



# 10

## God's Word Proclaimed

### Key Theme

- God wants us to study His Word.

### Key Passages

- Nehemiah 8:2–3, 8:5–9, 9:1–3

### Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe how the Jews came to conviction of their sin.
- Describe the response of the Jews after hearing God's Law read.



## Lesson Overview



### Come On In

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Students will practice the memory verse by working on a crossword puzzle and reciting the verse to a friend.



### Activity 1: God's Word Proclaimed Class Notes

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Students will fill out the God's Word Proclaimed Class Notes as you study the lesson.



### Studying God's Word

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The people asked Ezra to read from God's Word. All who could understand listened and responded as Ezra read the Law of Moses out loud until midday. As they heard the Word of God, their hearts were changed. They recalled God's holiness, wept because of their sin, confessed their sins, and worshipped God.



### Activity 2: Exalt the Lord Game

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During the Exalt the Lord Game, students will hear some of the blessings of God and the sins of the people of Israel as recorded in Nehemiah 9.

# Lesson Preparation

## WHAT YOU WILL DO

## WHAT YOU WILL NEED



### COME ON IN

- Print one Memory Verse Review Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.

- Memory Verse Poster
- Memory Verse Review Sheet for each student



### GOD'S WORD PROCLAIMED CLASS NOTES

- Print one God's Word Proclaimed Class Notes from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Keep the answer key for your use.

- God's Word Proclaimed Class Notes for each student
- God's Word Proclaimed Class Notes Answer Key
- Pencils



### STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.

- Student Take Home Sheets
- Quarter 3, Lessons 11 and 12 Theme Posters
- Quarter 4, Lessons 5, 8, and 9 Theme Posters



### EXALT THE LORD GAME

- Print and cut out the Exalt the Lord Game Call Out Cards from the Resource DVD-ROM. Keep the Teacher Guide for your use.
- Print and cut out one Exalt (Bingo) Card from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Be sure to use all six different cards.

- Exalt the Lord Game Teacher Guide
- Call Out Cards in a jar or container
- Exalt (Bingo) Cards for each student (there are six different cards)
- Space covers for the cards— buttons, candy, beans, pennies, etc.



## Memory Verse

**Nehemiah 9:6** You alone are the Lord; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them. And You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You.

➤ **Pace your lesson!** Use the clocks to mark the time you want to finish each section. This will help you stay on track and finish on time. You may need to shorten or drop sections as necessary.





# Prepare to Share

## SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the lesson key passages along with this background.

In our last lesson, we learned about Nehemiah's return to Jerusalem under King Artaxerxes. Nehemiah succeeded in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem under the guiding hand of God, and he continued as the governor over Jerusalem and the surrounding area for 12 years until he returned to Persia in 442 BC (Nehemiah 13:6). During Nehemiah's time as governor, he was zealous to help the people return to a right view of God and to obey Him and worship Him rightly.

Ezra, who led the second return to Jerusalem, was still alive in Jerusalem during this time. As we heard earlier, Ezra was a priest and scribe who had studied God's Law extensively (Ezra 7:10). His desire was to teach the Law in Israel, but his efforts must have fallen short. He had trained some men in the Law, but the people as a whole were still ignorant of what God required of them.

In order that the Law could be taught to the people, a platform was built and the people assembled in Jerusalem to learn. Ezra read from the Book of the Law of Moses to all the people assembled from morning until noon (Nehemiah 8:1–6). As Ezra opened the scrolls, he blessed God, and the people bowed in reverence to their God. Many teachers shared in the responsibility of explaining what the words recorded meant for the people.

Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, 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. (Nehemiah 8:7–8)

Notice what these teachers did—they helped the people understand what was written and gave them the sense of the text. This had always been the responsibility of the priests and elders of Israel, but it had been neglected for so long that nobody even knew what God expected of them. These teachers took the words recorded by Moses and broke them down to explain what they meant. With this help, the people were able to recognize their sinfulness and how they fell short of what God required of them. They wept and mourned over their sin (Nehemiah 8:9).

