

Do We Respect God As We Should In Our Assembly?

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➤ Intro:

- **Neh. 9:1-3** on the 24th day of the 7th month, after the week long feast of tabernacles, **Israel assembled together** – not a commanded assembly, but one they voluntarily chose – paint picture
 - they fasted in sackcloth, and with dirt upon themselves
 - they assembled
 - stood at the reading of the law of God for a forth of the day (3 hours)
 - stood, confessed and worshiped God another fourth of the day (3 hours)
- Israel approached their assembly with great respect for God, standing for 6 hours of worship
- Do we respect God as we should in our assembly?

➤ Ezra reads the law, and it's explained – earlier in the month, 1st day, at the feast of trumpets, before the day of atonement and the feast of tabernacles that occurred the same month

- **Neh. 8:1-4a, 5-6, 8** reading and explaining the law – paint picture
- **Neh. 8:9-12** reaction of the people was to weep, but instructed to rejoice and eat for gladness – paint picture
- **Neh. 8:13-18** the next day (2nd of month), fathers' of households get together for more study, learn they are commanded to observe the feast of booths, set out to do it, and observe the feast later in the month, after the day of atonement – paint picture
- remainder of lesson, important things we can learn from Ezra, Nehemiah, and Jews who returned from Babylonia captivity

➤ Important to prepare for worship – to respect God and worship as we should

- **Neh. 8:4a** Israel built a podium of the purpose – paint picture
 - **illus.: Israel, Mt. Sinai**, built tabernacle and furnishings, made priestly garments, preparation for worship
- church:
 - **Heb. 10:24-25** assemble
 - **illus. preparation:** facility, furnishings, communion, materials (Bible, song books, class material)
 - jobs equally important to any other
- Christians: preparation of self
 - **1 Pet. 1:13-16** prepare minds for action, keep sober, as obedient children, holy in all our behavior
 - **1 Cor. 6:19-20** glorify God in our bodies – be physically prepared
 - **illus.: lead and participate** in worship and Bible study, rested (sleep), eat, prepare children, clothes for body, etc.
 - **illus.: God commanded Israel at Sinai to prepare** for Him to come down to them, gave them 3 days to prepare and wash their clothes

- **Important to desire to worship** – to respect God and worship as we should
 - **Neh. 8:1** Israel “asked” Ezra to bring the book of the law – paint picture
 - **Neh. 8:18** later at the feast of booths, gathered every day to hear the law read

 - **2 Th. 1:11-12** if our “desire” is to worship God, rather than satisfying the flesh like unbelievers, we’ll accomplish it, by His grace, to His glory

 - **illus.:** you know people’s desires by watching what they do – we do whatever we “desire” most of all
 - if we desire to worship God more than earn a living or get rich, we’ll arrange our work schedules around assembling with the saints, but. . . .
 - if we desire to worship God more than recreation, we’ll . . . , but. . . .
 - if we desire to worship more than going to school, we’ll . . . , but. . . .

 - if we desire to worship God more than anything else, it will be seen in our actions when we assemble
 - speech, body language – everything we do while we’re here, and the preparation we’ve made
 - early, late, rush in at last minute and immediately rush out without greeting anyone (exceptions. . . .)

 - if we have the proper desire toward worship, we’ll do whatever is required in order to worship God, and show respect toward Him, no matter the cost
 - **2 Tim. 3:12** all who “desire” to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution – because we’ll live godly lives

 - do we have the desire we should have to worship God
 - do we respect God as we should in our assembly

- **Important to show respect toward God** – speech, body language, everything we do
 - **Neh. 8:5** Israel stood to show their respect for God and His word – paint picture, sound
 - **Neh. 9:1-3** stood for 3 hours, later in the month, reading of the word of God
 - **illus.: President of the US walks into the room**, stand to show respect
 - **illus.: Arlington Cemetary**
 - **illus.: Richard Raybon went to Pam’s house to pick her up for 1st date**, meet parents, after Richard sat down and began talking to her father, her mother entered the room at the predetermined time, if Richard stood out of respect the meeting could continue, if not the meeting was over and he had to leave with doing on a date
 - **respect is shown outwardly, as a result of respect that exists within the mind**
 - **illus.: Moses took off shoes** because ground was holy, commanded by God
 - **what are ways we show respect at the assembly** – cf. opposite, ways show disrespect
 - **by showing up** – cf. opposite
 - **illus.: if want to disrespect someone, don’t show up at an important event** in their lives, when you could have gone, like your children’s wedding or parents’ funeral
 - **what we wear** – cf. opposite
 - **illus.: God’s command for Israel to prepare for Him to come to them in the wilderness**, they had to wash their clothes
 - **illus.: priests had to wear special garments, and wash their bodies** before coming before God
 - **illus.: Allen and Pam’s wedding**, people asked what they should wear, formal or informal etc, so they could dress appropriately and respectfully
 - **illus.: Ronald Ragan wore a coat and tie every time he entered the oval office**, no matter the time of day or night, out of respect for the office
 - **illus.: disrespectful for men to wear hats in the assembly and when praying**
 - **e.g., had a young man visiting with us, took him to a singing** with us, as we walked in I asked him to remember to take off his hat, he did – we have to educate people regarding respectful behavior, esp. unbelievers who are young
 - as leaders in the Lord’s church, we have to teach people respectful behavior, like teachers and principles at school, or problems will develop
 - **what we say** – cf. opposite
 - **illus.: George W. Bush discontinued tours of the West Wing** after taking office, because people were asking where Bill Clinton had transgressed with Monica Lewinsky, and thereby disrespecting the office
 - **how we behave** (dignified or not)– cf. opposite
 - **illus.: acting one way when playing ultimate frisbee** with friends after church Sunday night, and differently when assembling with the saints

