

Call to Renew the Covenant

Key Verse: *“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.”*
—Nehemiah 8:3

Selected Scripture:
Nehemiah 8

A SPIRITUAL REVIVAL WAS

undertaken through the reading of the Scriptures to the Jews who were now established back in their homeland. “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. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.”—Neh. 8:1,2

Our Key Verse describes the attentiveness of the people as they listened to the reading of the Law of Moses for several hours. Undoubtedly, the priests and Levites were interspersed among the people and explained to them the meaning of what was being read. The people could well understand that they had been living in a manner that was contrary to God’s requirements, and their ini-

tial reaction was to mourn and weep.—vss. 4-9

The culmination of the day's activities was a feast at which the people gave expression of their love, peace, and joy of sharing their blessings with one another. (vss. 10-12) On the following day, there was a time for special study that involved the priests, Levites, and the leaders. They discovered from God's Word that the Jews were to observe the Feast of Tabernacles later in the month.—vss. 13-15

The celebration foreshadowed a future permanent time of joy, peace, and safety in their land when God's kingdom is established on earth. This feast was celebrated for an entire week. This was the first time the Jews had rejoiced in this manner since the days of Joshua.—vss. 16-18

Various Christian denominations teach creeds that conflict with each other and are not supported by the Word of God. One of many widely held present beliefs is that God will torture unbelievers for eternity in the flaming fires of hell. This is at variance with one of the most widely quoted scriptures in the New Testament—"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—John 3:16

With the many wonderful Bibles in existence today, supplemented by study aids such as concordances and scripturally based tracts, many Christians have had their eyes opened to understand the just and loving nature of the Heavenly Father, and will rejoice in the soon to be fulfilled scriptural promises contained in God's Word.—Jer. 31:34

What rejoicing and renewal there will be on a global scale when all mankind are raised from the tomb. (John 5:28,29, *Revised Standard Version*) It will then be clearly understood that Christ's death satisfied the penalty for sin, not only for believers, but also all mankind.—I John 2:1,2 ■