

## Joy: The Business of Heaven Nehemiah 8

### Joy: The Business of Heaven Introduction

- Contemporary pastor and Author J. S. Park makes a valuable point in one of his blog posts:
  - *Do Christians really have to be so grave, somber, and dramatic all the time? It's okay to be happy, you know. If you have Jesus and you're less happy, then that's because of you and not Jesus.*
- Todd Deatherage, one of the founders of the Telos Group, which works in the Middle East, makes a related observation.
  - *Angry discourse can certainly motivate and stir people to action, but we as Christians are called to live differently. Shouldn't we resist the urge to be a part of the angry mob rather than proudly trumpet our affiliation with it?*
    - Todd Deatherage, in Relevant Magazine
- The longer I walk with Jesus, the more I believe one of my heroes, C. S. Lewis, got it right.
  - *Dance and game are frivolous, unimportant down here; for 'down here' is not their natural place ... But in this world everything is upside down ... Joy is the serious business of heaven.*
    - C. S. Lewis, in Letters to Malcolm
- Nehemiah and company finished the wall of Jerusalem.
- They all went back to their homes.
- Now it was time for the Feast of Booths – or *Sukkoth*.
- So the people gathered in Jerusalem.

### Reading the Law Nehemiah 8:1-8

- 8:8 This verse gives a terrific strategy for how we should approach the teaching of the Bible in our churches.
- This was really part of Ezra's whole philosophy of life.
  - See Ezra 7:10
- Reading the Law Nehemiah 8:1-8
  - *One of the reasons there is so much religious heresy ... (with so many unfortunate consequences) is that many think that they do not need to study the word of God before dispensing it to others.*
    - Nupanga Weanzana

### **The Joy of the Lord    Nehemiah 8:9-12**

- 8:9    The people wept as they heard ... the law.
- This could have been the result of intense conviction for not having taken it seriously.
  
- 8:10    This is our key verse for today.
- The joy of the Lord is our strength too!

### **The Feast of Booths    Nehemiah 8:13-18**

- 8:17-18    And there was very great rejoicing.
- Now there is continued reading of the law, but it is accompanied by tremendous joy.
- This is how it should be.

### **Some Things to Think About**

- Christianity is supposed to be a joyful faith.
- Consider what Jesus said in John 15:11.
- Or consider Jesus in Hebrews 12:1-2.
- His anticipation of coming joy motivated him to endure the cross.
  
- There is more:
  - Consider this simple statement in Acts 13:52.
  - Or Paul on the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22.
  - Or what he says in 1 Thessalonians 5:16.
  - Finally, listen to Revelation 21:1-4.

### **Joy: The Business of Heaven    Affirmations**

- I believe that:
  1. God intended Christianity to be a joyful faith.
  2. He offers me fullness of joy.
  3. The work of the Holy Spirit within me produces joy.
  4. I must bear some responsibility for my own joy.
  5. The reality of heaven is more significant than all of my past, present or future struggles.
  
- Nehemiah 8:10    “The joy of the Lord is your strength.”
  - *Joy is the serious business of heaven.*
    - C. S. Lewis