

## Lev 05-08-07a

This is Sunday, the 7th of August, 2005. We continue our worship this morning. As we approach the study of the Word of God, we take a moment to exercise the function of our individual priesthood and make sure that God, the Holy Spirit, can speak to our hearts and teach us from God's Word.

Shall we pray? Father, we recognize that we are nothing, we have nothing, and we can accomplish nothing apart from your grace. We are thankful for the fact that we are in a position to receive your grace because of the Lord Jesus Christ and his work on our behalf on the cross. We thank you that we have been rescued from the kingdom of darkness, from a lost and hopeless condition, from a life that ultimately has no meaning and no purpose and no eternal fruit.

And we have been transferred from that into the kingdom of the Son of your love, a place where we can redeem the time where our life does count, where we can not only fulfill your purpose and your plan and reflect your glory, but also look forward to an eternal future where we continue to learn and grow in grace and knowledge of our Savior. We thank you for the country in which we live and those who lead it, especially those who are of the household of faith. We ask your blessing on our president and his cabinet and all those believers in the branches of our government who are seeking to do their work and accomplish their duties in the light of your Word.

We pray that you will confound and put to flight those who are seeking to undermine their efforts for their own personal gain. We pray that we can continue to be a light and a source of missionary effort throughout the world and a place where the light of your Word shines forth to the world. And we pray particularly for ourselves as a local congregation that you will work your will in each of our lives and collectively so that we can do the same.

We want to be a light shining in a dark place and we want our light to be on a lamp stand and not under a basket. We pray that our study this morning will equip us for every good work. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Our scripture reading this morning is in a book that you would probably not list in the top ten of potential scripture reading books. Turn with me to Nehemiah chapter 8. Nehemiah chapter 8. Because you are well versed in the general outline and content of the Word of God, you know already that the book of Nehemiah along with the book of Ezra addresses the period in history where the captives that we are currently studying in the book of Ezekiel have at long last returned to rebuild the walls and the temple of Jerusalem.

This is one of the last, historically speaking, one of the last books of the Old Testament. It certainly addresses events in the latter portion of the time period covered in the Old Testament. The people have returned.

The first several chapters of Nehemiah talk about the effort that is expended in rebuilding the wall, rebuilding Jerusalem with a trowel in one hand and a sword in the other, so to speak. There are conspiracies against them. There is opposition.

There is oppression. There is conspiracy. In chapter 6 you have Sanballat attempting to thwart Nehemiah's efforts.

But in spite of all of this, they finish the wall. And in 52 days, it tells us in 615 of Nehemiah, they finish the wall. And it happened when all our enemies heard of it.

All the nations around us saw these things. They were very disheartened in their own eyes for they perceived that this work was done by our God. And there is a chastened attitude on the part of the returned exiles who recognize as never before in the history of Israel the importance of faithfulness to God.

There is fruit born from the discipline of captivity. They have learned lessons that the northern kingdom never took to heart. You do not have a return from the Assyrian incursion and the Assyrian invasion and the Assyrian carrying away of the northern kingdom.

The northern kingdom, they don't return. They don't have a day of celebration and of coming back to God. They disappear and they are just gone.

But the captives of Judah, having heeded the ministry of Ezekiel, having heeded the ministry of Daniel, having learned by their discipline and by their chasing, when they return, they recognize that what they do, they are able to do because of God's power, because of God's strength. Well, this is the background for our scripture reading this morning in Nehemiah chapter 8, which impinges directly on our study of Levitical feasts. We'll see why when we read this chapter.

Now all the people gathered together as one man in the open square that was in front of the water gate. This is not the 70's water gate. This is the water gate of the wall in Jerusalem.

And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded Israel. 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. I've already given you the outline of the feasts of Israel.

What is the first day of the seventh month? That is New Year's Day. This is the feast of trumpets day. First day of the seventh month.

This is the feast of trumpets, which we're going to be looking at this morning. 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.

