

40.day2021

JUL 20

WEEK 4 | BUILT TO LAST

WORD ON DEMAND

NEHEMIAH 8:1-4 | And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the LORD had commanded Israel. ² So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. ³ And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. ⁴ And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose.

The Ministry of God's Word is worship. The survival of Israel and the Church depends on

it (JOSHUA 1:8). In ancient times, God gave the Levites the sacred duty of teaching his Word to all Israel (DEUT 31:9-13; 33:9-10; 2 CHRON 17:7-10; 35:3; MAL 2:6). With 48 Levite towns evenly dispersed throughout the nation, every Israelite had relatively easy access to the ministry of the Word (JOS 21:9-24; 1 CHRON 6:54-81).

Through the lapse of Levitical duty, however, Israel lost the knowledge of God and fell into moral ruin, resulting in catastrophic judgment (HOS 4:1-6). Bricks and mortar alone could never remove the reproach of sin and exile. The foundations had to be rebuilt from the ground up.

Re-enter Ezra, the Levitical priest who returned from exile 14 years before Nehemiah. A true scribe, he set his heart to study, practise, and teach God's Word to all Israel (EZRA 7:10). Now, on the first day of the seventh month, just five days after the wall was built, all Israel summoned Ezra to *bring the Book* and read it to them (NEH 6:15; 8:1-4).

The seventh month was the holiest of the year. It began with the Feast of Trumpets, followed by the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Booths. With the harvest gathered and the wall built, the whole month was like

an extended sabbath. A much needed one, too. Men and women, young and old gathered together as one. Not in the temple, where only men could go. But in the public square before the Water Gate. And what for? To hear a motivational speech? A harp and flute duet? No and No! They were united by a common desire: a holy hunger to hear God's Word read by God's Bible scholar.

So begins the Water Gate Revival. For six hours, all listen with undivided attention to the unadorned Word of God that cuts across gender and age.

The Church is built to last. But nowadays, the public reading of Scripture to all who can understand is a battered wall. *Give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhorting, to teaching* (1 TIM 4:13 NRSV). Dear Ezra, how we need you now!

WALL OF DUTY

■ Pray for an Ezra-Awakening. The biggest crisis facing the Church today is not Covid-19, but the pandemic of biblical illiteracy. *Bible knowledge is fading away* (THOMAS SCHIRRMACHER, WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE). Increasingly, Christians do not read, do not engage, and do not know their Bibles. *The situation in Singapore is not much better* (ETHOS INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC CHRISTIANITY). Woe unto us if we do not act now to reverse this trend! Self-examine.

■ Pray: Lord, forgive us. We are ashamed. We are the generation with the greatest access to your Word. We have the best resources to study your Word. And yet we are the least well-versed since the Reformation! We own up: Many of us who do read our Bibles settle for tidbits instead of feasting on your Word. We get more excited about social media and talk shows that spout human philosophy than Scripture engagement that reveals the mind of Christ. We confess: it's all smoke and mirrors to go on and on about revival if we don't take your Word seriously. We repent.

■ Pray: Lord, visit us. Grant us a revival marked by a return to your written Word. A radical heart-change, so that we listen to your Word with undivided attention. A dramatic mindshift, so that

we pursue you and encounter you in and through your Word. Because: *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work* (2 TIM 3:16-17).

■ Pray: Lord, convict us. We invest so much time and money on academic tuition for our children, but so little time and effort tutoring them in your Word. Forgive our misplaced priorities. Stir our hearts to study your Word, practise your Word, and teach your Word—to grow faith at home (DEUT 6:4-9). Make us all hungry Bible-caterpillars. Because: *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God* (MATT 4:4).

■ Pray: Lord, restore us. Set apart 40 Under 40 world-changers who love your Word, learn your Word, live your Word, and teach others to do the likewise. Call out the theologians, teachers, and thought leaders. Fire up their passion to revive biblical literacy in Singapore to safeguard our future from nominalism, liberalism, irreligiosity, and apostasy. Because: *what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also* (2 TIM 2:2).

■ Pray: Lord, help us. We are alarmed by the spike in Covid cases and the shocking news of the killing incident at River Valley High School. We need your grace and mercy. We return to you with all our hearts. We turn to your Word and declare it over Singapore: *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid* (JOHN 14:27). We acknowledge on behalf of Singapore: You are our refuge and our strength. A very present help in trouble (PS 46:1). Though we walk through dark shadows, we fear no evil. You are with us. You comfort us. You host us, you anoint us, you refresh us—in the midst of the raging battle (PS 23:4-5).