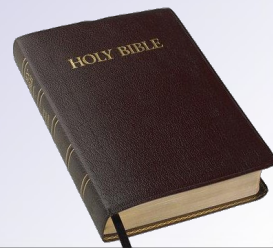
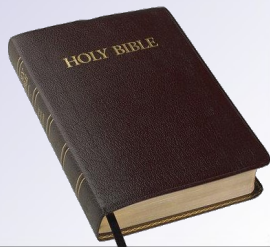


***Rebuilding What Was Lost***  
***The Book of Ezra-Nehemiah***



# ***Rebuilding What Was Lost***

- ***A Little Bit of Background***

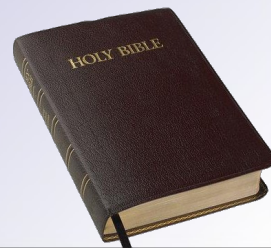


# ***A Little Bit of Background***

- First things first...
  - The book we're looking at is called Ezra-Nehemiah—it was originally written as one volume, and was only broken up into two separate books in Latin translations of the Bible in the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD
    - But I think that we really miss something when we artificially break it up—not only the *flow* of the narrative, but a large chunk of the *theme* as well
      - So we're going to look at the narrative as a whole...



Ezra-Nehemiah

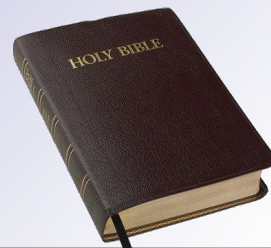


# ***A Little Bit of Background***

- **First things first...**
  - The book we're looking at is called Ezra-Nehemiah—it was originally written as one volume, and was only broken up into two separate books in Latin translations of the Bible in the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD
  - The whole point of the book is about rebuilding what was lost after the people of God were taken into exile, but then were finally allowed to come back together to their own place of worship again—only to realize that it was going to take some hard work and careful thought to bring the place (and their worship) back up to speed again
    - So why do you think that Ezra-Nehemiah might be a particularly relevant book for us to study today...?



Ezra-Nehemiah

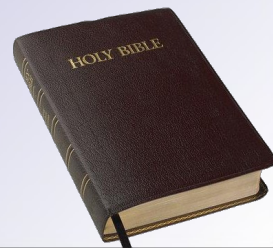


# ***A Little Bit of Background***



Funky little teaching moment...

- Let's talk about the Diaspora  
(διασπορά—meaning “scattering around”)



# A Little Bit of Background



## Funky little teaching moment...

- Let's talk about the Diaspora
  - The people of God experienced three major "Diaspora" moments in history—
    - 733-722 BC, when the Assyrians invaded under King Tukulti-apil-Ešarra (Tiglath-Pileser III) and others
      - Read 1 Chronicles 5:25-26
        - The Northern Kingdom of Israel was basically dissolved, repatriated with Assyrians, and turned into the vassal state of Samaria

(NOTE: Who actually instigated this invasion of God's holy land?)



# A Little Bit of Background



Funky little teaching moment...

- Let's talk about the Diaspora
  - The people of God experienced three major "Diaspora" moments in history—
    - 733-722 BC
    - 586 BC, when the Babylonians invaded under King Nabû-kudurri-uşur (Nebuchadnezzar II)
      - Read Jeremiah 25:8-11  
(But also, what sorts of details jump out at you in Jeremiah 21:4-5, or 21:10?)



# A Little Bit of Background



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- Let's talk about the Diaspora
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    - 586 BC, when the Babylonians invaded under King Nabû-kudurri-uşur (Nebuchadnezzar II)
      - Read Jeremiah 25:8-11
        - The Southern Kingdom of Judah was utterly destroyed and left a wasteland, its people dragged off to Babylon
        - Nebuchadnezzar even destroyed the Temple, burned every copy of the Torah, and tried to stamp out the Hebrew language (NOTE: Who actually instigated this invasion of God's holy land?)





# A Little Bit of Background



Funky little teaching moment...

- Let's talk about the Diaspora
  - The people of God experienced three major "Diaspora" moments in history—
    - 733-722 BC
    - 586 BC
    - 70 AD, when the Romans burned Jerusalem to the ground once again under the Emperor Vespasian and finally expelled the Jews from their own homeland in 130 AD, under the Emperor Hadrian—who even renamed the nation "Philistine Syria" ("Syria Palaestina") as a final insult

(which is why modern "Palestinians" feel like they have a legal right to the land)

(NOTE: Who actually instigated this invasion of God's holy land?)

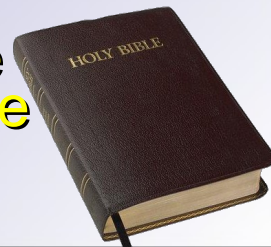


# A Little Bit of Background



Funky little teaching moment...

