

# LET GOD ARISE!

*Revival  
Prayer Guide #12  
Rev. Dr. Don L. Davis*



## **Rejoice in the Lord: Revival under Nehemiah** Nehemiah 8

### **The God of Abraham Praise**

*Thomas Olivers*

The God of Abr'ham praise, Who reigns enthroned above,  
The Ancient of eternal days and God of love.  
Jehovah, great I AM, by earth and heav'n confessed:  
We bow and bless the sacred name forever blest.

He by Himself hath sworn; we on His oath depend.  
We shall, on eagles' wings upborne, to heav'n ascend.  
We shall behold His face; we shall His pow'r adore  
And sing the wonders of His grace forevermore.

The God who reigns on high the great archangels sing,  
And "Holy, holy, holy," cry, "Almighty King!"  
Who was and is the same and evermore shall be:  
Eternal Father, great I AM, we worship Thee.

The whole triumphant host give thanks to God on high;  
"Hail, Father, Son and Holy Ghost!" they ever cry.  
Hail, Abr'ham's God and mine! With heav'n our songs we raise:  
All might and majesty are Thine and endless praise.

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**Insatiable hunger for the Word of God during the revival of Nehemiah**

Neh. 8.1-8 - 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. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand, and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left hand. [5] And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood. [6] And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, “Amen, Amen,” lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. [7] Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law, while the people remained in their places. [8] They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.

**Personal spiritual formation involves opening Scripture to the seeker about Jesus**

Hab. 2.2 - And the Lord answered me: “Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it.”

Luke 24.27 - And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.



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noted, all Scriptures  
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Luke 24.32 - They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?”

Luke 24.45 - Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures [46]and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, [47] and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. [48] You are witnesses of these things.”

Acts 8.30-35 - So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” [31] And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. [32] Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: “Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. [33] In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.” [34] And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” [35] Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.

John 5.39-40 - You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, [40] yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

Acts 17.2-3 - And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, [3] explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.”

Acts 28.23 - When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to



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them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets.

**Revival results in the blessing and adoration of God by his people for who he is and what he has done**

1 Chron. 29.20 - Then David said to all the assembly, “Bless the Lord your God.” And all the assembly blessed the Lord, the God of their fathers, and bowed their heads and paid homage to the Lord and to the king.

2 Chron. 6.4 - And he said, “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who with his hand has fulfilled what he promised with his mouth to David my father, saying . . .”

Ps. 41.13 - Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen.

Ps. 72.18-19 - Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things. [19] Blessed be his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen and Amen!

Eph. 1.3 - Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

1 Pet. 1.3 - Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

**Spiritual renewal results in a fresh exegesis of the will of God among his people**

Lev. 10.10-11 - You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean, [11] and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the Lord has spoken to them by Moses.



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Deut. 33.10 - They shall teach Jacob your rules and Israel your law; they shall put incense before you and whole burnt offerings on your altar.

2 Chron. 17.7-9 - In the third year of his reign he sent his officials, Ben-hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel, and Micaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah; [8] and with them the Levites, Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Je-honathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tobadonijah; and with these Levites, the priests Elishama and Jehoram. [9] And they taught in Judah, having the Book of the Law of the Lord with them. They went about through all the cities of Judah and taught among the people.

2 Chron. 30.22 - And Hezekiah spoke encouragingly to all the Levites who showed good skill in the service of the Lord. So they ate the food of the festival for seven days, sacrificing peace offerings and giving thanks to the Lord, the God of their fathers.

Mal. 2.7 - For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.

**The proclamation of God's word and heart repentance exchanges sorrow and mourning for joy and celebration**

Neh. 8.9-12 - And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law. [10] Then he said to them, "Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." [11] So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be quiet, for this day is holy; do not be grieved." [12] And all the people went their way to eat and drink and to send portions and to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them.



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Isa. 61.1-3 - The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; [2] to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; [3] to grant to those who mourn in Zion—to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.

2 Cor. 7.9-11 - As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. [10] For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. [11] For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter.

### **The joy of the Lord is the strength of his people**

Ps. 28.7-8 - The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him. [8] The Lord is the strength of his people; he is the saving refuge of his anointed.

Ps. 149.2 - Let Israel be glad in his Maker; let the children of Zion rejoice in their King!

Prov. 17.22 - A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.



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Isa. 6.7-8 - And he touched my mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for. [8] And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here am I! Send me.”