But as the day was “holy to the Lord your God” (8:9), Nehemiah, Ezra, and the other leaders encouraged them to praise God and be thankful for all that God had done for them. They had so much to be thankful for. “Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength” (8:10). The people were able to rejoice in their understanding of the words of God and the knowledge that He rewards obedience and pardons sin. That was reason to celebrate.

After this initial teaching event, the people found in the Law that they were to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, and so they celebrated in booths for the first time since the days of Joshua. The Jews continued to respond positively to the teaching of God's Law. Similar to Isaiah's proclamation (Isaiah 55:10–13), the word of the Lord was going out and accomplishing what He sent it for—to bring change to the hearts of those who hear the truth.

As the people learned more from the teaching of the Law, they continued to have a repentant attitude and to focus themselves on the right worship of God (Nehemiah 9:1–3). In response to God, the priests and teachers overflowed in a glorious tribute to God and all that He had done for the Jews in the past. In a sense, they were giving a history lesson through a poem proclaimed aloud to the people. The people repented, and God was glorified through the proclamation of His Word by the teachers who honored Him. All of this was sealed with an oath to walk in God's Law and to observe all of the commands that they now understood (Nehemiah 10:28–29).

By way of application, it is so important for us to study God's Word so that we know what He desires of us and commands us to do. Jesus said, “Have you not read . . . ?” in many different situations to remind the false teachers in Israel that what is set forth in the Scriptures, the Old Testament at that time, is the authority. It is the authority because it has come from God and, as His creatures, we must submit to His authority. Part of that submission is to study what God has said so that we can understand what God expects of us.

As you teach this lesson, you have the opportunity to proclaim the truths of God's Word, as Ezra did, and then explain the meaning to your students, as the other teachers did. This is both a great opportunity and a great responsibility. God has established teachers within the church and given the gifts of the Spirit to build up the saints for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11–16). As you teach this lesson, remind your students that while God does want us to obey His commands, Jesus Christ

has already fulfilled those commands perfectly and His righteousness can be credited to our account. Recognizing sin is the first step toward repentance and celebrating the forgiveness that God offers through Jesus Christ. Proclaim that truth and help those listening to understand how God would have them respond.

## **HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND**

Since the beginning of the world, God has called His creatures to obey His commands. In the garden, Adam and Eve were to tend to the plants and avoid eating the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They failed to keep that command and introduced sin into the world. Since that time, God has revealed His commands to the people of the earth. However, there is a clear pattern—people constantly fail to obey God’s commands. That disobedience is rooted in the sin nature that passed to all mankind from Adam.

But to those who have received the forgiveness available through Christ for sins, past and present, there is no condemnation for disobedience and no fear of punishment (Romans 8:1–4; 1 John 4:16–18). Christ has paid the penalty for those sins in full. Now unshackled from our old natures, we are free to obey Him and keep His commandments. Many people, Christian or not, misunderstand this idea and think that Christians must be constantly obeying to earn God’s favor. But Christ has earned God’s favor for us, and we now have the joy of serving Him and obeying His commands in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:8–10). We can surely block our fellowship

with God through disobedience and grieve His Spirit, but His love for us remains, and as we turn to Him in repentance, that fellowship is restored.

One mark of a true Christian is to be obeying the commands of Christ (1 John 2:1–6). As Jesus was giving His disciples final instructions before He ascended to heaven, He called them to make disciples, teaching them to obey His commands (Matthew 28:18–20). As Christians continue in the work of making disciples, we must continue to teach the commands of Christ. But if we don’t know what those commands are, we can’t teach them to others. We must be diligent to study God’s Word so that the blind are not leading the blind and that we are able to fulfill Christ’s call to make disciples.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



## **BEFORE THE THRONE**

Lord, I join with the Israelites in saying “Amen! Amen!” Your Word is living and powerful. It is a discerner of thoughts and intents of the heart. You speak to me through your Word each time I open its delicate pages and read. Your Words are a comfort and strength to me in times of trial. How precious are the times you bring them to my mind in joy and in sorrow. Please move in the hearts of my students to treasure your Word, study it, and memorize it, too.



## COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- They will complete the Memory Verse Review Sheet. If time allows, have the students recite the verse together, to each other, or to you.

*This time at the beginning of class should be used to review the memory verse. We have provided an activity sheet on the Resource DVD-ROM for you to use. You may have other ideas and ways to encourage your students to memorize the verse.*



After all the students arrive, pray with them before beginning the lesson.



## REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme Posters provided with each lesson, quickly review the previous lesson(s) with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you display the Lesson Theme Posters. Reflect briefly on the passages you read, bringing the objectives and themes back into focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.



# God's Word Proclaimed Class Notes

## MATERIALS

- God's Word Proclaimed Class Notes for each student
- God's Word Proclaimed Class Notes Answer Key
- Pencils

## INSTRUCTIONS

*Print the class notes for each student. Pass them out at the beginning of class. Have students fill in the blanks as you study the lesson.*

We will complete the class notes today as we study the Bible passages. Do not work ahead. I'll let you know when to fill something in.

*After completing each point on the class notes, have the students re-read the statement together or call on individual students to read it.*

## CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

As we complete the class notes today, we will see an example of how powerful the Word of God is to change hearts.



# Studying God's Word

## READ THE WORD

*Refer to Lesson 9 Lesson Theme Poster.* God used Nehemiah to lead the third and final group of Jews back to Israel. He had returned to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. God protected Nehemiah and the people while the walls were rebuilt. Nehemiah trusted God, prayed, and acted to do what God wanted him to do. Nehemiah was made the governor of Jerusalem and continued to encourage the people to obey God and worship Him alone.

- Use the History of Israel Poster included with your teacher kit to show your class where the biblical accounts you study chronologically fit into this timeline.

## Nehemiah 8:2–3

Refer to Lesson 8 Lesson Theme Poster. Ezra, the priest, was still in Jerusalem. Remember that Ezra led the second group of Jews back to Israel. The people had turned away from God, and Ezra preached the Word and the truth to them. The people repented of their sins and turned back to God. Ezra loved to preach the Word of God. And today's lesson is about another time when he taught the people from the Book of the Law of Moses. That is what we are going to read about today. Open your Bibles to Nehemiah 8. We'll read Nehemiah 8:2–3. Choose students to read the verses.

### EXAMINE THE WORD

#### Observe the Text

- ? How does Nehemiah 8:2 describe Ezra? What was he? *Nehemiah 8:2. Priest.*
- ? What did he bring to read to the men and women? *Nehemiah 8:2. The Law.*
- ? Where was Ezra as he read the Book of the Law? *Nehemiah 8:3. In the open square.*
- ? And how long did Ezra read? That is also in Nehemiah 8:3. *Nehemiah 8:3. From morning until midday.*

Ezra opened the Book of the Law and started to read. The Bible says he read from morning until midday. This means he started when the sun rose and went until lunch time. It was probably 6 hours or more! A very long time!

- ? Now let's take a look at the class notes. Will someone read #1 for us? What is the answer to that? *Nehemiah 8:2. Assign a reader. Priest.*
- ? OK. And #2. Who can read that one and how will you answer it? *Nehemiah 8:2. Assign a reader. Law.*
- ? And #3? Who will read that for me? What is the answer? *Nehemiah 8:3. Assign a reader. Morning.*

This was an important time for the people of Israel. The people had asked Ezra to read, and he agreed. Let's read a little more about this. Turn to Nehemiah 8:5–9. Will someone read that for us? *Assign a reader.*

- ? Where was Ezra standing as he read the Book of the Law? *Nehemiah 8:5. Above all the people.*
- ? What did the people do when Ezra began to read? *Nehemiah 8:5. They stood up.*  
The people stood up for the reading of God's Word. This was a sign of respect for God. And they stood the whole time Ezra read—about 6 hours.
- ? And what did the people answer after Ezra began reading? *Nehemiah 8:6. They answered, "Amen! Amen!"*
- ? What does that mean—when the people said, "Amen"? *Allow discussion.*

Saying "Amen" is a way of letting a reader or speaker know that you agree with what he is saying. The people were standing in respect, and they were agreeing with Ezra, his prayer, and the reading of God's Word.