So Ezra the scribe stood on a platform of wood which they had made for the purpose. This is

where you get your podium, your platform, your elevated... I have a little thing made of wood here, but I'm not standing on it. I'm standing behind it.

But he was elevated. It raised him up so that his voice would carry. Jesus used this same technique in preaching many times when he would get on the side of a hill and use the fact that people were below him, were sitting at his feet as it were to hear him.

Other times he would go out on the lake and use the amphitheater effect where his voice would reflect off the water. Ezra stood on a platform made for the purpose. At his right hand stood Mattithiah, Shema, Ananiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseah.

And at his left hand, Paddaiah, Mishael, Malkijah, Hashem, Hashbadanah, Zechariah, and Meshulam. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people. And when he opened it, all the people stood up.

And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. Then all the people answered, Amen, Amen, while lifting up their hands. See, it's okay to lift up your hands in worship.

And they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground. Also, Yeshua, Bani, Cherubiah, Yaman, Akuv, Shabbatai, Adijah, Maaseah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozebed, Hanan, Peliah, and the Levites helped the people to understand the law. And the people stood in their place.

So they read distinctly from the book in the law of God, and they gave the sense and helped them to understand the reading. And Nehemiah, who was the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people, said to all the people, This day is holy to the Lord your God. Do not mourn nor weep, for all the people wept when they heard the words of the law.

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. So the Levites quieted all the people, saying, Be still, for the day is holy.

Do not be grieved. And all the people went their way to eat and drink, to send portions, and rejoiced greatly, because they understood the words that were declared to them. Well, after a great lapse of time, the law is once again read in the hearing of the people, and you see their reaction.

How many times have we heard the reading of the word of God, and been brought to tears? There is a responsive attitude. There is obedience. And you'll notice, it says that they gathered in the morning, in verse 3, until midday.

So let's say they were there maybe three and a half hours, say from 8 to 11.30, or 8.30 to 12, something like that. And the men and women and those who could understand stood. Some of us can appreciate this.

There is a tradition at some of the service academies, where if you go to a game, especially if it's the Army-Navy game, if your team is on the field, you're on your feet, because you figure they're on their feet. They're fighting for your school, and so you ought to be on your feet. So anytime the team is on the field, why do you stand up? Well, a football game can last quite a long time, and you begin to realize that when they make the stands out of concrete, and it's cold, and you're standing there hopping from one foot to the other, so to speak, it can be kind of tedious.

But if you have an attitude of dedication and loyalty and recognition that something of importance to you is taking place, then you'll stand. People in uniform will engage in a parade at ceremonial occasions, and sometimes you have the troops standing there a long time. I remember watching the funeral of President Reagan, and they had an honor guard there, and if you recall, there was speech after speech after speech after speech, and the military honor guard around his casket didn't move a muscle to the observer's eye.

Those of us who have had to do that know that you actually have to move a lot of muscles to be able to stand that long without keeling over. But part of my mind was watching the guard the whole time all of these nice words were being spoken because it's an endurance match, but if you're dedicated and if you think it's important, you can do a lot. These people stood on their feet for the reading of the law.

They didn't sit down by companies like when Jesus fed the 5,000. They stood and they took in the bread of life as it existed in those days, which was the law. So we should not consider it too great an inconvenience when we have to arrange our schedule to take in the word of God, to meditate on the word of God, to try to spend some time each day.

We don't have to stand for four hours on our feet to hear the word. We have a copy of it that we can pull out any time we choose. We have tape recordings.

We have radio. We have books. We have all kinds of great assets that were non-existent in this day.

If they wanted to hear the law, they had to stand there, and they stood respectfully all morning long. Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. All the people answered, Amen, Amen, while lifting up their hands.

There was a response to blessing God. It was a heartfelt response. These people weren't there as a matter of duty.

They were there as a matter of desire. They were there to celebrate and to worship. You'll note that as Ezra stands up, there are individuals standing on each side.