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- by “**remaining in our place**” – “stood in their place”
 - **Neh. 8:7b** people remained in their place – not moving around, shuffling in and out, they were attentive to what was going on and not disruptive – not disturbing others
 - **illus.: when I was a teenager**, where I went to church, kids sat in back and would leave the auditorium, going in and out, disturbing others, because they were bored – bad habit, don’t know if any are faithful today – compliment our teens – medical exceptions
 - **parents and church leaders allowed it**, rather than disciplining children
 - **kids could sit through a movie or football game**, but not church – is that respectful
 - **today**, brethren in some congregations leave the assembly to **make non-emergency calls on a cell phone, text, or go on Facebook** – is that respectful
 - **bad habit, shows problem within spirit of the individual**
- **respect is shown outwardly** – the outward reflects what’s inside
 - do we respect God as we should in our assembly

➤ **Important to pay attention - “listen”** – to respect God and worship as we should

- **Neh. 8:2** people listened – paid attention

- **illus.:** didn't sleep, goof off, play around, children not acting wild and rebellious

- **paying attention is more about respecting God** and His word, than the person speaking

- **tips for ways to help pay attention**

- **worship in spirit:** be actively engaged, mentally (**Jn. 4:24**)

- **Neh. 8:6a** all the people said Amen, after Ezra blessed the Lord – paint picture, sound

- **desire:** foster such a strong desire you will pay attention

- **illus.:** if desire to worship is strong enough to stand 3 hours while word is read, it's strong enough to stay awake and mentally engage for a 30 minute sermon

- **rest:** get enough rest (sleep), and try to avoid situations where you are not mentally maxed out

- **preaching / class:** follow along in the Bible, take notes, use the PowerPoint handout during the sermon

- make constant **application** to yourself

- **pray about changes you need** to make as you study about them

- **prayers:** repeat prayers in your head, say amen silently

- **Lord's Supper / collection:** pray and read Scripture to help you meditate

- **singing:** sing to the Lord and everyone around you, listen to others, be zealous

- **follow along in the Bible:** helps us pay attention, learn much more (**Rom. 1:16**)

- what would people have been doing while Ezra read God's word, if they had Bibles

- **if our desire is what it should be**, and we're serious about showing proper respect for God and His word, we will pay attention

- **illus.:** some congregations have problems with people (usually young) texting and on social media during the assembly – some parents and church leaders allow it – reflection of their hearts, disrespectful

- **cf. emergencies** when texting is necessary

➤ **Important to understand** – that's the reason for Bible classes and sermons

- **Neh. 8:2a, 3b, 7b-8** listened with understanding

- **Ho. 4:6** God's people were destroyed for a lack of knowledge

- **Matt. 13:13-15** Jews didn't understand Jesus, thus lived in sin

- **Matt. 13:19** if we don't understand the word when it's sown in our hearts, the devil will snatch it away, and we won't bear fruit

- **Eph. 5:17** if we don't understand the will of the Lord, we're fools

- **1 Cor. 14:15** must pray and sing with understanding to worship God correctly

- **the aim of false religions is to keep people in the dark, but as the Lord's church we want everyone to understand**

- **illus.:** Roman Catholic church, fought not to have Bible translated in common language, not have services in common language, and not have Bible printed and readily available so people could not understand

- **illus.:** community churches today, church growth philosophy, not teach doctrine in the assembly, not teach people that they must have personal knowledge of God's word – the less they know the better

- **1 Tim. 3:15** as the Lord's church, we are the pillar and foundation of the truth

- **Matt. 5:13-16** as Christians we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world

- **Important to have a tender heart** – to respect God and worship as we should
 - **Neh. 8:9** Jews wept when hearing and understanding God's word – convicted of sin, emotional reaction – paint picture, sound
 - **Acts 2:37-38** Jews who heard were pierced (pricked) to the heart, obeyed, baptized
 - do we have tender hearts, pricked by God's word, understand all He has done for us (Jesus)
 - if so, we'll have the respect for God that we should – worship, assemble – outwardly seen by all

- **Summary / Inv.**
 - review: PP
 - Do we respect God the way we should – in our daily lives – in our assembly?
 - **inv.:** if not a Christian, 1st thing you can do is obey Jesus and become His disciple – **Acts 2:37-38**