

## Unit 18, Session 3: The People Worshiped God

**Big Picture Question: What is the Bible about? The Bible is the sort of God's plan to save people through Jesus.**

**Memory Verse: John 20:31 – But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**

**Christ Connection: God's people remembered all He had done, and they promised to be faithful. God is gracious and compassionate. All along, God has been faithful to people who are unfaithful. We experience God's grace and compassion in Jesus, who gave His life so we can receive mercy and life forever.**

### **Bible Passage: Nehemiah 7-13**

Find the passages together in your Bibles and read through them together. You could also read the paraphrase of all these passages below in blue. For younger kids, you may want to just read the bolded portions.

As the people returned to Jerusalem to reestablish the city, they also needed to reestablish their way of life as God's chosen people. Living as God's special people meant different expectations for daily life, holiness, and worship. A key theme throughout Nehemiah 7-13 is the heart of worship that motivates the changes made among the people. Many of the people who returned to Israel did not know or remember what life was like in Israel before exile. Many had never heard God's law before. Many of the people did not understand God's expectations for living life in relationship with him. As the people learned about God's law (Neh 8), they responded through various forms of worship: "They knelt low and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground" (8:6). "All the people began to eat and drink, send portions, and have a great celebration, because they had understood the words that were explained to them" (8:12). They celebrated the Festival of Booths (8:13-18). The people also worshiped through confession and repentance. As they confessed their own sins and the sins of their ancestors before the Lord, worshiping as they fasted, wore sackcloth, and put dust on their heads (Neh 9:1-37). They took a vow of faithfulness to God (9:38-10:39). They even sought to live holy lives by keeping the sabbath holy and removing foreign, pagan people from among them (10:30-31; 13).

The people returning to Jerusalem from exile responded rightly to hearing God's Word. They celebrated, mourned, confessed and repented. They sought to live holy lives of obedience to God. In other words, they worshiped. All their actions were motivated by hearts positioned to worship their holy, loving God, who had kept his promise to bring them home. Does God's love and holiness compel you to worship him? Does the fact that he has kept every promise to us through his Son Jesus Christ move you to worship in the same ways as the people of Judah?

**After Ezra read the law, the people gathered together.** They fasted, wore sackcloth, and put dust on their heads. **They confessed their sins, read from the book of the law of the Lord, and worshiped all day. The Levites led the people in a prayer, saying:**

**“Blessed be your name, God.** You are the only God. **You created the heavens** with all their stars, **the earth and all that is in it,** the seas and all that is in them.”

**As they prayed, the people remembered how God chose Abram and changed his name to Abraham. God made a covenant with Abraham and gave the Promised Land to his descendants. God kept His promise because He is righteous.**

**The people also praised God for rescuing His people from slavery in Egypt.** God parted the Red Sea and led His people by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. **God came down to His people at Mount Sinai and gave them His good commands. All through their wilderness journey, God provided for His people and told them to go to the Promised Land. In the people’s prayer, they remembered how their ancestors did not obey God.** Their ancestors made idols and forgot God’s works. **But God did not leave them.** He is forgiving, gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in faithful love.

**God’s people prayed: “You gave our ancestors the land, giving them victory over the people who lived there. But they were disobedient and ignored your prophets. So, you handed them over to your enemies, who oppressed them. But in your compassion, you did not destroy or abandon your people.”**

Then the people said, “Here we are today, slaves in the land you gave your ancestors. We are in trouble.” **The people recognized they needed God, and so they promised to follow the law of God and to obey all His commands.** Then the leaders and some of the people stayed in Jerusalem, and everyone else went to live in the nearby cities. **Later, the people gathered to dedicate the wall around Jerusalem. They celebrated with music and gave thanks to God. Then God’s law was read to the people,** and they were reminded to keep His commands.

**If you or your child have questions about what it looks like to follow Jesus in salvation or baptism, Pastor Sam would love to talk with you! Please feel free to contact him at [ssiever@lenexabaptist.com](mailto:ssiever@lenexabaptist.com).**