There are at his right hand, Mattathiah, Shema, Ananiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Massiah. And at his left hand, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashim, Hashibadana, Zechariah, and Meshulam. How many people is that total? Someday we'll go through this in great detail.

But you have, just count them. Mattathiah, Shema, Ananiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Massiah are six at his right hand, correct? And then at his left hand, you have seven. So there are a total of 14 individuals standing before the people.

And at the center, six on one side, seven on the other, you have Ezra. Well, of course, seven plus seven is a pretty significant number. This is New Year's Day.

It is a new beginning. Ezra blesses the Lord. And you have all of these individuals in verse 7 who are there to help people understand the law.

The people stood in their place. This is a great model, by the way, for the modern church to look at. This isn't synagogue and it isn't temple worship, but this is communication of God's Word in a fairly pure form.

You have the senior individual on site, which is Ezra. He is the priest and he is the scribe, reading the words of the law. And then you have these other individuals who help to explain it.

This is what takes place in a church. You have the pastor or teacher who teaches the Word of God. And then there are those who explain it to children, to their families, to those who maybe didn't catch it the first time around.

Husbands explain it to their wives. Husbands and wives explain it to their children. Teachers, if you have a large enough group where you have something along the lines of Sunday school or separate classes.

Those who have learned under the tutelage of a faithful pastor and teacher can in turn go and teach others also. And that's what's happening here. These individuals understand.

And why do you think they understand what Ezra is saying? I strongly suspect that Ezra had a sit-down with these individuals before the public reading of the law and said, now I want you all to understand what this means. And when I read it, if there are people who have questions, you can quietly explain. These men are scattered out amongst the assembled people.

And he's reading, of course, in Hebrew. These people have already begun to adopt Aramaic. They've been in captivity for nearly two generations now.

And so some of the Hebrew is going to be falling on ears that are unaccustomed to hearing it. And so these men can whisper or quietly give an Aramaic translation, give an explanation. And this is so that people don't just hear, they hear with comprehension.

One of the things that's lost in our ritualistic forms of worship that you see, for example, in the Catholic Church and even in some Protestant denominations where there's high worship, people with robes and a bunch of carrying on, is that there's no explanation given. You wander into one of those churches and sit down and you see people waving stuff and praying over stuff and kneeling and rising and sprinkling and getting the crumbs and putting cardboard over the

cup and going through all this mystical mumbo-jumbo. There's no explanation given.

And the Apostle Paul condemns worship where people wander in and can't figure out what's going on. He says, I would rather speak five words that people can comprehend than talk all day long in a tongue that nobody doesn't comprehend. Somebody ought to be able to come in and hear the word of truth and understand it.

And that's why even in the times of sign gifts, with the gift of tongues, it was not to be exercised in the church apart from the gift of interpretation of tongues. So that when someone spoke in a foreign language as a sign, someone stood up and started speaking in Parsi or Chinese or some foreign language that only a few people there could understand, someone else would translate. And the amazing thing was that neither the speaker nor the translator knew that foreign language.

But it came to them through the ministry of the Holy Spirit to indicate and to signify that it was God's will that His word, His prophetic word, be understandable to everyone. That's what the gift of tongues meant. That's what the gift of interpretation meant.

As on the day of Pentecost, when the disciples stood up and began to preach, each man heard the word in his own language. This is the age of understanding. This is the age of communication.

God's word is not to be obscure. It isn't to be the province of those who live in an ivory tower. It ought to be near to us, in our hearts, on our lips.

And there is no excuse for not understanding it. It is God's will that we understand. And you see a reflection of that on this day.

And it's no accident that this is New Year's Day. This is the Feast of Trumpets Day. And there is a foreshadowing of the kingdom.

Because the Feast of Trumpets, like no other feast, foreshadows and foretells the coming of God's kingdom to His people, Israel. And the blowing of the shofar is a call to assemble and a call to hear. So that's what's taking place on this day.

