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Get a copy of, & understand & obey the words of God (Pt 1 Neh.8)

In this teaching we provide four points from Neh.8; (1) the people have a copy of the words of God, and (2) the words of God are read and the audience are attentive, and (3) teachers give the sense and cause their audience to understand, and (4) the audience respond in obedience to the words. Let us add a little detail to our points:-

1. The people had a copy of the words of God,

Neh 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.."

The nation of Israel had the "book of the law". Was the book that was found the original autographs (original stone that God wrote on or animal skin) that God Almighty gave to Moses? They would almost certainly have been copies, just as Timothy had copies yet called them the holy scriptures (2Tim.3: 15). Would there have been any words missing from those that God gave to Moses? No! Would the words in the book have been perfect or imperfect? For those words to fulfil what Scripture says about the words of God, they would have to be perfect and pure (Deut. 32: 14 - works of the Lord are perfect, hence, as they were given by inspiration of God, then they would have to be perfect, and Ps.11: 6, 7 says that the words of the Lord are pure). So yes, let us give God the benefit of the doubt, the words that Ezra read were perfect and pure because they were given by inspiration of God, and **preserved** by God. Whereas, proof that words (claimed to be from God) are not from God, but man, is that they are given and preserved imperfect and impure. That is no different today, when a believer seeks God's perfect, pure and preserved words then he needs to consider whether the book he has in his hand fulfils the criteria established in the book, and if what they hold in their hand is imperfect then it **cannot** be the preserved words of God, whereas if they are perfect and free from error, then they **are** the preserved words of God.

Let us consider the words of the Book of Mormon that Mormons today believe to be holy scripture. They believe God gave them to the angel Moroni. How can the genuine seeker of truth establish if that book is, or is **not** the preserved words of God Almighty? By providing errors or contradictions in the text, or proof from within its pages that the words are imperfect. And the Book of Mormon itself, according to the NZ Protestant, states that the words of their book are **imperfect** (see <http://nzprotestant.org/Other%20Churches/Mormon%20Scriptures%20-%20Proof%20they%20are%20not%20Holy%20Scripture.pdf>). Therefore, any claim by Mormons to have a revelation from God through the angel Moroni **must** be **false**. Believers today can inform Mormons that the words of the angel Moroni were NOT given by inspiration of God but by the devil because their text says the words are **imperfect**. Hence, the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith is a fraud and is no different to the Muslim prophet Mohammed who supposedly received a revelation from the angel Gabriel resulting in the Qur'an, which is widely accepted to be **imperfect**.

The Jews in Nehemiah's time did have a copy of the words of the Lord in a book, the priest did not have to choose which words were the inspired and preserved words of God, but rather he simply had to find the book of the law, and it is no different today. The minister of God, the preacher of righteousness, only has to put his hands on "The Book" of Holy Scripture that fulfils the claims of purity and perfectness within its pages. That is, all the Bible colleges, and Theology colleges have to do, is **find** "The Book" of Holy Scriptures preserved today in the English text of the 1611 Authorised Bible.

2. The words of God are read, and the audience are attentive.

Neh 8:3 "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."

The verse says that the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book, not some of the people, but **all** the people. What does it mean that the ears of the people were attentive unto the book? According to the Oxford dictionary "attentive" means to "pay close attention to something". The word is derived from the French word "attentif" from "attendre", and means give ones attention to". Therefore the ears of the people in the congregation were purposefully attending to the words of the book of the law, they were actively listening to the words, similar to

the biblical instruction to hearken to the words of the Lord (which has a sense of “to hear intelligently, often with the implication of obedience”), supported by the example in 2Kg.22: 13. When the Lord Jesus taught the people they “were very attentive to hear him” (Lk.19: 48), in contrast the “scribes and chief of the people sought to destroy him” (verse 47), when they heard His words, possibly because they did not believe He spoke the words of God, so they felt threatened. Perhaps the biblical scholars specialising in Greek and Hebrew at our Bible colleges also believe that the words of the 1611 Authorised Bible are not God’s preserved words and feel threatened when they hear or read a verse from the English text of the 1611AB. Because if every word is preserved in English then why do you need the Greek and Hebrew scholars to determine the text? Think about it from their point of view, you have taken up a paid job to teach Greek and Hebrew in the knowledge that all potential ministers of God will need to sit under you to find the best approximation of God’s words. Then some zealous Bible-believing Christian asserts that there is an authoritative English text for the people. The Greek and Hebrew scholars would be out of a job if such a text existed, their whole livelihoods would be in jeopardy, like those who rebuked Paul for preaching Christ, because it would take away their livelihood (see Acts 19: 25–27).