Isa. 12.1-3 - You will say in that day: “I will give thanks to you, O Lord, for though you were angry with me, your anger turned away, that you might comfort me. [2] “Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the Lord God is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation.” [3] With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

Joel 2.23 - “Be glad, O children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God, for he has given the early rain for your vindication; he has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the latter rain, as before.”

2 Cor. 12.8-9 - Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. [9] But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

### **In revival the people of God unite to affirm and declare the faithfulness of God**

Neh. 8.13-18 - On the second day the heads of fathers’ houses of all the people, with the priests and the Levites, came together to Ezra the scribe in order to study the words of the Law. [14] And they found it written in the Law that the LORD had commanded by Moses that the people of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month, [15] and that they should proclaim it and publish it in all their towns and in Jerusalem, “Go out to the hills and bring branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees to make booths, as it is written.” [16] So the people went out and brought them and made booths for themselves, each on his roof, and in their courts and in the courts of the house of God, and in the square at the Water Gate and in the square at the Gate of Ephraim. [17]



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And all the assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and lived in the booths, for from the days of Jeshua the son of Nun to that day the people of Israel had not done so. And there was very great rejoicing. [18] And day by day, from the first day to the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. They kept the feast seven days, and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly, according to the rule.

**A heart repentance leads to a knowledge of the truth in Christ**

2 Tim. 2.24-25 - And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, [25] correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth [26] and they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

Titus 1.1 - Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness.

2 Cor. 7.10 - For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

Ezek. 18.27-30 - Again, when a wicked person turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is just and right, he shall save his life. [28] Because he considered and turned away from all the transgressions that he had committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die. [29] Yet the house of Israel says, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' O house of Israel, are my ways not just? Is it not your ways that are not just? [30] "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, declares the Lord God. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin."



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Isa. 1.18 - Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.

Isa. 55.7 - let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Ezek. 18.21 - But if a wicked person turns away from all his sins that he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does what is just and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

### **The end of the righteous will be unending joy**

Hos. 6.1-3 - Come, let us return to the Lord; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up. [2] After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him. [3] Let us know; let us press on to know the Lord; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth.

Even in the midst of judgment our God will restore us if we return to him  
Isa. 35.1-4 - The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus; [2] it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. [3] Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. [4] Say to those who have an anxious heart, "Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you."

Isa. 61.10 - I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me



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with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

Isa. 51.11 - And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Hab. 3.18 - yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.

Luke 1.46-47 - And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, [47] and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior."

Rom. 5.11 - More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Phil. 3.1 - Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.

Phil. 4.4 - Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.

1 Pet. 1.8 - Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.

Rev. 19.7-8 - Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; [8] it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. ■



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## ARE YOU HAPPY?

For some, this is an odd query, an emotional distraction, a trick question which can only be answered with the Christianized obligatory line, “Happiness is fleeting, joy is sustained regardless of circumstances.” OK, let’s buy that, for a moment. Go back to my question.

## Are you happy?

In a world under such pressure and duress, and as we live lives that increasingly are filled with numerous challenges, indictments, and concerns, such a question can seem intimidating, even offensive. How can any rational person (who is neither escapist nor naive) possibly be happy in a world of violence and idolatry? Isn’t talking about happiness a kind of selfish preoccupation with one’s own situation? Isn’t talking about happiness a waste of time living in a world of woe and death? How can anybody really expect to be happy all the time, anyway? Still, I ask—

## Are you happy?

One of the most remarkable and exciting products of genuine revival from God is the manifestation of joy—passionate, thrilling, and intense joy. Let us not quibble about terms; this joy is unrestrained happiness over God’s blessing, and this happiness is the divine joy released in the new situation of hope, cleansing, and grace. The Scriptures are unequivocal and crystal clear: Prov. 16.20 (NKJV) “He who heeds the word wisely will find good, and whoever trusts in the Lord, *happy is he*.” The fruit of trust in the power and leading of God is joy, true happiness, unrestrained exultation. Not empty-headed fleeting emotion, but deep, genuine joy.

How fitting to end our discussions and reflections on the nature of revival’s most obvious and wondrous effect: rejoicing in the Lord. Nehemiah’s return



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to the land is the third in the series of the longest revival stories in the Bible, and belongs to the same general period as the revivals under Zerubbabel with Haggai and Zechariah. The first was led by Zerubbabel in 537/6 B.C., and eighty years after the first return, Ezra lead another group of exiles back to Jerusalem in 457 B.C. (Cf. Ezra 7-10). The third of this series occurred under Nehemiah in 445 B.C., nearly 75 years after the revival led by Haggai and Zechariah.

