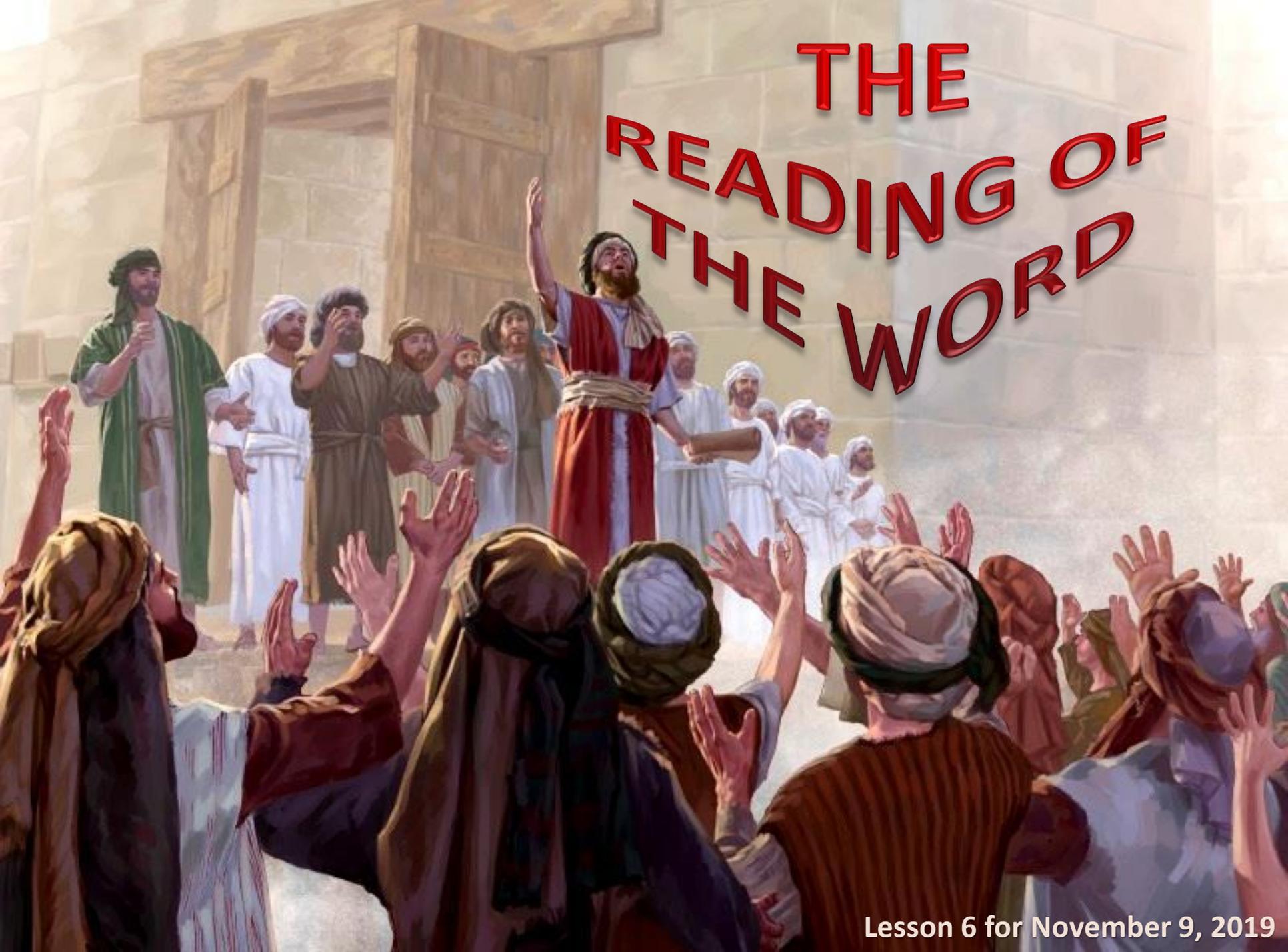


# THE READING OF THE WORD



**Nehemiah 8 tells of the gathering of the people to hear the Word of God. They followed Moses' instructions in Deuteronomy 31:11 by reading "the Law"—the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy).**

