

Rebuilding What Was Lost
The Book of Ezra-Nehemiah



Rebuilding What Was Lost

- *A Little Bit of Background*
- *The Return*
- *Laying the Foundation*
- *Letters to Kings (part 3)*



Letters to Kings



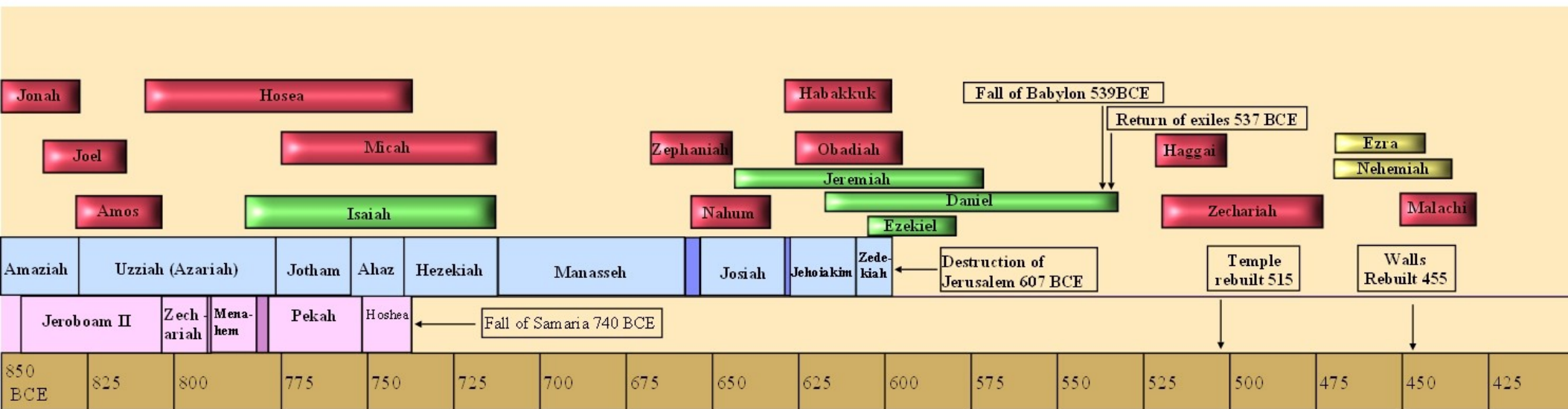
Funky little teaching moment...

- By request, here's a reminder from our study of the Minor Prophets about who's writing what when—

12 Prophets
 Contemporary Prophets
 Other Contemporaries
 Kings of Judah*
 Kings of Israel*

*Kings who ruled more than two years

Timeline of the minor prophets



- You'll notice that Haggai and Zechariah are contemporaries of one another (though Zechariah—being young—ended up covering a much longer period of time)
- You'll also notice that Ezra and Nehemiah came along *later* than the time period the book actually covers
- Last week, we looked at verses from Haggai and Zechariah (taking our cue from Ezra 5:1)



Letters to Kings



Funky little teaching moment...

- To understand Ezra 5, we read from Haggai 2
 - On the twenty-first day of the seventh month, the word of YAHWEH came through the prophet Haggai: "Speak to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people. Ask them, 'Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing?'"
 - What did we discuss about this from last week? How can we apply this today?



Letters to Kings



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 - What does God repeat *three times* here?



Letters to Kings



Funky little teaching moment...

- To understand *how* to do that, read what the priest-prophet Zechariah says in Zechariah 4
 - This is the word of YAHWEH to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says YAHWEH Almighty.
 - How can we apply that concept to our own contexts?
 - Can you trust in that—just in that much—even if God doesn't give you any more details?



