

The Ears of All the People Were Attentive
By Trey Sullins

In Nehemiah's day the people of God were returning to the city of Jerusalem. After many years of captivity God had once again delivered His people and fulfilled His promise to them. Their task after returning was to begin rebuilding the city of Jerusalem with a major focus being on the wall surrounding the city. With God's continued help, the people eventually completed the wall in Nehemiah 6:15. In chapter 8 we notice this great attentiveness to the law of God. The Bible says, "Now all the people gathered together as one man in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate; and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded Israel." All the people came together for the purpose of hearing the Law of Moses. Notice the great respect the people had for the Law of God.

One sign of this is the fact that everyone who could understand was gathered there. Nehemiah 8:2, says "So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly of men and women and all who could hear with understanding on the first day of the seventh month." In this instance there does not appear to be exceptions for anything. Often today, when it comes to worship or church gathering times, people will make excuses for just about anything. Some have used hunting, fishing, work, rain, relatives visiting, vacation, and so many other things as excuses to not have to go to worship. This is not how we should be as Christians. God has done so much for us that we should make every single attempt possible to show Him how much we love and appreciate him.

Another sign of this respect is everyone was attentive to the reading of the law. These people had just made a great journey back to their old land of Jerusalem. They had a lot of work to do to restore the city back to what it once was (Nehemiah 7:4). Even though this great amount of work was still ahead of them, here they were gathering to hear the proclamation of God's word. Chapter 8 and verse 3 says "from morning until midday." This most likely means from first light, or very early in the morning until midday they were there. This was probably about six hours of listening to God's word. Imagine if one day we gathered together for six hours at 6:00AM on a Sunday morning! How many people do you think would still be left by midday? Yet the people's ears were tuned in to the words. Is that our spirit when we gather on the Lord's day? If not, then we must make the changes to respect God's word properly.

Lastly, the people stood up when Ezra opened the book. Once more call to mind the scene here. Thousands are gathered facing a central platform which Ezra is standing on. When Ezra opened the book those thousands of people in union all stood up. Such a sight would truly be amazing to see. Standing up has been a sign of respect for thousands of years. We stand for the national anthem, when greeting those we respect, and even in worship we stand to show honor and reverence to God. Once more as Christians we really should examine the body language that we use in honor to God. Do we bow or fall to our knees when we pray to Him? Are we happy to stand as we sing out songs of praise to Him? We certainly should be doing these things.

When you consider the timeline of Israel, there are many periods in their history when they were disrespectful to God. However, in this moment and time they show powerful example of respect to Jehovah! Seeing their example should cause us to want to work on how respectful we are. At the end of this glorious day, the people were found weeping and grieving (Nehemiah 8:9, 11).

They were doing this because they understood what was read to them (Nehemiah 8:12). They also realized all the sins they had done and saw all the love God had shown to them which led them to this moment. They had so much respect that their grief surely would have caused them to want to do better for their God.