**The people of Israel were revived after hearing the Law and its meaning.**

**➡ The festivity of the Word (v. 1-2)**

**➡ The reading of the Word (v. 3)**

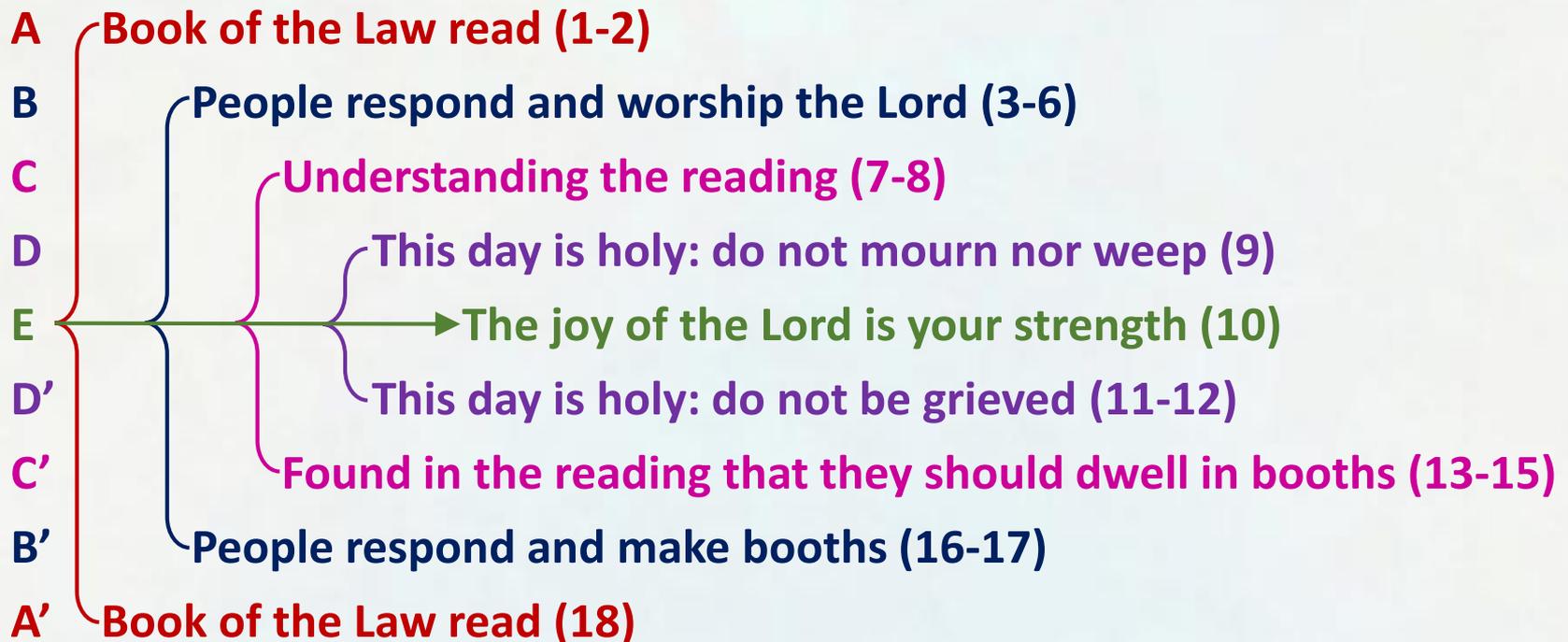
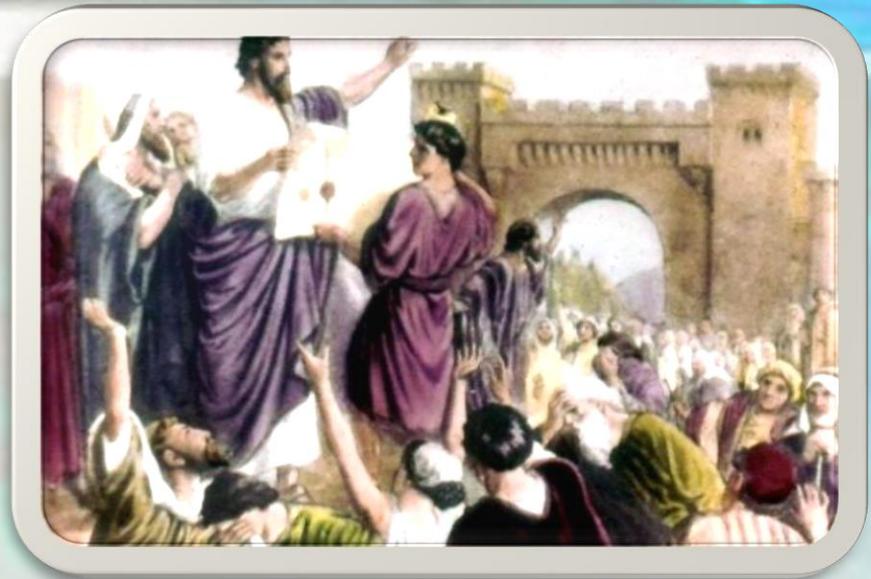
**➡ Understanding the Word (v. 4-8)**