Letters to Kings



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 - This is the word of YAHWEH to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says YAHWEH Almighty... The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; his hands will also complete it. Then you will know that YAHWEH Almighty has sent me to you.
 - God says, "I *promise* you that—can you simply trust my promises?"
 - Or will you wither away when troubles come along or let your commitment get choked by comforts or just assume that it'll get done by *your* strength?
 - I love the beginning of the next verse--



Letters to Kings

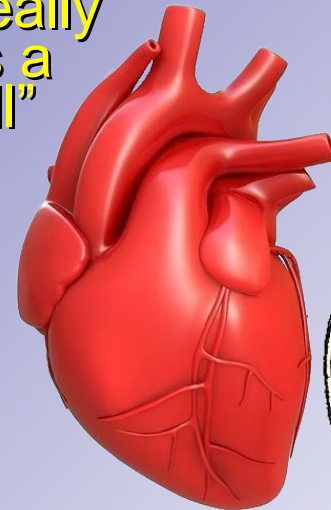


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Who despises the day of small things?

- Just because something *looks* small, that doesn't mean that it's a small—i.e.; *unimportant*—thing
(Your heart is only the size of your fist, but it's kinda crucially important to you staying alive)
(Besides—is there really even such a thing as a “big” thing or a “small” thing to God?)
(How can we apply this idea to our own lives?)



Letters to Kings



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Who despises the day of small things?

- Just because something *looks* small, that doesn't mean that it's a small—i.e.; *unimportant*—thing
- How can you despise small things when you know that God has a plan for them?
 - Just how do you decide how sovereign God is in your life?
 - When was all of this happening, according to Haggai 1:1 and Ezra 4:24-5:1?
 - Does it make a difference to know that it was in his second year of being king that Darius finally squelched the various rebellions that had kept Persia destabilized until then—finally allowing him to turn his attention to outlying provinces?



Letters to Kings



Funky little teaching moment...

- Years later, in Zechariah 8, we read this—
 - This is what YAHWEH says: "I will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of YAHWEH Almighty will be called the Holy Mountain... It may seem marvelous to the remnant of this people at that time, but will it seem marvelous to me?" declares YAHWEH Almighty.
 - Why would it seem "marvelous" to the people of God?
 - Why would it *not* seem "marvelous" to God Himself? (remember, "Who despises the day of small things?"—is there really even such a thing as a "big" thing or a "small" thing to God?)



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- This is what YAHWEH Almighty says: "You who now hear these words spoken by the prophets who were there when the foundation was laid for the house of YAHWEH Almighty, let your hands be strong so that the temple may be built... The seed will grow well, the vine will yield its fruit, the ground will produce its crops, and the heavens will drop their dew. I will give all these things as an inheritance to the remnant of this people. As you have been an object of cursing among the nations, O Judah and Israel, so will I save you, and you will be a blessing. Do not be afraid, but let your hands be strong."
- How will that be a change from what we've read about what's going on right now in Haggai and Ezra-Nehemiah?



Letters to Kings



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 - This is what YAHWEH Almighty says: "Many peoples and the inhabitants of many cities will yet come, and the inhabitants of one city will go to another and say, 'Let us go at once to entreat YAHWEH and seek YAHWEH Almighty. I myself am going.' And many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek YAHWEH Almighty and to entreat him."
 - How will *that* be a change from what we've read about what's going on right now in Haggai and Ezra-Nehemiah?
(i.e.; how is this a fundamentally different entreaty than we saw in Ezra 4:1-2?)



Letters to Kings

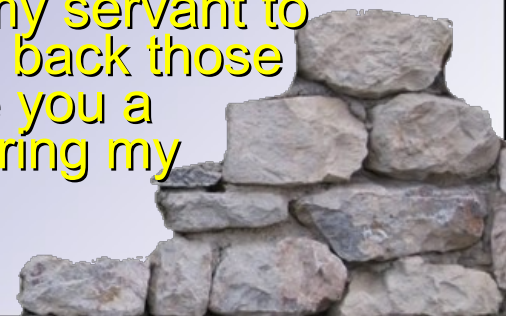


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This is what YAHWEH Almighty says: "In those days ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, 'Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.'"

- So there will be ten times as many Gentiles wanting to worship God as Jews—how significant is that?
- Is that consistent with God's Messianic promises?
 - "I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles."
(Isaiah 42:6)
 - "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."
(Isaiah 49:6)



Letters to Kings

- The people of God have returned home
 - But they have stopped building the Temple
 - So now, back in the “present,” how did Zerubbabel and Joshua respond in Ezra 5:2?

