the Word**

The leaders' return on the second day reflects a spiritual hunger that goes beyond ritual. It's a model for us to not be content with surface-level engagement but to seek deeper understanding and transformation through Scripture.

- **Humility in Leadership**

These were respected men—yet they humbled themselves to learn. This teaches that no one is above the need for instruction, and that great leaders are first great learners.

- **Community Transformation Begins with Leaders**

Their study led to the rediscovery of the Feast of Tabernacles (vv. 14–18), which had been neglected. This shows how the obedience of leaders can spark revival in the entire community.

Psalms 119:105, *Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.*

James 1:22, *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*

2 Timothy 3:16-17, *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

- **Prioritize Scripture Study:**

Like the leaders in Nehemiah, we should carve out time to study God’s Word deeply—not just for knowledge, but for transformation.

- **Lead by Example:**

Whether in a family, church, or community, spiritual leaders must model a commitment to learning and obedience.

- **Seek Insight, Not Just Information:**

The goal isn’t just to know the Bible but to understand and live it.

1. God’s Provision in the Past:

“He Sustained Them”

Nehemiah 8:14–16, *And they found written in the Law, which the Lord had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month,¹⁵ and that they should announce and proclaim in all*

their cities and in Jerusalem, saying, "Go out to the mountain, and bring olive branches, branches of oil trees, myrtle branches, palm branches, and branches of leafy trees, to make booths, as it is written." ¹⁶Then the people went out and brought them and made themselves booths, each one on the roof of his house, or in their courtyards or the courts of the house of God, and in the open square of the Water Gate and in the open square of the Gate of Ephraim.

Illustration:

A farmer builds a small booth on his land each year to remember the drought God brought him through. It's not just a structure but a story.

Nehemiah:

The people gathered branches and built booths on rooftops, in courtyards, and public squares. It was a **visible testimony** of God's provision and their renewed obedience.

Leviticus 23:42–43, *You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths,⁴³ that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.' "*



Feast Tabernacles celebrated from 15th day of 7th month for 8 days.

1st day and 8th day Sabbath.

1st Day of 7th Month is Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah)

10th Day of 7th Month is Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)

15th Day of 7th month is beginning of Feast of Trumpets (Sukkot)

Signifying the final harvest.

Solomon dedicated the temple during the Feast of Tabernacles.

7 days they must stay in the booths.

Probably some believe Jesus was born during this festival.
Jesus spoke about the Holy Spirit in John 7 during this festival.



Rediscovery of the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot)

- The leaders, while studying the Law with Ezra, “found it written” that God had commanded the Israelites to dwell in booths during the seventh month (**Leviticus 23:39–43**).
- This feast commemorated Israel’s wilderness journey, where they lived in temporary shelters and experienced God’s provision and presence.

Immediate Obedience

- Upon discovering the command, they didn't delay. They proclaimed it publicly and instructed everyone to gather branches and build booths.
- The specific trees mentioned: olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and leafy trees. These were native to the region and used to construct these temporary shelters.

Widespread Participation

- The people-built booths everywhere: on rooftops, in courtyards, around the temple, and in public squares. This shows a unified, joyful response to God's Word.
- It wasn't just a ritual but a revival.

The people were reclaiming their identity and renewing their covenant with God through obedience.

Symbol	Meaning
Booths (Sukkot)	A reminder of God's provision and presence during the wilderness journey
Branches	Symbolize the beauty and abundance of God's creation used in worship
Public Proclamation	Revival spreads when truth is shared openly and joyfully

Symbol	Meaning
Unity in Action	The entire community responded together, reflecting spiritual renewal

- **Scripture Ignites Revival:**

When God's Word is read and understood, it leads to transformation not just emotion, but action.

- **Obedience Brings Joy:**

The people didn't see this as a burden but embraced it with enthusiasm. **Obedience to God's Word is a source of joy**, not drudgery.

- **Faith Is Communal:**

This wasn't a private act of devotion. It was a public, shared celebration. Faith flourishes in community.

The Power of Returning to Neglected Spiritual Practices

The Forgotten Fireplace

Imagine a family living in an old house with a beautiful fireplace. Over the years, the fireplace was covered with furniture, forgotten, and unused. Winters came and went, and the family relied on electric heaters—functional, but impersonal.