**➡ Rejoicing in the Word (v. 9-12)**

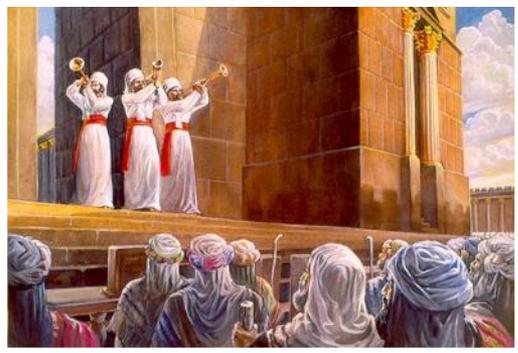
**➡ Obeying the Word (v. 13-18)**



The chiastic structure of Nehemiah 8 is helpful to understand the story and to discover its main point: “the joy of the Lord is your strength.” (Nehemiah 8:10 NIV)



# THE FESTIVITY OF THE WORD

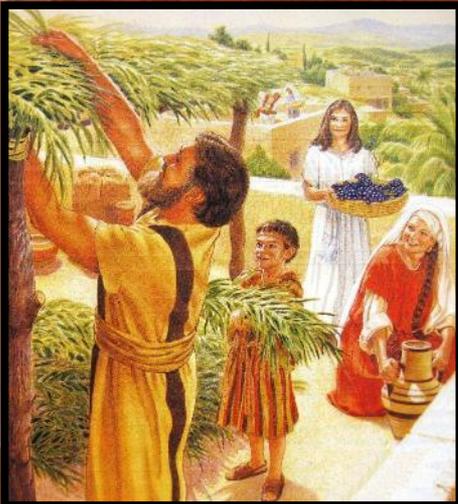


“So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly of men and women and all who could hear with understanding on the first day of the seventh month.” (Nehemiah 8:2)

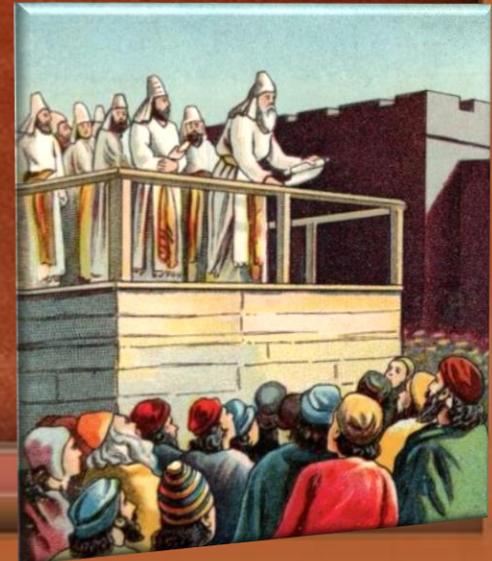
The first day of the seventh month in the Jewish calendar was the civil New Year. That’s when the festivity of the trumpets took place (Leviticus 23:24).



The Day of Atonement also took place in the seventh month, on day 10 (Leviticus 23:27), and the Feast of the Tabernacles took place on day 15 (Leviticus 23:34)

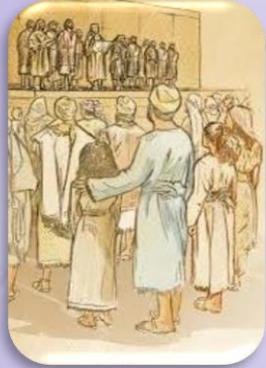


The people of Israel decided to devote themselves to God in that New Year. They built a high platform and asked Ezra to read the book of the Law.



