

Rebuilding What Was Lost
The Book of Ezra-Nehemiah



Rebuilding What Was Lost

- *A Little Bit of Background*
- *The Return*
- *Laying the Foundation*



Laying the Foundation

- The people of God have returned home
 - And, thanks to the written decree of King Cyrus II they're returning home with literally *tons* of treasure for use in rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem
 - Why is all of that important?
 - Cyrus sent all of this back to Jerusalem under the care of a Judean prince named Sheshbazzar... (whose name means "may the sun god Shamash protect the father")



Laying the Foundation



Funky little teaching moment...

- After that, we don't hear anything more about this Prince Sheshbazzar until Chapter 5, where he is called the official governor of Judah and credited with laying the foundations of the Temple
 - But in Haggai 1:1, it's a guy named *Zerubbabel* who's the governor of Judah, and Ezra 3 credits *him* with laying the foundations of the Temple
 - So what's the deal?
(NOTE: Remember that in Babylon, even truly good, YAHWEH-worshiping Jews like Daniel were given pagan names like "Belteshazzar"—"may the god Ba'al protect the king")
- Option 1: Sheshbazzar started the work on the Temple, and Zerubbabel finished it
(but it's a little odd that Sheshbazzar just disappeared after Chapter 1, while Zerubbabel does all of the work in the intervening chapters... but then Sheshbazzar gets all of the credit in Chapter 5 and is never mentioned anywhere else in the Bible)



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(NOTE: Remember that in Babylon, even truly good, YAHWEH-worshiping Jews like Daniel were given pagan names like "Belteshazzar"—"may the god Ba'al protect the king")
 - Option 1: Sheshbazzar started the work on the Temple, and Zerubbabel finished it
 - Option 2: Much like Daniel, Zerubbabel was known by a Babylonian name in Babylon, but by his Jewish name back home
(which makes more sense, since the name "Sheshbazzar" is only used when interacting with Cyrus back in Chapter 1 and in the official report sent to King Darius in Chapter 5 and because Christ's genealogy tells us that Zerubbabel was *also* a prince)



Laying the Foundation



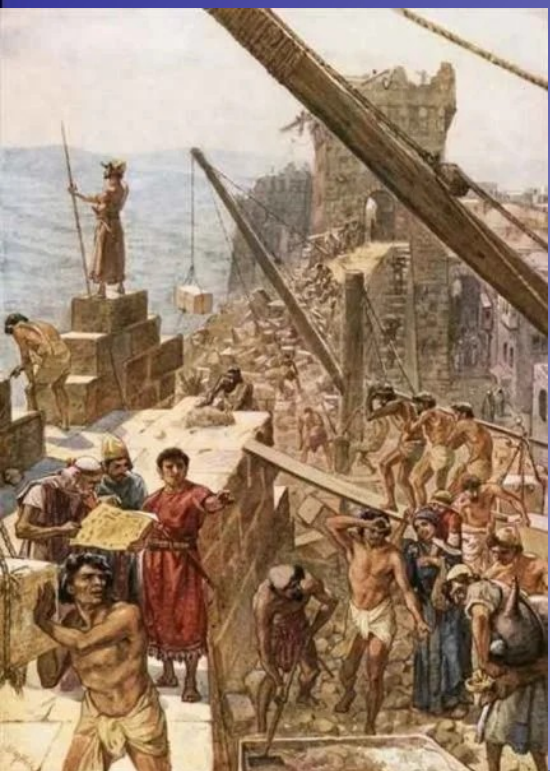
Funky little teaching moment...

- After that, we don't hear anything more about this Prince Sheshbazzar until Chapter 5, where he is called the official governor of Judah and credited with laying the foundations of the Temple
- “Zerubbabel” means “sown in Babylon”—so we should think of him being the last of the kingly line, born and raised in exile, now finally coming home
 - For you nerds, he's basically Aragorn...
 - And yet, before we carry that analogy too far, this is a guy who's been given power from the new conquering King Cyrus, tens of millions of dollars to work with, and more or less absolute authority in Jerusalem—but we're told, “This is the word of YAHWEH to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says YAHWEH Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)
 - More on that in coming weeks... but this guy is clearly going to be a very *different* conquering hero...



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 - So how did they begin?
 - Please read Ezra 3:1-3
 - Why would they have any fear of their neighbors? Didn't they have a nifty letter from Cyrus?
 - And yet, why did they rebuild an altar *before* they started to rebuild the city walls?
 - How can we apply that sort of thinking today in our own contexts?



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 - Please read Ezra 3:1-3
 - Please read Ezra 3:4-6
 - So this wasn't just a "one-time" offering, right?
 - How can they be so committed to worship without even having a Temple built yet?
 - How can we apply that sort of thinking today in our own contexts?