## Nehemiah 8:5–9

- ? Let's go back to the class notes. Who can read #4 for us? What is the answer? *Nehemiah 8:5. Assign a reader. Stood.*
- ? And what about #5. Someone read that. How will you complete it? *Nehemiah 8:6. Assign a reader. Amen.*
- ? What else did the people do as they heard God's holy Word being read? You will find the answer at the end of Nehemiah 8:6. It lists three different things. *Nehemiah 8:6. They lifted their hands, bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord.*
- ? Now look back in your Bible at Nehemiah 8:7. You will see the names of some people there. These men were priests like Ezra. What were these priests doing? It is toward the end of Nehemiah 8:7. *Nehemiah 8:7. They helped the people to understand the Law.*
- They were helping the people to understand what was being read. But something odd happened. Let's read Nehemiah 8:9 again. *Nehemiah 8:9. Assign a reader.*
- ? Nehemiah, Ezra, and all the Levites said something to the people. They were talking about this special day. What did they say about the day? *Nehemiah 8:9. It was holy to the Lord.*
- ? Then he told the people to stop doing something. What was that? *Nehemiah 8:9. Do not mourn nor weep.*
- ? The Bible says that when they heard the Word, they cried. Why would they cry? *Allow discussion.*

## Discover the Truth

The people had not heard the Word of God for a long time. And on this day they heard it. Ezra and the priests helped the people to understand it. As they heard and understood, they began to cry. Now these weren't tears of joy. You see, the people had again turned away from God in sin. And as Ezra read the Word, they realized what they had done.

*Refer to Quarter 3, Lesson 11 Theme Poster. They remembered that God had punished them for their sin, and He sent the Babylonians to take their country. Refer to Quarter 3, Lesson 12 Theme Poster. They remembered that they had been in captivity for 70 years because of their disobedience! Refer to Quarter 4, Lessons 5, 8, and 9 Theme Posters. And they remembered that God was faithful to His promise and brought them back to Jerusalem. And now they cried. Why? Because God had been faithful to them through all those years. But they had once again forgotten about God. They had turned away from Him in sin. And when they heard the Words of God, they wept.*

The people were crying, but the leaders and the priests called this a holy day. They told the people to rejoice and not cry because the Word of God was being read and understood. The people were again repenting of their sins and turning back to God. This is what God wants from His people! This was indeed a good and holy day.

? Now look at #6 on your class notes. Who can read that for us? You will circle one of the answers. Which one? *Assign a reader. C) They understood God's Word and were sorry for sinning against God.*

? And how about #7? Someone read that please. What is the answer? *Assign a reader. Word of God.*



## Nehemiah 9:1-3

### READ THE WORD

The people continued to hear the reading of the Word, and they continued to change. Let's see how. Now look at Nehemiah 9:1-3. *Choose students to read the verses.*

### EXAMINE THE WORD

#### Observe the Text

? Nehemiah 9:1 tells us that the children of Israel were assembled. They were fasting, in sackcloth, and had dust on their heads. Does anyone know what all that means? First, what does it mean when the Bible says the people fasted? *Allow discussion.*

When the people fasted it usually meant they didn't eat or drink anything. They would spend the time in prayer.

? And what about the rest of this? What is sackcloth, and why did they have dust on their heads? *Allow discussion.*

When the Bible says that the people had sackcloth on, it means they put on clothes that were made from rough material. This was a sign that they were coming before God to ask forgiveness. They would also dust themselves with ash. Again, the ash was a sign that they were humbly seeking God and publicly admitting that they had sinned against Him.

All of these things—the fasting, the sackcloth, and the ashes—were ways the people showed on the outside how sorry, sad, and upset they were because of their sin against the holy God.