After a time of judgment, after a time of separation, after a time of no nationhood, they are back in a reconstructed Jerusalem. And the first thing that happens on the new year, the head of the year, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Teruah, which is the Day of Trumpet, the first thing that happens is they assemble and hear the word of God. And they ensure that Ezra is up high enough that everybody can hear his voice and that there are those who can explain it.

And that everyone gets it. And the people who are there are all of like mind, aren't they? They assemble willingly. They hear the word and say, Amen, Amen.

And they hear the message and they weep. What a great picture of the beginning of the

millennial kingdom when God raises Israel in the flesh and those who are qualified are going to be in Jerusalem. Maybe they will assemble right there at the water gate.

And once again, the law of God will be read. And those who are in Jerusalem who qualify, not like the Pharisees, Jesus said, you'll see many coming in, but you yourselves will be cast out. Those who are in Jerusalem, those who are there to hear, are going to have that heart of passion for God's word and are going to care about what it says.

So they read distinctly from the book and the law of God and they gave the sense and helped them to understand the reading. Nehemiah, Ezra and the Levites said to the people, This day is holy to the Lord your God. It is a high Sabbath.

He says, Do not mourn nor weep. All the people wept when they heard the words of the law. And they said, You can't be weeping on this day.

This is a festival day. This is a feast day. It's a day of celebration.

And you should not be weeping. Why would they be weeping? This is the word that defines their relationship to God. These are the words of the covenant.

And they realize how far as a nation and as a people they have strayed from this great high calling. What do you suppose Ezra was reading? Do you think he read all five books in four hours or so? My guess is he read Exodus. He read Leviticus.

We know at least he read portions of Leviticus because it proclaims to them, as you see in the latter part of this chapter, the nature of the feasts and when they are supposed to be celebrated. Go your way. Eat the fat.

See, this is hard for those of us who think, well, you know, get the low-fat diet. But on this day, I think this is support at least for my dad's view of his heart-healthy diet that five or six days of the week he sticks pretty close. And then on one day he just gives himself a license to eat whatever he wants.

This was a feast day. Eat the fat. Drink the sweet.

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.

This is something we tend to forget, I think. And whether it is a time of prosperity, whether it is a time of challenge, or generally in our life we have a combination of both. There are some areas of our life that are a big challenge, and other areas are pretty prosperous at any given time.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, and peace. How many times in Scripture are we told to rejoice? To be happy? This ought to mark and ought to characterize our life. Who is going to think that being a Christian is something to consider if they're an unbeliever and they look at us

and we're trudging through life with a scowl and a heavy burden on our shoulder and it's chafing and we're grumbling under our breath and muttering along.

In what way does that reflect the glory of God? In what way does that reflect the work of Christ in delivering us into a kingdom of light and giving us hope? Hope, when it's real, engenders within our soul joy because we know that this is a momentary light affliction. We know what is in store. And we celebrate what God has done for us.

And yes, we can look into the Word of God and be sorrowful, especially when we see our shortcomings and our failures, but that is not to last. We are not to go trudging through life. You know, on Jordan's stormy banks I stand and cast a wistful eye.

It's over in Canaan where all the joy is, but over here I'm all oppressed and depressed and there's black storm clouds and I'm like that guy in the old comic strip where there's just a big cloud with a lightning bolt that follows me everywhere I go over my head. That is not the attitude the people of God are supposed to have. Do not mourn nor weep.

Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared. Notice, this is an exhortation to look outside. They're looking inside and saying, oh, I have failed the Lord.

He says, no, eat and drink and be merry, essentially, like Solomon says. Eat, drink, and be merry, not because tomorrow you die, but send portions out to others. Look at what you have to celebrate.

Enjoy the celebration yourself and send celebration out. We ought to be spreaders of joy, not spreaders of stern and drang. We ought not to be sort of spiritual killjoys, and a lot of people are.