- Let's talk about the Diaspora
  - The people of God experienced three major "Diaspora" moments in history—
    - 733-722 BC
    - 586 BC
    - 70 AD
  - Then, of course, there was that whole 20<sup>th</sup> Century thing, with Adolf Hitler systematically killing 6 million Jews in Europe as part of an attempt to eradicate the Jewish people entirely... but that wasn't a Diaspora
    - I include it here to provide a context for us to understand the sorts of "mass extinction" level events that the Jews have experienced in history—and to give us a little perspective today
    - People talk about this U.S. President or that one being "a fascist" or "essentially just like Hitler" or about holding areas for illegal immigrants being "basically like Auschwitz and Dachau"
      - But Megan has *visited* Auschwitz, and it is an affront to history—and especially to the history of the Jewish people—to equate our present context to what they've gone through over the centuries

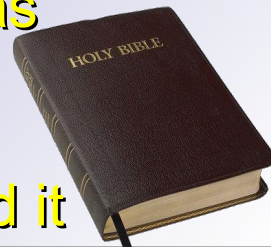
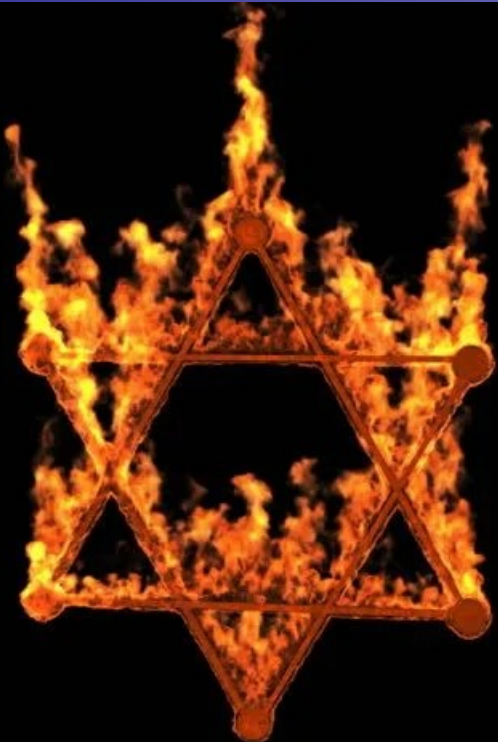


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## Funky little teaching moment...

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    - 586 BC
    - 70 AD
  - Then, of course, there was that whole 20<sup>th</sup> Century thing, with Adolf Hitler...
  - Not to diminish anyone's suffering in America today, but imagine what it meant to be Jewish in 586 BC
    - Being told that there is no longer a United States, and that your nation no longer even exists
    - Being told that from now on, you personally would be called *only* by an unfamiliar, foreign name—and even if you *could* somehow escape from your exile, there is literally no home left for you to escape back to
    - Not only your home, but everything that means anything to you *about* that home—every stars and stripes has been destroyed, Washington has been burned to the ground, every church in every city has been demolished, and every Bible has been torn to shreds
    - You're now *Babylonian*—God even decreed it

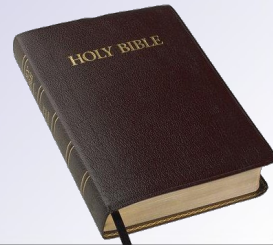


# A Little Bit of Background



## Funky little teaching moment...

- Let's talk about the Diaspora
  - The people of God experienced three major "Diaspora" moments in history
  - Is it any wonder that Nebuchadnezzar II was more or less equated with a mini-*Satan* in Isaiah 14?
    - Nebuchadnezzar's rise and fall was expressed as such a parallel to Satan's rise and fall that we (rightly) read Isaiah 14:12-17 as essentially describing Satan's history in addition to Isaiah's stated "king of Babylon" —so much so that we read the epithet "morning star, son of the dawn" used for Nebuchadnezzar in vs. 12 and (wrongly) assume its Latin translation ("*lucifer, qui mane oriebaris*") to be a proper name for Satan
      - And yet, read Jeremiah 25:11-4
        - How can Nebuchadnezzar be God's "servant" in vs. 9, performing God's expressed will against a corrupt Judah... and yet still be held morally *accountable* for his actions in vs. 12?
        - Can even the most un-Godly leaders still be used by a sovereign God?  
(NOTE: *Who* actually instigated Assyria, Babylon, and Rome's invasion of God's holy land?)

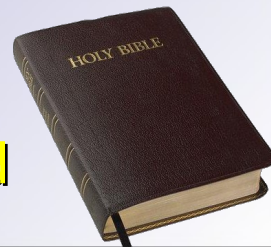


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      - How can Nebuchadnezzar be God's “servant” in vs. 9, performing God's expressed will against a corrupt Judah... and yet still be held morally *accountable* for his actions in vs. 12?
      - Daniel 4 even speaks of his son-in-law, King Nabonidus being cursed by God into madness, living in the wild like a beast —which actually appears to be attested to by other, *non-Biblical* Babylonian and Greek historical sources



# A Little Bit of Background



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- Let's talk about the Diaspora
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  - And yet, Kūruš (Cyrus II, or “Cyrus the Great”)—the Persian king who later conquered Babylon—was more or less equated with a mini-*Christ* in Isaiah 45
    - “This is what YAHWEH says to his Messiah, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him...” (Isaiah 45:1)
    - And *why* does Cyrus rate such admiration?
    - We're told that the Lord says of Cyrus, “He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, 'Let it be rebuilt,' and of the temple, 'Let its foundations be laid.’” (Isaiah 44:28)  
—and *that's* where we'll pick this story up next week in Ezra 1:1



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- But in the meantime, what can we learn and apply from this already in our modern times?

- What can we learn about being “the people of God” today?
- What can we learn from un-Godly leaders like Tiglath-Pileser III, or Nebuchadnezzar II (and Nabonidus), or Vespasian and Hadrian, or even Adolf Hitler?
- What can we learn from other, still non-believing leaders such as Cyrus II?
- How should any of this make *us* live out *our* faith today?

