

Rebuilding What Was Lost
The Book of Ezra-Nehemiah



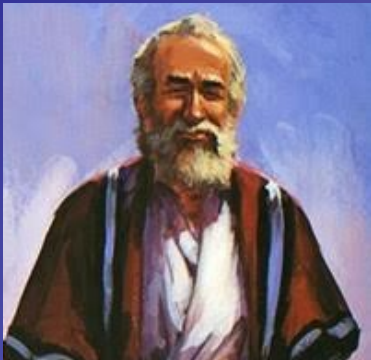
Rebuilding What Was Lost

- *A Little Bit of Background*
- *The Return*
- *Laying the Foundation*
- *Letters to Kings*
- *The Return of the Heroes*



The Return of the Heroes

- We've met several characters so far in our study of Ezra-Nehemiah
 - Ironically, two people we *haven't* met yet are Ezra and Nehemiah



The Return of the Heroes



Funky little teaching moment...

- Why might our author, Ezra, structure his story in such a way that our heroes (well, our narrator and our main hero) come in so late in the game?



The Return of the Heroes

- We've met several characters so far in our study of Ezra-Nehemiah
 - Ironically, two people we *haven't* met yet are Ezra and Nehemiah
 - Please read *the first three words* of Ezra 7:1
 - After *what* things...?
(where did we leave off?)



The Return of the Heroes



Funky little teaching moment...

- Okay, we have to stop and back up for a second
 - Part of the fun of reading the Bible is remembering that it's not just stories—it's *histories*
 - So it's fun when the Bible interacts with itself across multiple, interweaving books
 - For instance, last week, we talked about how in Ezra 6:22, the people of God celebrated in their new Temple, because

“YAHWEH had filled them with joy by changing the attitude of the king of Assyria, so that he assisted them in the work on the house of God, the God of Israel”

- And we celebrated God's sovereignty in preparing Darius for that very moment—that when Tattenai's letter denouncing the people of YAHWEH got to him, he was in the right frame of mind to be generous
(even *ridiculously* generous)
- But *how* had God sovereignly prepared Darius for that moment?
 - When exactly was all of this stuff with the Temple and Tattenai happening, according to what we read in Haggai 1:1?



The Return of the Heroes



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- Okay, we have to stop and back up for a second
 - Part of the fun of reading the Bible is remembering that it's not just stories—it's *histories*
 - In Daniel 5:31, Darius took over the kingdom from his predecessor, King Belshazzar
 - Please read Daniel 6:1-3
 - What does that say about Daniel—and about Darius in this first year or so of his new rule of neo-Babylon?



The Return of the Heroes



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 - Please read Daniel 6:1-3
 - Please read Daniel 6:4-5
 - What does *that* say about Daniel and his faith—and the perspective of the people of neo-Babylon about the Jewish faith?



The Return of the Heroes



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 - Please read Daniel 6:1-3
 - Please read Daniel 6:4-5
 - Please read Daniel 6:6-9
 - Does *this* King Darius who's still consolidating his new power sound like the sort of guy who would write the decrees that we read last week in class?
 - If not, then does that help you understand the wording of Ezra 6:22?
“YAHWEH had filled them with joy *by changing the attitude of the king of Assyria*, so that he assisted them in the work on the house of God, the God of Israel”



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 - Please read Daniel 6:4-5
 - Please read Daniel 6:6-9
 - Please read Daniel 6:10
 - Doesn't this sound like the *dumbest* thing for Daniel to do, after hearing about the new edict?
 - When *should* we as people of God break the law of the land?
 - When should we obey the law?
 - When should we change the law?
 - What does doing that *right* show to those around us—and what does doing it *wrong*?



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 - Please read Daniel 6:4-5
 - Please read Daniel 6:6-9
 - Please read Daniel 6:10
 - Please read Daniel 6:11-15
 - Why was the king so distressed?
 - What does that say about Daniel—and what does that say about Darius?



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 - Please read Daniel 6:10
 - Please read Daniel 6:11-15
 - Please read *the first sentence* of Daniel 6:16
 - Why did Darius do that, if he really, really didn't want to? (HINT: Look again at 6:15)
 - So who (or what) is actually shown to be sovereign here—*Darius?*



The Return of the Heroes



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 - Please read Daniel 6:10
 - Please read Daniel 6:11-15
 - Please read *the first sentence* of Daniel 6:16
 - Please read *the second sentence* of Daniel 6:16
 - Wouldn't this technically constitute a prayer to YAHWEH?
 - And wouldn't that technically mean that Darius is breaking his own law?



The Return of the Heroes



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 - Please read Daniel 6:17-22
 - How personally had Darius taken all of this?
(ex: how dignified was it for a king to *run*...?)
 - What are the chances that this episode would have had a lasting effect on Darius?



The Return of the Heroes



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 - Please read Daniel 6:17-22
 - Please read Daniel 6:23-24
 - That's thematically satisfying, but how is it also important narratively? What would this have clarified to everyone watching—including Darius?
 - What might a smart guy like Darius have concluded about just who (or what) is actually sovereign here?



The Return of the Heroes



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 - Please read Daniel 6:25-27
 - How has seeing the undeniable sovereignty of Daniel's god—the God of Israel—changed Darius?
 - Does *this* King Darius sound more like the sort of guy who would write the decrees that we read last week in class?
 - Again, does that help you understand the context of the wording of Ezra 6:22?
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 - Again, does that help you understand the context of the wording of Ezra 6:22?
 - Or, for that matter, the ultimate context of God's promise in Zechariah 4:6?
"Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit," says YAHWEH Almighty"



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 - Again, does that help you understand the context of the wording of Ezra 6:22?
 - Or, for that matter, the ultimate context of God's promise in Zechariah 4:6?
 - Much like Christ calling of the fishermen by the lakeshore, there's always a *context* to the work of God—though it's often “behind the scenes” or even “off-camera” in a given situation
 - But does that matter?



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 - Does *this* King Darius sound more like the sort of guy who would write the decrees that we read last week in class?
 - It would've only been a short while after Darius sent off this new decree to his empire that Tattenai wrote his report denouncing the rebuilding of the Temple for the God of Israel, requesting an official response from the king
 - How do you see God's sovereignty here?
 - By the time that Tattenai sent his damning letter, God had *already* dealt with Darius' heart and set the "fix" in motion



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 - How do you see God's sovereignty here?
 - How can God use one man's simple act of obedience in one country to affect the Temple worship of His people in another country?



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 - Did Daniel ever learn that his experience with the lions' den had such a profound institutional effect on the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem?
 - Does that matter?
 - Is it possible that *you'll* never learn how God may use *your* circumstances to affect other people's?
 - Does *that* matter?
 - How can we apply all of this?
 - Can we trust in God's sovereignty in our own situations, even if His work might be going on "off-camera"?
 - Even if we *never* see what He was doing?
 - How does that affect your reading of texts like Philippians 4:6-7?



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 - Twenty years after the death of Darius came King Artaxerxes—a generation *after* the completion of the Temple in Jerusalem—and that's where we'll pick things back up in Ezra 7...