We can get this way by having a critical attitude, by constantly finding fault, not looking at whatsoever things are pure and noble and right and lovely and of good report, and thinking on those things. We look at whatever is wrong and bad and getting worse. Do not sorrow.

The joy of the Lord is your strength. Joy and hope are intertwined and intermingled. You don't find many joyful people who have no hope.

Hope is the foundation for joy, and if the joy of the Lord is your strength, it tells us that what bolsters and motivates our faith, what undergirds and empowers our love is hope, and with that hope comes joy, and that is our strength. We ought to be happy. You know when the guy had that song a while back, Don't Worry, Be Happy? Well, it's one thing to say that, it's something else to do it.

How can you not worry? Well, you either have to put yourself in oblivion by disconnecting yourself from reality and removing contact with your problems, or you have positive hope that has ground and has foundation and has truth in it. So the Levites quieted all the people saying,

Be still, for the day is holy. Do not be grieved.

So all the people went their way to eat and drink, to send portions and rejoice greatly because they understood the words that were declared to them. With positive attitude comes understanding. People who are superficial, people who are shallow, people who are occasional in their interest in the Word of God are not going to understand it.

It's going to seem contradictory. It's going to seem indistinct. It's going to seem vague.

It's going to seem open to a bunch of different interpretations. You get out of the Word of God what you put into it in terms of faith, in terms of positive attitude, in terms of trusting that God has in His Word what you need. Now, take a look at the rest of this chapter.

On the second day, the heads of the fathers' houses of all the people with the priests and Levites were gathered to Ezra the scribe in order to understand the words of the law. I think this is really kind of funny because on the first day, this was Feast of Trumpets Day, everybody assembled, all the men and women and those who could hear, and you had these others whispering and explaining what Ezra read. On the second day, this is the day after, the heads of households and the priests and the Levites came to Ezra and said, Hey, we need a little more explanation than we got yesterday because our families and our people are asking us questions and we need more Bible class.

So these are the leaders who come to Ezra in order to understand the words of the law. So they open it back up. Ezra gets out the scroll and he says, Well, let's have class.

So 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. Now, remember, spring feasts we've already covered, fall feasts you have three, Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Feast of Booths, Tabernacles. This is what they saw, the Feast of Tabernacles.

First day of the seventh month, Feast of Trumpets, Yom Teruah. For ten days, you examine yourself, meditate, figure out where you stand with relation to God, and on the tenth, you have the Day of Atonement. Five days after that, you have the Feast of Booths, the Feast of Tabernacles on the fifteenth.

And it's another week-long feast, just like you had at the beginning with the Feast of Unleavened Bread. You had that nice little symmetry there, where God has a week-long feast in the spring, and there's a week-long feast in the fall. And so, that's what they saw in the law.

They said, well, yesterday was the Feast of Trumpets. Interestingly, they don't say anything about the Day of Atonement, but they do see that the Feast of Booths, the Feast of Tabernacles, is coming up. Now, this is the second day of the seventh month.

That feast starts on the fifteenth. So, they've got just under two weeks to get ready for it. So, they found written in the law that they should dwell in booths during the Feast of the seventh

month, and that they should announce and proclaim in all their cities and in Jerusalem, saying, Go out to the mountain and bring olive branches of oil trees, myrtle branches, palm branches, and branches of leafy trees to make booths as it is written.

Then the people went out and brought them and made themselves booths, each one on the roof of his house or in their courtyards or the courts of the house of God and in the open square of the water gate and in the open square of the gate of Ephraim. So, the whole assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and sat under the booths. Now, look at this.

For since the days of Joshua, the son of Nun, until that day, the children of Israel had not done so. Now, that's astonishing. In the days of Samuel the prophet, in the days of King Saul, in the days of King David, faithful David who was a man after God's own heart who brought the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, who laid the plans for the temple.

The days of Solomon who built the temple. David established the courses for the priests and established the singers and cranked up all of the worship in Israel. And in all of that time, they were not complete in their obedience.