# THE READING OF THE WORD

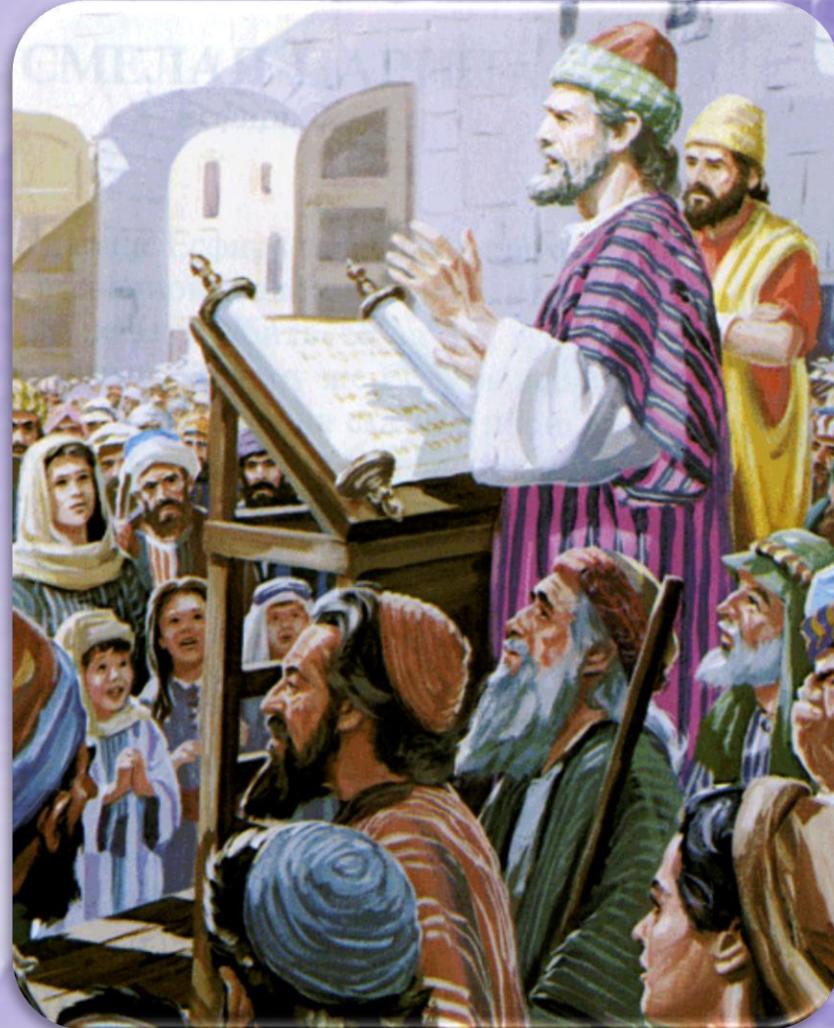
"Then he read from it in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate from morning until midday, before the men and women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law." (Nehemiah 8:3)



**Ezra had been teaching the Word of God for many years (Ezra 7:25).**

**The walls of Jerusalem had been rebuilt, and the people lived peacefully. The previous teachings of Ezra had touched the people's hearts, so they felt an urge to hear the Word.**

**Men, women and children listened to the story of God's faithfulness. They heard about how God had led His people to the Promised Land and had given them fair laws.**



# UNDERSTANDING THE WORD

"They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people understood what was being read." (Nehemiah 8:8 NVI)



There were two groups of 13 teachers:



The first group read (v. 4). They read the text in Hebrew—the original language—and probably translated it into Aramaic—the common language.

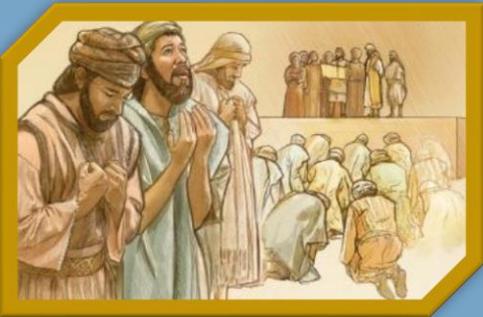
The second group interpreted the text (v. 7). They explained to the people what had just been read.

The reading took the whole morning (about 5-6 hours). Nobody complained about the length of the event. Everyone was happy to hear the Law.

The best thing was that everybody could understand the Word of God.