So today, when you read the words of the Lord, as they are preserved in the Authorised Bible, and there be some who rebuke you, and others who listen with intent, don’t be surprised. But rather encourage all who hear the words, to hearken, to actively listen, purposefully with the idea of obeying the words. Why? Because they **are** the words of the Lord, and when the prophets spoke the words of the Lord, the people were to receive in their heart and hear in their ears (Ez.3: 10). Because that is the response of a believer, they desire to hear and know the words of God, they listen to the words of God when they are read, and their ears are attentive to each word. They are not just interested in the **message** that is conveyed by the words, but the actual words themselves. Because they read that man should “not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt.4: 4). Is that how you respond when you either read the words of God or hear them being read? Do you listen attentively, paying close attention to each word? or are you happy to pick up on the general context and message of each verse or passage? Does the teacher or preacher at your local church take care with each word in the Scriptures, and ask his congregation to listen attentively, as if they were the actual preserved words of God Almighty? If you say no, they do not, then that would not surprise me, because the majority of churches today would not believe that the words they read in their Bible, or their pastor reads, are the words that were given by inspiration of God, but rather have been translated into another language (see 2Tim.3: 16), and if they are not reading from the English text of the Authorised Bible then they would be correct. Why would they believe God has preserved His inspired words if the Bible which they use they believe is the best there is of the 200 corruptions? In which case if you know of believers that desire the words of God, and they sit under a teacher that reads from one of the two hundred versions, and their attention span is short when they listen to those words, then encourage them to sit under teaching that is from Holy Scripture, preserved for the body of Christ today in the 1611AB. When they sit under teaching from the AB, they will no longer have a short attention span because they will be listening to the words of God. Let us encourage the young in our midst to desire with their whole heart to hear the words of the Lord, and be attentive unto each word.

3. Teachers give the sense and cause their audience to understand.

Neh.8:7 & 8 “Also Jeshua...and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people [stood] in their place. So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused [them] to understand the reading.”

After the Scriptures have been read, it is then the role of the teacher, the minister of God, the teacher righteousness, to give the sense and cause the people to understand the words. The Lord Jesus Christ when he was on earth opened “their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures” (Lk.24: 45). Philip in his encounter with the Eunuch was asked a question of the Eunuch (Acts 8: 34) who admitted that he needed “some man to guide” him in his understanding. So Philip “preached unto him Jesus”. Hence Philip gave him the sense of the passage in Isaiah, and then caused him to understand how those passages applied to the Lord Jesus Christ. And as we know many of the Jews of the first century rejected the gospel of Christ (Acts 28: 27). Paul found that there were those in the first century church who desired to be teachers of the law, yet they themselves did not understand the law (1Tim.1: 7). Paul also

reasoned with the Jews from out of the Scriptures (Acts 17: 2), he convinced them mightily, showing them from the Scriptures (Acts 18: 28). And given that all scripture is given by inspiration of God, those who give the sense of those holy writings and cause the people to understand, are doing no different to what Phillip or Paul did in the early church. And let us remember that there are some scriptures which are hard to understand (2Pet.3: 16), both in the Old Testament and the New, and those who wrestle with them, and are unlearned, do so “unto their own destruction” (2Pet.3: 16). And if you desire to understand a passage, or your teacher, pastor or minister is causing you to understand the meaning of a passage, keep in mind that “no prophecy of the scriptures is of any private interpretation” (2Pet.1: 20), and similarly, if the teacher is causing you to understand a passage that contradicts other passages then you need to be asking him the question, why? because scripture is understood within the passages of scripture (see 1Cor.2: 13).

So if your teacher, preacher, pastor or minister of God brings a message from his experience, or uses one or two verses in his whole teaching, then he will struggle to give **any** sense nor give understanding to the Scriptures. And if he does not have them, but rather only 200 corrupt versions, then perhaps we can understand why he does not cause his congregation to understand. How can you give the sense of or cause others to understand the words of God, if you do **not** first **have** the **words**? You **cannot**! Whereas, if the teacher has a copy of the 1611 AB he will desire to read the words, give the sense of the words, and cause the people to understand the words.

4. The audience responded with obedience to the words of God.

Neh.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 in the feast of the seventh month: So the people went forth, and brought [them], and made themselves booths...”

The people’s response to hearing and understanding the words of God was to obey them. They did not give a reason why the words did not apply to them, neither did they justify why they could not obey them, they simply went and did what they heard and were caused to understand. God asks nothing else from each generation, but to hear His words, understand them, believe them, then obey them. i.e.: go and do what they say. And in this example from Nehemiah they read in the law of Moses that the people were to live in booths, so they obeyed the commandment and “the people went forth, and brought them, and made themselves booths.” Just as today, we are asked to hear, receive understanding of the Scriptures as they apply to the church age, and then “do what they say”. Therefore, we encourage you to be charitable when you see believers down at your local church, where the preacher reads from a corrupt version of Scripture, his message is made up of his experience intermingled with verses from “his chosen version of the Bible”, consequently he has no authority to preach the word, to “reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine”, therefore the people are not taught to turn from their sin, but rather call evil good, and good evil (see Is.5: 20). Then we come along and look at their works and quote the scripture that says that by their works they are known, hence we assert that these folk are not Christian because of their works. Yet their teachers and pastors have failed to feed them from the word of God, because they do not have the word, because they do not believe God has kept His promise and preserved His words. Just as Israel’s priest did not turn to the Lord, so the people sinned and went a whoring after other gods.

Let us challenge those who get paid as a full time job to preach and teach Holy Scripture, and feed the flock, yet do not have the words of God, they do not believe their bible, they do not teach the people to hearken to the words, nor provide the sense of the words, or cause their congregation to understand and obey the words. Because in their mind, they do not have the inspired words of God preserved today, so no one is encouraged to obey the words in their book because the scholars are still in the process of giving us God’s words. May we send the young we meet (who need feeding), to teachers who believe the words, cause to give understanding of the words, and encourage their audience to obey the words. Amen!

Having said what we have said, let us say it again. In this our first study of Chapter 8 in the book of Nehemiah, we have established four points: (1) the people have a copy of the words of God, and (2) the words of God are read and the audience are attentive, and (3) teachers give the sense and cause their audience to understand, and (4) the audience respond in obedience to the words.