They weren't complete in their understanding since the days of Joshua. Joshua was the last man that made sure that Israel celebrated the feast of booths. It's startling.

You would expect, well, surely in the days of David, surely in the days of Solomon with the temple, they would have followed the letter of the law. And they had not. Since the days of Joshua the son of Nun until that day, the children of Israel had not done so and there was very great gladness.

So it took them a week and a half or so to get all these branches gathered from the mountains. It's not like driving your van up there and chopping a Christmas tree down from the pine forest and coming back. This takes time to get to the mountains and get back down and assemble this much foliage and branch and so on to make these out of.

Verse 18, day by day, from the first day until the last day, he read from the book of the law of God. All week long. More word of God.

They kept the feast seven days and on the eighth day, there was a sacred assembly according to the prescribed manner. Now you might read this and say, well now it sounds like they started this seven or eight day celebration on the second day. That they didn't wait until the fifteenth day because it says on the second day the heads of the fathers got together and so on.

And then it says they celebrated this thing and it doesn't say that on the fifteenth day they celebrated it. But we know that they celebrated it in the prescribed manner because he's reading the word of God day by day by day and they know exactly when it's supposed to be. They kept the feast seven days.

That's exactly what's prescribed in Leviticus. Plus, look at the beginning of chapter nine. Remember, the feast starts on the fifteenth.

You go for seven days and then on the eighth day you have another sacred assembly, right? So that's fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty, twenty-first and then on the twenty-second you have another sacred assembly that's going to run over to the twenty-third, right? So you have that eight days from the fifteenth to the twenty-third and now look at the beginning of chapter nine. Now, on the twenty-fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting in sackcloth and with dust on their heads. They have finished celebrating that last great feast in the schedule and the very next day, the twenty-fourth, they come back and they're fasting.

It's not a feast, it's a fast. They're not celebrating, they're in sackcloth and ashes. Then those of Israelite lineage separated themselves from all foreigners and they stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers.

I won't go much further into this, but I want to point out to you that in the same way that these feasts tell us of the timing and the sequence and the substance of God's plan for Israel, spring feasts associated with the first advent, fall feasts associated with the second advent, feast of trumpets, the trumpet blast that is going to raise the dead of Israel out of the ground according to Ezekiel and Daniel. Many who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to a resurrection of life and some to a resurrection of shame and contempt. Those who are resurrection of life are going to be in Jerusalem.

And just as on this day they're going to hear the Word of God preached and spoken and it's going to strike them in their hearts, God says, the fulfillment of the new covenant to Israel, in that day I will take out your heart of stone. I will give you a heart of flesh. You will have no need that any man teach you.

You will understand. Every man will speak the truth to his neighbor and so on. That's those that come into Israel.

The rest of those who are outside are going to miss that opportunity. That's the resurrection of shame and contempt. There is a parallel for us, as we know, at the judgment seat of Christ.

There are those who are overcomers. There are those who are not. There are those who will walk with Christ in white and those who won't.

There are those who will sit with Him on His throne and those who won't. There are those who will partake of the hidden manna and those who will not. There are those who will have their name written, a name that only the Lord and they know, and there are others who will not.

All of those promises. There are those who will be hurt by the second death and those who will not. Same thing in this resurrection.

But, Feast of Trumpets. That's heralding and celebrating the inception of the Millennial Kingdom. From the first to the tenth, this is the time of intensive meditation and reflection because on the tenth, you have the Day of Atonement coming up, right? So, for ten days, you examine yourself.

For ten days, you evaluate yourself. For ten days, you figure out where you stand relative to God. Well, thousand year Millennial reign of Christ, that ten days.

Ten, of course, is the number of man. The first thing that comes into anybody's mind is your ten fingers. It's the basis of our decimal system of enumeration.

And that period of time, you're reminded of the letters to the seven churches. You will have testing ten days. Israel tests themselves, examines themselves for ten days.