The story of Nehemiah's broken heart for his homeland and its capital in rubble is well known, and comprises the key narrative of the book of Nehemiah. Under the gracious provision and leading of God, Nehemiah arranged for a remnant to return to the city to rebuild its walls, restore its gates, and renew the city of Jerusalem. In the face of remarkable opposition and due to his own sacrifice, administration, and deep humility, Nehemiah was moved by the Spirit of God to formulate a plan to rebuild the walls, amazingly carried out in just 52 days (cf. 6.15)! More desperate and of greater import than building the walls was the spiritual formation of the returnees, and chapters 8-10 of Nehemiah speak of the spiritual challenges faced by these dear saints. The revival in chapter 8 reveals the ways in which the working of God in revival produces rejoicing and joy in and among the people of God.

First, the proclaimed word of God produces a joy in the people of God. Ezra constructs one of the first "pulpits," a large wooden platform so that the people could hear the reading of the Word of God. With Ezra in the center, with seven priests on the right and six on the left, the scroll of the Word of God was opened in front of all the people, who dramatically, immediately stood to their feet (8.5)! For six hours daily Ezra read from the Word of God (from early morning till around midday), and in smaller groups the Levites made the sense of the read text clear. The Word of God read clearly, with the sense given, and the people understanding, produced the conditions of a deep and lasting joy among these people. Surely, revival results in and is



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born from a deep rediscovery of the meaning of Scripture for the lives of the people, and it will be so today as it was for them.

Second, the weeping of repentance at the hearing of the Word gave way to joy and celebration in the presence of God. Nehemiah had to exhort the people not to be overcome by weeping and sadness, for as they heard the Word they recognized their own disobedience and transgression. Their grief and sorrow, however, were signs of their readiness for a new level of obedience, surrender, and yieldedness to the Lord. In their understanding, they were broken, and in their brokenness, they were prepared for the renewal and restoration of the Lord. In fact, Nehemiah commands them not to weep, mourn, or be grieved, for the day was holy to the Lord (8.10). The joy of the Lord was the strength of his people, and the Levites quieted the brokenhearted returnees, and exhorted them to renewal in God. The day was set apart, for in their understanding of the words of the Lord they experienced their true purpose: to prepare the people of God to encounter him and his will in such a way that they rediscover their calling as his holy people and royal nation. In hearing the Word of God, and responding with understanding and brokenness, they were prepared to experience the Lord's cleansing, leading, and joy.

Finally, their heart response to the Word of God prepared them to hear more from Ezra on the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths (cf. Lev. 23.33-43). The families of the returnees observed this feast on the fifteenth day of the month, forming shelters from branches of palm, myrtle, and olive trees to commemorate the faithfulness of God in his deliverance of his people from Egypt. In mass they declared as a living visual aid their affirmation that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of Moses is a God of covenant faithfulness, who will never break his word or lie to his own. Two days after celebrating the Tabernacles feast, they came to the day of Atonement, filled with fasting, confession, listening to the Word of God, with prayers of intercession, longing, and renewal (Neh. 9.1-38). Hungry for God and



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moved by the preached Word, revival burst forth with unrestrained joy, true humility, and unity in proclaiming the faithfulness of God.

This story of revival reveals that if the people of God will respond to the word and will of God in simple obedience and true repentance, he will visit his people, cleansing them, forgiving them, renewing them, and shepherding them. In the midst of this transformation, something miraculous occurs—the people of God rediscover the meaning of true happiness, real joy, genuine unity, and renewed hope. All because they simply heard and responded to the long-neglected but never impotent Word of the living God. A simple solution to an ever-recurring problem.

Tell me, friend—are *you* happy? ■

### Example of Rejoicing in the Lord: The Exiles under Nehemiah

*Neh. 8.9-12 - And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law. [10] Then he said to them, "Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." [11] So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be quiet, for this day is holy; do not be grieved." [12] And all the people went their way to eat and drink and to send portions and to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them.*

### Biblical Principle of the Month

Revival is rooted in simple repentance and openness to the Word of God, a word that produces humility and brokenness in the prepared heart. This



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preparation produces no lasting sorrow, for the revived heart is of necessity a heart of joy, rejoicing, and grateful praise to the God whose faithful working renews and restores those open to his working.

*Ps. 149.2 - Let Israel be glad in his Maker; let the children of Zion rejoice in their King!*

*Isa. 12.2-3 - Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the Lord God is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation. [3] With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.*

*Phil. 4.4 - Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.*



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