

Context

- Walls have been completed - maybe just 7 days beforehand!
- (Elul (6:15) was sixth month)
- Nehemiah has moved on to establishing Jerusalem - preliminaries before lots cast on who comes into city to live...
- consolidation - basis for next stage - looked at last week...
- Now have a gap when account goes into 3rd person, not directly part of Nehemiah's diary

Overview

- Reading 1 - all people, mega-assembly, day1
- Reading 2 - leaders, Bible Study, day2
- Tabernacles - response to leaders BS

First Reading of the Law - Extensive

- Don't really know cause or reason for this assembly - maybe popular demand!?
- Whatever, some organisation lay behind it - witness erection of stand
- Remarkable only a few days after walls completed!
- v.1 - Law of Moses = Pentateuch, Gen/Ex/Lev/Num/Deut - Scripture!
- v.2 - remarkable inclusion of women and non-adults! Joking apart...! Relationship requires knowledge, understanding. This is one of the key lessons, thrusts of passage - emphasis is repeated in v.3 and throughout chapter - understanding is part of faith
- v.3 - Six hour sermon! (well, little less!) See importance placed on learning of God. Attentively!
- v.4 - Many involved in helping; still often today in Synagogue several people will read; other customs such as standing when Scripture read are mentioned later. Use of many people in leading worship?
- v.5 - Respect for God's words
- v.6 - Not Bible-worship; focus is on God, on praising him for who he reveals himself to be. Ezra and people alike
- v.7 - Those with a special responsibility to teach, explain, make clear - perhaps translate (Hebrew/Aramaic), since language situation unclear
- v.8 - All this emphasis on clarity, on comprehension! Leaves same responsibility on us - perhaps particularly those called to preach and teach, but all in developing that understanding, in applying selves to Scripture, to study, etc
- v.9 - Was no empty ceremony - God's word evoked a response in God's people. First response was grief - for disobedience? For neglect? Encouragement was to see God as gracious and generous, desiring relationship, so revealing himself in Law - so point is "be glad you've now got the chance to obey" rather than "Oh no! I haven't obeyed!"
- v.10 - Celebration - something we do fairly poorly!
- v.11 - Working in tandem
- v.12 - Sharing, concern for one another in midst of celebration. Joy is in part because they understand just who God is, what He has done
- Suppose like our response to the Cross - tears of shame that my sins sent Jesus there, but unbelievable joy as we comprehend just what Jesus accomplished for us by so dying!

Second Reading of the Law and Feast of Tabernacles - Intensive

- Came back for more!
- Leaders
- Close bible study
- Issued in desire to conform to Biblical norms - not just Nehemiah or Ezra driving people on unwillingly - as Scripture is opened up, the initiative starts to come from the people

- A good pastor, in one sense, is always seeking to do themselves out of a job!
- Memories of booths in desert - probably this side of the festival forgotten, rather than end of harvest aspect
- Reading from the Law every day was a "more than" the festival requirements - so desiring to get to grips with God's word, that the "one-off" prescribed was not enough!

Conclusion

- Our attitude to Scripture!
- Our desire to understand
- Our need to obey
- Our need to celebrate