And this is what's going to take place during the Millennial Kingdom. How do we know that? What did Jesus say about the sheep and goats judgment? And it is a judgment of works. You look at what you do.

This reflects attitude. Faith is not an issue in the Millennial Kingdom because Jesus is visible on the earth. It's not a question of believing what you cannot see.

It is a question of accepting and obeying what you can see. And that's why the basis of that judgment, which does reflect on salvation because the goats, on the left hand, are dismissed into eternal fire. The righteous, on the right hand, go into the kingdom of the Father.

So it is a judgment. But they have already been judged by their salvation because the sheep are already assembled on the right and the goats are already assembled on the left. God already knows who's saved and who's not.

And it is a matter then of evaluating and demonstrating that separation and that identification by what they have done. But faith is not in question at that sheep and goats judgment at the end of the Millennium because faith is not an issue. If you're walking by sight, you don't have to walk by faith.

But the issue of acceptance is the same throughout human history. Do you accept God? Do you humble yourself under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time or do you not? So, think about it now. You've got the Feast of Trumpets.

Ten days after that you have the Day of Atonement. We'll be talking about that in our second session this morning. And then, five days after that, you have the Feast of Tabernacles.

But here, these individuals in Nehemiah chapter 9, on the 24th day of the month, after the feasting and after the recognition of how everything works, the first thing they do is put on sackcloth and dust on their heads and they fast. And they separate themselves from all foreigners. What's going to happen at the end of the Millennial Kingdom? Remember the

parable of the wheat and the tares? Jesus is going to send His angels and they are going to gather out of His kingdom all things which offend.

They are going to pull up the tares and gather the wheat into the barn. And you have another foreshadowing of that because here the people recognize that there are foreigners and strangers in their midst that should not be there. That's exactly the case toward the end of the Millennium when you get to the Gog-Magog rebellion.

How are those people identified and outed and separated? Satan himself is released from the bottomless pit and he leads them and he draws them like a magnet out from their infiltration of the worldwide population and in particular, the people of God. So the children of Israel, those of Israelite lineage, separated themselves from all foreigners. They stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers.

They stood up in their place and read from the book of the law of the Lord their God for one fourth of the day. This is going to be another three hours. You have the day divided into watches, six o'clock to nine, nine to twelve, twelve to three, and three to six.

They are identified differently depending on if you are on the Hebrew system or the Roman system, but basically you have these three hour watches. So three solid hours. Now keep in mind, they started at the beginning of this month and they have been saturated.

They have been getting the word of God every day for over three weeks. And what do they do when they are under no further obligation? The word of God doesn't say you have to celebrate a feast, you have to celebrate a Sabbath. What do they do? They assemble in sackcloth and ashes and put dust on their heads and say, give us some more of the word of God.

Now this is the kind of people God is looking for. This is the fruit of that chastisement. You remember when, over in Hebrews, it talks about no discipline is enjoyable during the time that you are undergoing it, but afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness? Well, that's what has happened here.

And that's what we should look for. We tend to be sad when we recognize that we have been out of line, that maybe God has had to clobber us with fatherly discipline. And we tend to be depressed.

But, look at the attitude, look at the dedication, look at the love for the word that these people now have having come through and out of that discipline. And their level of obedience, because this is going to break up families, this is going to break up marriages, this is going to create a lot of social consternation, but they are going to do it anyway. And you know the story in the rest of Nehemiah about how they dedicate themselves and separate themselves to God.

And yet, interestingly, at the point that they do that, we have no further communication. We have no more prophetic ministry. We have no further history in the Old Testament.

That's where we're left with the people of God is in this new purged and dedicated mode. And that's exactly where we find ourselves at the end of the Millennial Kingdom. So it's very interesting that even in the history of the returned captives of Judah, you see a foreshadowing and a fulfillment of the Fall Feasts that we are studying.

Well, we're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back, we'll return to our formal study of the Feasts and take a look at these three Fall Feasts that are in view here in Nehemiah.