Take a look at #8 on your class notes. Will someone read that for me please? What is the answer? *Assign a reader. Outward.*

? What caused this show of repentance, sorrow, and sadness in the people? What were they reading from? *Nehemiah 9:3. The Book of the Law of the Lord their God.*

? And how long did this reading last? *Nehemiah 9:3. For one-fourth of the day.*

? And how long did they confess and worship God after the reading? *Nehemiah 9:3. For one-fourth of the day.*

Now one-fourth of the day means 3 hours. Because they measured time and "day" by the daylight hours. They heard the Word of God for 3 hours, and they confessed and worshipped for 3 hours. It was a total of about 6 hours! That is a long time!

Someone read #9 on the class notes. What is the answer? *Assign a reader. Six.*

## Discover the Truth

God's Word is powerful! It can change hearts. When the people heard God's Word, they realized they had sinned against God, and their hearts turned back to God. They confessed their sins and worshipped the God who had done so much for them.

? Now, who will read #10 on the class notes? What is the answer? *Assign a reader. Change.*



## Exalt the Lord Game

### MATERIALS

- Exalt (Bingo) Cards
- Exalt the Lord Game Teacher Guide
- Call Out Cards in a jar
- Space covers for the cards— buttons, candy, beans, pennies, etc.

### INSTRUCTIONS

*Pass out the Exalt (Bingo) Cards and space covers. We are going to play a game like Bingo. But instead of matching numbers, you will be matching the statements I read to you. The statements are from the Bible. Some statements are promises from God. The others are the sins of the people. The first one to match 5 statements in a row can call out, "Exalt the Lord!"*

The people were sorry when they heard the Word and were reminded of God's blessings.

Let's play! Listen carefully to what I read and try to quickly find it on your cards. *Read the Call Out Cards one at a time. Give the students time to find the proper square on their game cards.*

### CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Nehemiah 9 records many of God's blessings. It also contains some reminders of sins that the people committed. As you know, the children of Israel weren't always faithful. Many times they turned away from God. But when they heard the Word of the Lord read out loud, they understood what it said, and their hearts were changed. They wanted to confess their sins and remember the mercies of God. They had a renewed desire to live lives that would be pleasing to God. And it all started by hearing and believing the Word of God!



## Applying God's Word

### WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

Ezra was a priest and scribe trained in understanding the Law of Moses. When he returned to Jerusalem, he was called upon to read the scroll of the Law of Moses—the Word of God. The people had turned away from God in their sin and had not heard the Word of God read for a

long time. As Ezra read, there were other priests around who helped the people understand the meaning of what was being read. The Word of God changed the hearts of the people. They realized how gracious God had been to them in the past. And they realized they had once again turned away from the Creator God and turned back to their sinful ways. They reacted by shouting “Amen,” bowing their heads, and lifting up their hands. The people wept when they heard the words of the Law because they knew they had not been obeying God. It was a holy day.

## GOD’S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD.

The people in Ezra’s day were changed by the Word of God. As you hear God’s Word and come to understand it, you will find that it can change you, too! But only if you read it and listen carefully to those who teach it.

As you learn it better, you will see that it presents God’s amazing plan to save sinners from the punishment of hell that they deserve. You see, we are all sinners. And because God is holy, He can’t look at our sin. And our sin will keep us out of heaven. But we know that Jesus came to earth so that sinners could be saved. When Jesus died, He took the punishment of everyone who would ever believe in Him. Jesus’s death made a way for us to get to God. The Bible says if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and repent of our sins we will be saved. And all of eternity can be spent with Jesus.

Stay in the Word of God. It will teach you amazing things. God gave us His Word, and God wants us to study His Word. The Bible is something you can study for the rest of your life. I hope you get excited about reading the Bible and learning from it. I know that God can use it to change your heart!



► Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind the students to practice the memory verse this week.



### MEMORY VERSE

**Nehemiah 9:6** You alone are the Lord; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them. And You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You.



### GROUP PRAYER TIME

- Praise God that His Word is living and powerful enough to change my heart and make it new.
- Thank God for being able to go to a church that teaches His Word.
- Ask God to help me get to know Him better through His Word.