

27 July 2014

Prepare yourself to hear the words of God (Pt 2 Neh.8)

This is our second & final teaching from Nehemiah chapter eight. In our first study we provided four points; (1) the people have a copy of the words of God, and (2) the words of God are read and the audience is attentive, and (3) teachers give the sense and cause their audience to understand, and (4) the audience responded in obedience to the words. In this study we will cover three additional points: (1) the words of God are Holy, and (2) the people prepared themselves to receive the words of God, and (3) the people wept when they heard the words of the Lord.

Let us add a little detail to our points:-

1. The words of God are Holy

Neh.8: 8 "So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused [them] to understand the reading." V 18 "Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day [was] a solemn assembly, according unto the manner."

See also Neh.9: 3.

God is holy, and the people found the book of the law of God; so by inference the law of God is holy, which Paul confirms in Rom.7: 12. And God gave the law and His other words by inspiration, and therefore the Holy Scriptures of God, which are the written form of God's words, were given by inspiration of God (2Tim.3: 16). God's name is holy, and His words are magnified above all His name (Ps.138: 2). The second member of the Trinity is the Son, He spoke not His words, but the words of His Father (Jn.14: 10), which are holy words. The third member of the Trinity is called the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit, and the words that the Lord Jesus Christ spoke, "they are spirit" (Jn.6: 63). And the Holy Scriptures are known as the sword of the Spirit (Eph.6: 17). So there is no doubt that when the Holy Scriptures speak about the law of **God**, those words of the law **are** holy. And today, most versions of **Holy** Scripture have on the front cover, "Holy Bible", and that is what you would expect to find, if that book contained the holy words of God.

During my time at Bible college the Lord used a chippy (carpenter) to challenge what I was being taught. I remember at the end of my second year working on a building site as an electrician, minding my own business, singing a hymn, with an NIV "holy Bible" in my back pocket. At the end of my day the chippy asked me "what is the difference between 'a Bible' and a 'holy Bible'?" I remember thinking what sought of a crazy question is that, a Bible is a holy Bible, isn't it? there is nothing more to it than that, is there? Some people get the point straight away, and others like me take a while, and others just simply never get the point that God could **not**, according to His words, preserve His words in 200 plus corrupted English bibles and a Greek text which the scholars are still doing their best to put together from scraps. With such evidence it is clear to those who have eyes to see, that not **all** Bibles are holy, not all bibles are pure, perfect, and preserved from the words that God gave by inspiration (2Tim.3: 16). Even though each of those 200 bibles says that every word is "pure", God's work is "perfect", God will "preserve" His words, and "all" scripture is given by inspiration of God. Why? We find the answer in the Scriptures, when Paul was writing his epistles there were **many** which corrupt (2Cor.2: 17), and that is when the Pauline epistles were being written! So next time someone is using an NIV with the words "Holy Bible" on the cover, ask them "is their Bible the **Holy** Bible, or **just** the Bible?" In other words are the words contained in that book God's holy words, are they God's **pure, perfect, preserved** words, or are they a descendant from those that were being corrupted in Paul's time, and have continued to be corrupted down through the centuries?

I think Muslims simply believe the Qur'an is holy and given by Allah and preserved today because it is still in the language in which it was given, whereas, many Christians struggle to believe that God gave his words in one language and preserved them in another, even though there are examples in the Scriptures of God translating words from one language to another (see Matt.5: 41 & Mk.15: 34), and they must have been translated perfectly, because **God** translated them. Did you know that a Jew will not put his book of the law, the Torah, on the floor, because they are the words of God, they are holy? Muslims also believe their book the Qur'an is holy, divinely given by Allah to Mohammed, so you understand why they get so hysterical if someone defames the Qur'an, whilst most Christians let the insults slide. Some because they read in their book that they are to "love their enemies", and others because they believe their book is **not** holy, it is **just** a translation of the words God gave, it is a translation of the Holy Scriptures. Have you ever heard

that phrase before, about the English text of the 1611 Authorised Bible, it is **just** a translation? In which case it can be put on the floor, desk, or anywhere, because it is **just** a translation **of** Holy Scripture.

Some Bible scholars see the Muslim devotion to the Qur'an as a form of worship. I remember Dr. Tim Meadowcroft at BCNZ saying to me that "the Muslim worships their holy book as Christians do the Lord Jesus Christ, and those who believe the KJV to be the Christian's Bible, worship the book as Muslims do the Qur'an". If that is why he and other scholars reject the KJV as the preserved holy words of God, then I see that the devil has used a very plausible device to deceive believers today, especially when the likes of Dr. Meadowcroft are lecturing at our largest Bible college to young ministers in training. The scriptural fact that God's words are **holy** is lost today, but let us remember to teach our young that God gave us words, and those words are **holy**.

2. The people prepared themselves to receive 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, which the Lord had commanded to Israel." V 5 "And all the people stood up".