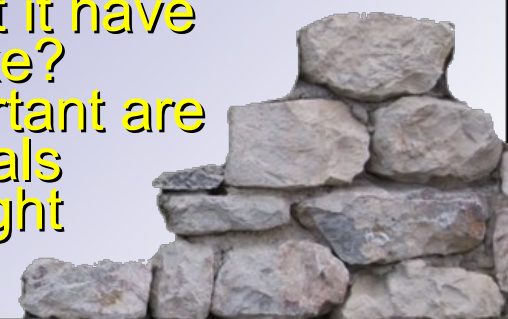


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 - Please read Ezra 3:7



- 1 Kings 5-6 tell us that the original Temple built by Solomon was lined and roofed with cedar planking, with flooring made from juniper, all of which were then covered in sheets of gold
 - What must that have looked like when the incense braziers were lit?
 - What must it have smelled like?
 - How important are the materials being sought out here?



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 - Please read Ezra 3:4-6
 - Please read Ezra 3:7
 - Please read Ezra 3:8-9
 - Why would they waste two years gathering up materials, appointing more Levites, etc., before starting to rebuild the Temple?
 - Weren't they champing at the bit to just get going with things?
 - How can we apply that sort of thinking today in our *own* ministry contexts?



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 - Please read Ezra 3:10-11



- This is what David had instructed the priests to sing before the ark of the covenant back in 1 Chronicles 16:41
- Please also read 2 Chronicles 5:1, 12-14
 - Why is this such an appropriate thing to sing here in Ezra 3:11?
 - Why would they be *this* excited to sing, when all they've got is the barest foundation laid down?
 - How impressive do things have to *look* in order to be holy?
 - How can we apply that sort of thinking today in our own ministry contexts?



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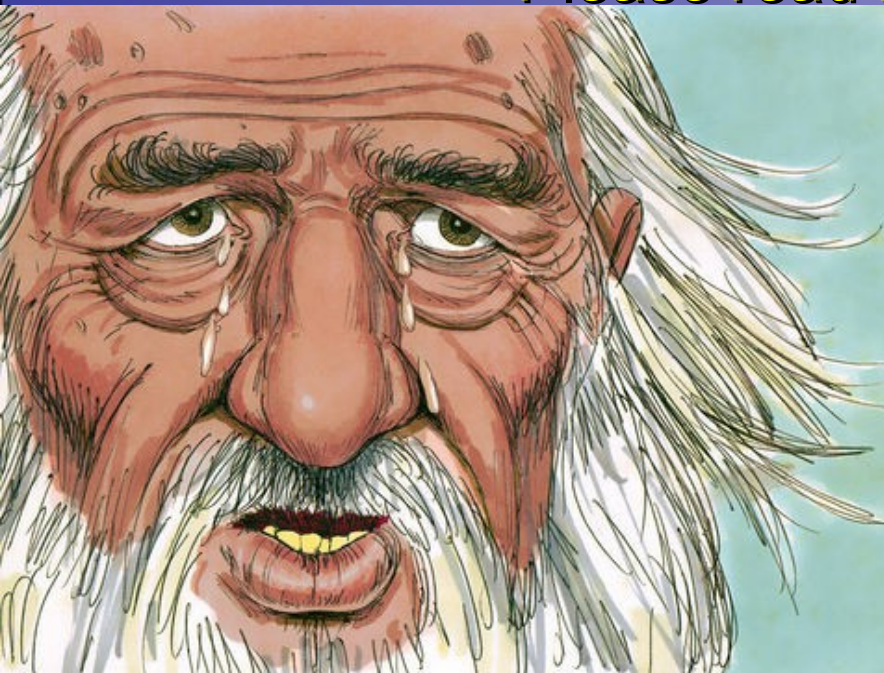


- This is what David had instructed the priests to sing before the ark of the covenant back in 1 Chronicles 16:41
- Please also read 2 Chronicles 5:1, 12-14
- How amazing was the amazing worship service in Solomon's amazing Temple back in 2 Chronicles 5:13-14?
 - How might this worship service here in Ezra 3:10-11—standing on a bare foundation out in the open air—have seemed by comparison to the people?



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 - Please read Ezra 3:12



- So is it that the older folks were just ungrateful, while the younger ones appreciated what they had?
 - Or is it that the younger ones were basically ignorant, while the older folks appreciated what they'd lost?
- How can we apply that sort of paradox today in our own ministry contexts? (or even in our own personal life contexts in general?)
- What did God say about all of that in Haggai 2:3-4? (or in Haggai 2:8-9?)



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 - Please read Ezra 3:10-11
 - Please read Ezra 3:12
 - Please read Ezra 3:13
 - How is this a beautiful, poetic way to describe the end of this bittersweet day?
 - And yet, there's more to it than that
 - Let's cheat and read this together with the *next* verse, Ezra 4:1...
“The sound was heard far away. When the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the exiles were building a temple for YAHWEH, the God of Israel...”

