

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



# ***Rebuilding What Was Lost***

- *A Little Bit of Background*
- *The Return (part 2)*



# *The Return*

- Let's look at Ezra-Nehemiah itself...
  - The first verse is really important, so we looked at it in some detail last week...
    - Ezra 1:1
      - “In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah...”
      - And what had the LORD spoken about to Isaiah about Cyrus, or to Jeremiah about His people?
        - So a quick Quiz to get us back up to speed—
          - Which King carried the people of God off into exile in Babylon—was it Cyrus the Great or Nebuchadnezzar?
          - *YAHWEH Himself* carried His people into exile *and* carried them every day *during* their exile *and* had already promised to carry them home *after* their exile—and all *because* He absolutely knows what He's doing in order to *heal* His people





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      - So one of the very first things that new “über-King” Cyrus did in his new role was this—
        - Please read Ezra 1:2-3
          - Could you *imagine* hearing that?
            - After half a century of captivity, with no hope of ever going home (aside from, y'know, what *God* had said), the first act of the *new* king is to overthrow the tyranny of the *last* king
            - Israel is still under Babylonian rule, but it's now your homeland again —and may *God* be with you...
        - How awesome is *God* already in the first three verses of Ezra-Nehemiah?
          - But it gets *better*...



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      - So one of the very first things that new “über-King” Cyrus did in his new role was this—
        - Please read Ezra 1:2-3
        - Please read Ezra 1:4
          - Could you imagine hearing *that*?
        - We actually know from history that Cyrus did this for *all* of the people enslaved by Babylon from *all* of the local nations—not just the Jews
          - Why would a conquering king do that?
          - Which is better—to have grumbling slaves whom you have to feed and guard, or to have tax-paying neighbors who all but worship you for setting them free again?
          - Does any of that mean that this *wasn't* from God?





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        - Please read Ezra 1:7-8



(NOTE: “Sheshbazzar” means “may the sun god Shamash protect the father” —and *that's* who's the prince of Judah)  
(NOTE<sup>2</sup>: Then again, Daniel was called “Belteshazzar” —“may the god Ba'al protect the king”—so there's a good chance that this Sheshbazzar had a good Hebrew name, too, right? —more on that later...)





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        - Please read Ezra 1:4
        - Please read Ezra 1:5-6
        - Please read Ezra 1:7-8
        - Please read Ezra 1:9-11
          - I dunno how much that's all worth (Using the weights that Numbers 7 gives for comparable dishware, in today's prices, the dishes and bowls alone would've been worth around \$1,760,000)





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        - Please read Ezra 1:5-6
        - Please read Ezra 1:7-8
        - Please read Ezra 1:9-11
          - I dunno how much that's all worth, but that's *in addition* to whatever they picked up in verses 4-6 from their neighbors
          - If you were an exiled Jew about to be able to go back home with all of this treasure, how would you feel?



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- But we need to rewind a smidgey bit—
  - In Ezra 1:5, “the family heads of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites—everyone whose heart God had moved—prepared to go up and build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem.”
    - Their priority wasn't on nation-building, or on returning to their warm homes and familiar comfort levels
    - Their priority in coming home wasn't to *reinstitute* what they'd done before, but to *fix* what they'd done before—to seek God with *all* their heart this time from the get-go
  - How can we apply this today?





# *The Return*

- Let's look at Ezra-Nehemiah itself...
  - The first verse is really important
  - In chapter 2, the people of God actually go back to Jerusalem with Prince Sheshbazzar  
(Though Ezra 2:2 suggests that they were led by a governor named Zerubbabel—as well as familiar names like Nehemiah, Mordecai, and Jeshua)



# The Return

- Let's look at Ezra-Nehemiah itself...
  - The first verse is really important
  - In chapter 2, the people of God actually go back to Jerusalem with Prince Sheshbazzar
    - The writer of the book provides an exhaustive list of all of the people who returned, and from what family lines they'd originally descended
      - Why is that important?
        - Read Ezra 2:59-61
          - Could you *have* priests and Levites who weren't clearly from a priestly or Levitical line?
          - Then why had these guys been serving the people in this capacity in Babylon?





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      - Why is that important?
        - Read Ezra 2:59-61
        - Read Ezra 2:62-63
          - Why is this so critical? Why is Zerubbabel taking this all so seriously at this point?
            - What does this suggest about the mindset of the people as they returned home and to their place of worship?
            - How can we apply that mindset today?



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    - The writer of the book provides an exhaustive list of all of the people who returned, and from what family lines they'd originally descended
    - According to Ezra 2:64-65, given everyone listed (and a chunk who apparently weren't officially listed), the total returning to Jerusalem was about 50,000
      - 2 Kings 24 suggests that somewhere in the neighborhood of 20,000 people had been taken into exile in Babylon two generations earlier (all of whom comprised the core infrastructure of the governmental and religious foundations of the nation—the rest of the population had been scattered into the wastelands)





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      - 2 Kings 24 suggests that somewhere in the neighborhood of 20,000 people had been taken into exile in Babylon two generations earlier
      - So where did the extra 30,000 people come from to return home here in Ezra-Nehemiah?



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    - Please read Ezra 2:68-69
      - That would be roughly 1,100 pounds of gold and about 3 tons of silver
        - In today's market, that's \$24,631,200 in gold and \$2,151,875 in silver—for a total of \$26,783,075 in *freewill offerings*, all at once...
        - And what was that offering intended to accomplish here?
        - How can we apply that priority today?