When Israel were in the wilderness Moses called the people to stand and hear the words of the Lord (Num.9: 8). Hence, the people were called to be ready, they were called to prepare themselves to receive the words of God. When the people of Israel were finally in the land that God promised them, they had rest from war in the days of Solomon, and each morning and evening the people would stand to "thank and praise the Lord" (1Chr.23: 30). Then there is an example in Neh. 9: 5 where the Levites asked the people to "stand up and bless the Lord your God", then you have our verse in Neh.8: 1 where the people gathered themselves together, and stood up to receive the words of God. Why? Because they believed God gave the words by inspiration and therefore they **were** the **actual** words of God, they were holy. In the New Testament there is the example where the brethren in Thessalonica are recorded as receiving "the word with all readiness of mind". Why? Because they believed they had the actual words of God, and if that were true, then it would be just like when the Lord spoke to Moses in the burning bush and was told he was standing on holy ground, and was listening to God speak (Ex.3: 2-4).

Do we approach the Holy Scriptures with readiness of mind, as if we were reading the very words that God spoke? In our meetings of worship, when we gather together to hear the words of God being expounded, do we stand when the Holy Scriptures are read?

If the words of God were not perfect but imperfect would the people have prepared themselves in the same way? Would they have prepared their minds to receive words that were inspired by man? I know at concerts some crowds give standing ovations, but the crowd do not do so to prepare themselves to worship or receive the music. Such an honour is ascribed to God and to **His** words, not man's words!

Would the people have come together and prepared their hearts to receive the words of the fairy-tale, "Bell & the Dragon", which is a book that comes from the same manuscripts as the Roman Catholic Church's Bible? I suggest they would not!

What if Mormons today knew that their Book of Mormon asserted that the words from their angel Moroni, as recorded in their holy writings, were "imperfect"? would they gather together to hear the words that can be proven to be from man? I suggest that if they were taught the truth and saw the truth in their writings, and **desired** the truth, they would depart from their worship in the "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" and abandon the writings of that church.

Would a church-going man who learnt the truth of the Authorised Bible and its purity and perfectness, abandon his corrupt Bible version for a book that is pure and perfect at word level? I am sure that for those who have come to this knowledge and shared with such believers, they would find the success-rate of such a man leaving their NIV or GN is very low. Perhaps that is why such churches do not stand to receive the words of God, because they know that what they are reading are not the words of God, but the best that man has today.

Why would anyone prepare to receive words of another man? I suggest they would not!

When you visit a Messianic group, as Karen and I did, perhaps you will find as we did, that they stand to hear the reading of the words of God, and they will not put their bibles on the floor. They treat their 'Holy Book' much like the Muslims treat the Qur'an. But again, what if they knew that

the book they had in their hand was imperfect or impure, would they stand to hear the reading, would they be so insistent as not to put the book on the floor?

Let us encourage each other and ourselves to prepare our hearts and minds to hear the words of God when they are read. If that means we stand, let us do so with one mind, if that means pray before hearing the words, let us do so together. Because if we **do** have the words of God, then let us honour Him, and His words, and prepare ourselves to receive His words.

3. The people wept when they heard the words of the Lord.

Neh.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.”

Recorded in Judg.2: 4 we read that “when the angel of the Lord spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept.” Why? Because they knew they heard the words of the Lord. I suggest that for those in our example in Nehemiah that wept, they knew that they had the words of the law which were from God, and they wept because the book had been found, read, and they realised they had been disobedient unto the words that the Lord commanded Moses. And when a believer realises they have broken God’s law and humbles himself before God and repents (as Paul commands in Acts 17: 30, and as with the example in 2Chr.34: 27) then the Lord is faithful and will forgive him. But if the book of the law were not the words of God, but rather words of man, could the Holy Spirit of God use those words to humble a man? NO! Let us remember that it is not recorded that on **every** occasion the people wept when they heard the words of God being read, but the example does show that when the words of God are read, the Holy Spirit of God can use those words to convict us of our sin (Jn.16: 7–11), as He does when the words are preached to the lost.

If the preacher preached from the book of Mormon could the Holy Spirit of God use those words and convict the lost of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment (Jn.16: 7–11)? I suggest that if there is a duplicate of the words of Holy Scripture that are read, then it is possible, but given that the words of the book of Mormon are imperfect, they are inspired by man, not God, then it is likely that they would not weep, nor come under conviction of their sin!

If the preacher preaches from the NIV and uses a verse like Jn.3: 16, can the Holy Spirit of God convict a man of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment? I think He could, and if the person believed in their heart they would be saved.

But we can say with absolute **certainty** that the Holy Spirit of God **does** and **will** use the words of Holy Scripture to convict a lost man of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, and hence the lost man may repent, weep and mourn, because of their sin. Perhaps that is why you hardly ever see a man preaching on the street with an NIV, GN or New English Bible, or any other version of Holy Scripture, because they are corrupt, they contain words from man.

Have you ever wept when reading Holy Scripture? Perhaps you have at a time when you realised you had disobeyed the words of God?

Have you ever preached from the Scriptures and a lost man wept when he heard the words of God?

Let us be mindful to encourage others to **find** the words of God, **prepare** their hearts and mind to **receive** the words, and let us come to the Scriptures with a humble heart, willing to respond with weeping when moved by the Spirit of God, whether it be in response to our sin or the awesomeness of our God.

Having said what we have said, let us say it again. In this our second & final study of Chapter 8 in the book of Nehemiah, we have established three points: (1) the words of God are **Holy**, and (2) the people prepared themselves to **receive** the words of God, and (3) the people **wept** when they heard the words of the Lord.