



Gospel Doctrine Sunday School Lesson

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Slippery Rock Branch

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Today's Word: Nehemiah

December 17, 2006

Are You:

- Reading Your Scriptures Every Day?
- Taking Time for Family Home Evening?

Today's Scriptures

Ezra 8; Nehemiah 1-2, 4, 6, and 8

Next Week:

Lesson 37:

"Thou Hast Done Wonderful Things"

Isaiah 22; Isaiah 24-26;

Isaiah 28-30

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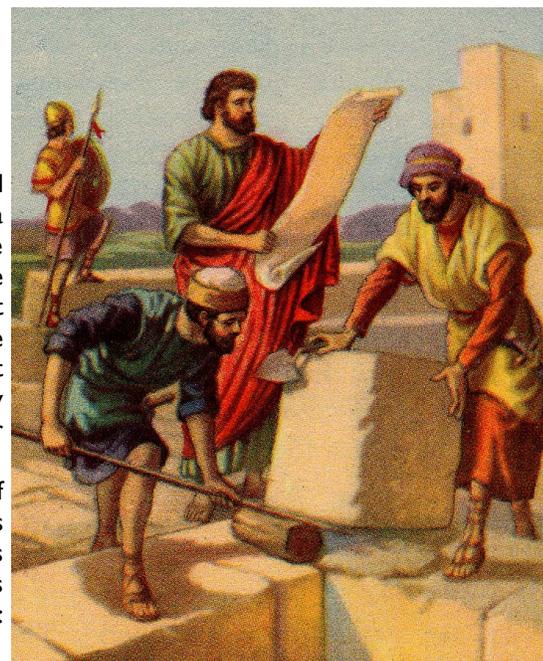
Questions to Ponder

- How can we be more attentive when we read the scriptures?
- How can better resist distractions that keep us from doing the Lord's work?

Nehemiah's story of inspired leadership and mission to rebuild walls and lives teaches us of a loving and merciful Father in Heaven. He gave His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to atone for the sins of all mankind. His Atonement makes our glorious return to Their presence possible. The road toward that return may at times be difficult, but it is very possible only because of and through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer.

The valiance of Nehemiah is an example of what the Lord requires of the Latter-day Saints today: the courage to rebuild the lives of His scattered people and bring them back into His presence (Modesto M. Amistad, Jr., "Wanted: Modern Nehemiahs," *Ensign*, Dec. 22, 44).

Lesson 47: "Let Us Rise Up and Build"



Ezra and Nehemiah Re-Introduce the Scriptures

The story of Ezra shows us how the ancient Jews felt and what they did at the first public discourse on the scriptures in Jerusalem in at least 120 years. . . . Not long after Ezra arrived in Jerusalem, the people prepared for a special celebration called the Feast of Tabernacles. . . . The people must have been particularly grateful at the feast that year for their newly acquired freedoms, land, and temple. They asked Ezra to be their spiritual leader and to teach them from the scriptures (see Neh. 8:1).

A wooden stand was built for Ezra from which he could speak so that all the people could see and hear. Similar to our conference gatherings, 15 men, including Nehemiah, the governor, occupied the stand, as an assembly of "all that could hear with understanding," including men, women, and children, anxiously awaited instruction (see Neh. 8:2-4, 9). As Ezra opened the scriptures, all the people simultaneously stood up and remained standing throughout the meeting. Ezra knelt down and offered thanks to the Lord, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," with hands raised to heaven. They then "bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground" (Neh. 8:6).

Ezra, Nehemiah, and several other Levites then instructed the people, reading from the scriptures, giving clear explanations of their meanings so that all the people could understand. The speeches went on for five or six hours, yet the people listened attentively. This experience affected the people so profoundly they were moved to tears by the words of the scriptures.

"This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep," Ezra told the people. "Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet," he said, "for this day is holy unto our Lord" (Neh. 8:9-10). Ezra also asked the people to make sure that no one went without plenty of delicious food on this day. So the people went home and made "great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them." (Brian D. Garner, "Ezra Unfolds the Scriptures," *Ensign*, Dec. 2002, 47).