One day, while cleaning, they uncovered the fireplace. They cleaned it, lit a fire, and for the first time in years, the home was filled with warmth, light, and the crackle of something ancient and alive. It changed the atmosphere. It brought people together.

That fireplace was never broken—it was just neglected.

Many believers and churches have “spiritual fireplaces” that have been covered up:

- Personal prayer and fasting
- Family devotions
- Corporate confession
- Sabbath rest
- Celebrating biblical feasts or spiritual disciplines with meaning

These practices aren’t outdated but they are powerful. When rediscovered and practiced, they rekindle warmth, intimacy with God, and communal joy.

The Reformation

During the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther and others didn’t invent new doctrines but they returned to neglected truths:

Salvation by grace, the priesthood of all believers, and the authority of Scripture. That return sparked one of the greatest revivals in church history.

- What spiritual practices have we neglected?
- What truths have we buried under the furniture of busyness, tradition, or modern convenience?
- What would happen if we rediscovered them—not as burdens, but as blessings?

2. God’s Presence in the Present:

“He Dwells Among Us”

V 17-18, *So the whole assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and sat under the booths; for since the days of Joshua the son of Nun until that day the children of Israel had not done so. And there was very great gladness. ¹⁸Also day by day, from the first day until the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day there was a sacred assembly, according to the prescribed manner.*

As they obeyed, Ezra read the Law **daily** (v. 18).

God’s presence was felt not just in booths, but in **His Word being honoured**. Revival was not emotionalism it was rooted in Scripture.

The phrase *“had not done so since the days of Jeshua (Joshua) son of Nun”* doesn’t mean the feast had never been celebrated—it had (**1 Kings 8:2, Ezra 3:4**). But **not with such wholeheartedness, unity, and joy**.

“Very Great Rejoicing”

- This wasn’t just ritual compliance it was a **celebration of restoration**. After exile and hardship, the people were back in their land, hearing God’s Word, and living out their faith.
- Their joy was both spiritual and communal, rooted in obedience and remembrance of God’s faithfulness.

Daily Reading of the Law

- Ezra read from the Book of the Law **every day** of the seven-day feast.

This shows a **deep hunger for God’s Word** and a commitment to sustained spiritual growth.

- The **eighth day** was a solemn assembly, as prescribed in Leviticus 23:36—a day of reflection and worship.

Element	Symbolism
Booths	Humility, dependence on God, remembrance of divine provision
Daily Scripture Reading	Ongoing renewal, not a one-time emotional response

Element	Symbolism
Great Rejoicing	Joy is the fruit of obedience and restored relationship with God
Solemn Assembly	A sacred pause to reflect, worship, and commit afresh

- **Celebrate God’s Faithfulness:**

Like the Feast of Tabernacles, we need rhythms of remembrance to anchor us in God’s past provision and future promises.

John 1:14, *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

John 7:37–39, *On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” ³⁹But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*

3. God's Promise for the Future:

“He Will Reign Forever”

Zechariah 14:16–19, *And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. ¹⁷And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, on them there will be no rain. ¹⁸If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the Lord strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. ¹⁹This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.*

After God's final victory, survivors from all nations will annually worship Him in Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles.

Any nation that refuses to participate will face divine judgment—symbolized by drought or plague.

This passage emphasizes God's universal reign and the necessity of honouring Him with joyful obedience.

Revelation 21:3, *And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.*

Their obedience wasn't just about the past—it was a **prophetic rehearsal**. They were aligning themselves with God's eternal plan, preparing for the day when He would dwell with them forever.

Application:

Practical Response: "Live Like You Are Camping"

Psalm 27:5, *For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; In the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock.*

2 Corinthians 5:1, *For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

1 Chronicles 29:15, *For we are aliens and pilgrims before You, As were all our fathers; Our days on earth are as a shadow, And without hope.*

1 Peter 2:11, *Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,*

The people didn't just hear the Word, but they **acted on it immediately**.

Their booths were declarations: "We are not home yet, but we are walking with the One who is."

Nehemiah 8:18 says they kept the feast for seven days, and on the eighth day held a solemn assembly “**according to the rule.**” Obedience led to **unity, joy, and renewal.**