# REJOICING IN THE WORD

**"Then he said to them, 'Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.'" (Nehemiah 8:10)**



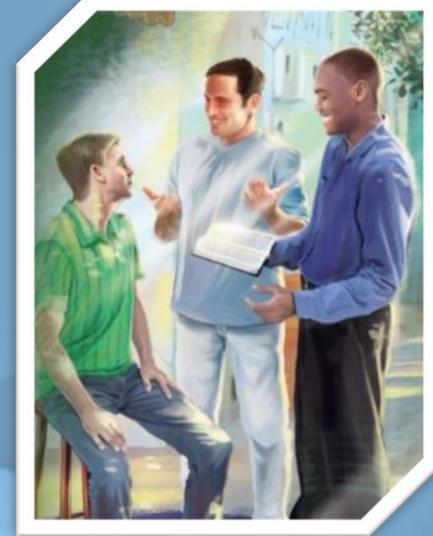
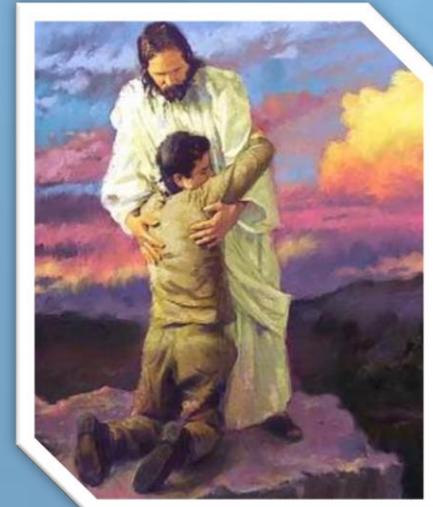
**The people felt sinful after reading of the Word. They cried because they understood they were unworthy before God and helpless to improve their own situation.**



**The leaders encouraged the people to repent, because God listens and forgives. Therefore, they should rejoice in God's kindness: "for the joy of the Lord is your strength." (v. 10)**

**They celebrated a great meal together. They also invited those who had not prepared anything.**

**The joy of the Gospel motivates us to share it with others.**



**“While the Christian’s life will be characterized by humility, it should not be marked with sadness and self-depreciation. It is the privilege of everyone so to live that God will approve and bless him. It is not the will of our heavenly Father that we should be ever under condemnation and darkness. There is no evidence of true humility in going with the head bowed down and the heart filled with thoughts of self. We may go to Jesus and be cleansed, and stand before the law without shame and remorse...**

**Truly spoke God’s servant Nehemiah: ‘The joy of the Lord is your strength.’ Nehemiah 8:10. And Paul says: ‘Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.’ ‘Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.’ Philippians 4:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-1”**

# OBEYING THE WORD

“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.” (Nehemiah 8:14)

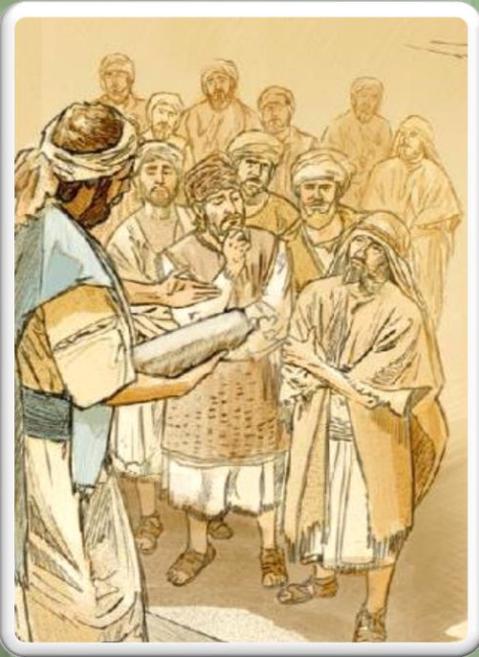
After the gathering, the leaders asked Ezra for a deeper explanation of God’s Word.

They understood that they couldn’t lead the people if they didn’t understand God’s will first.

They were willing to obey every requirement God had established in His Word.

They found out that they should celebrate the Feast of the Tabernacles on the 15<sup>th</sup>, so they immediately told the people to do so.

Thus they celebrated the most joyful feast. As they remembered God’s acts of mercy and grace and salvation, the people were to rejoice in what the Lord had done for them.



**“Ministers of the gospel should make the truth of God the theme of study, of meditation, and of conversation. The mind that dwells much on the revealed will of God to man will become strong in the truth. Those who read and study with an earnest desire for divine light, whether they are ministers or not, will soon discover in the Scriptures a beauty and harmony which will captivate their attention, elevate their thoughts, and give them an inspiration and an energy of argument that will be powerful to convict and convert souls.”**

