

***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*
- *After “The End”*
- *The Cupbearer to the King (part 2)*



# *The Cupbearer to the King*

- Nehemiah has finally joined our story...
  - Remind me what we saw in Nehemiah 1
    - Nehemiah lives in Susa—a political center in the Persian Empire
      - This is where Daniel had influenced King Darius and where Esther had later influenced King Xerxes and probably where Ezra had even later influenced his son, Artaxerxes
        - This was kinda the place for influential Jews...





# *The Cupbearer to the King*

- Nehemiah has finally joined our story...
  - Remind me what we saw in Nehemiah 1
    - Nehemiah lives in Susa—a political center in the Persian Empire—and his heart was broken to hear that Jerusalem still lay in ruins
      - So he prayed and fasted and planned—possibly for three or four months
      - And then he had a plan to connect with Artaxerxes—because he was the cupbearer to the king (which meant what, exactly?)



# *The Cupbearer to the King*

- Nehemiah has finally joined our story...
  - Remind me what we saw in Nehemiah 1
  - Please read Nehemiah 2:1-2 (*to the end of the quotes*)
    - In March or April of 444 BC, after praying for months for an opening, Nehemiah got his opening
      - How often do “open doors” happen like this for you?
        - How much of that reflects the amount of time we spend praying for “open doors” (and *continuing* to pray for them) and then keeping our eyes and spirit open to *recognizing* them?





# *The Cupbearer to the King*



Funky little teaching moment...

- March or April of 444 BC is an interesting date
  - Years before, Daniel had prophesied,  
“Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble.”  
(*Daniel 9:25*)
- If Daniel was foreseeing King Artaxerxes someday giving Nehemiah the authority to rebuild Jerusalem (which makes sense)



# *The Cupbearer to the King*



Funky little teaching moment...

- March or April of 444 BC is an interesting date
  - Years before, Daniel had prophesied,  
“Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble.”  
(*Daniel 9:25*)
  - If Daniel was foreseeing King Artaxerxes someday giving Nehemiah the authority to rebuild Jerusalem, and if the king issued the order on March 5, 444 BC (which is as reasonable a possible date as any other)





# The Cupbearer to the King



## Funky little teaching moment...

- March or April of 444 BC is an interesting date
  - Years before, Daniel had prophesied,  
“Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble.”  
(Daniel 9:25)
  - If Daniel was foreseeing King Artaxerxes someday giving Nehemiah the authority to rebuild Jerusalem, and if the king issued the order on March 5, 444 BC and if the “sevens” that Daniel spoke about were sets of seven years  
(which is more likely than sets of weeks)





# The Cupbearer to the King



## Funky little teaching moment...

- March or April of 444 BC is an interesting date
  - Years before, Daniel had prophesied, “Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble.”  
(Daniel 9:25)
  - If Daniel was foreseeing King Artaxerxes someday giving Nehemiah the authority to rebuild Jerusalem, and if the king issued the order on March 5, 444 BC and if the “sevens” that Daniel spoke about were sets of seven years, and if we go by the Hebrew year of 360 days  
(which is probably what Daniel was talking about)  
(yielding a total of 173,880 days)



# The Cupbearer to the King



## Funky little teaching moment...

- March or April of 444 BC is an interesting date
  - Years before, Daniel had prophesied, “Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble.”  
(Daniel 9:25)

- If Daniel was foreseeing King Artaxerxes someday giving Nehemiah the authority to rebuild Jerusalem, and if the king issued the order on March 5, 444 BC and if the “sevens” that Daniel spoke about were sets of seven years, and if we go by the Hebrew year of 360 days, then doing a little calendar math, that says the Messiah should appear on March 30, 33 AD—which was the Sunday right before a Passover and thus quite possibly the Sunday that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, with people praising Him with palm fronds and shouting, “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”  
(Luke 19:38)





# The Cupbearer to the King



## Funky little teaching moment...

- March or April of 444 BC is an interesting date
  - Years before, Daniel had prophesied, “Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble.”  
(Daniel 9:25)
  - If Daniel was foreseeing King Artaxerxes someday giving Nehemiah the authority to rebuild Jerusalem, and if the king issued the order on March 5, 444 BC and if the “sevens” that Daniel spoke about were sets of seven years, and if we go by the Hebrew year of 360 days, then doing a little calendar math, that says the Messiah should appear on March 30, 33 AD—which was the Sunday right before a Passover and thus quite possibly the Sunday that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey
  - That's a lot of “if” levels, but it's *yet another way* that the people might have been primed to expect that Jesus really was the Messiah—and might explain why He finally *allowed* their praise of Him that day...



# *The Cupbearer to the King*

- **Nehemiah has finally joined our story...**
  - Remind me what we saw in Nehemiah 1
  - **Please read Nehemiah 2:1-2**
    - In March or April of 444 BC, after praying for months for an opening, Nehemiah got his opening
    - **Go ahead and read that last snippet of verse 2**
      - So why was Nehemiah afraid, if this is precisely what he'd spent months praying for?
        - Because all of this was new and big and scary—and remember how scary it'd been for Esther?
      - You have to have permission to talk with the king—and in general, it's not usually healthy to ask for favors from kings or mafia dons...
        - But beyond that, it was *illegal* to come into the king's presence *sad*—it made it seem like it wasn't an inherent *joy* just to be with the king  
(see Esther 4:2, etc.)





# The Cupbearer to the King

- Nehemiah has finally joined our story...
  - Remind me what we saw in Nehemiah 1
  - Please read Nehemiah 2:1-2
    - In March or April of 444 BC, after praying for months for an opening, Nehemiah got his opening
    - Go ahead and read that last snippet of verse 2
      - So why was Nehemiah afraid, if this is precisely what he'd spent months praying for?
        - Because all of this was new and big and scary—and remember how scary it'd been for Esther?



- You have to have permission to talk with the king—and in general, it's not usually healthy to ask for favors from kings or mafia dons...
  - But beyond that, it was *illegal* to come into the king's presence *sad*
  - So how was Artaxerxes going to respond to Nehemiah's sadness—with compassion or with a death sentence?  
(and what does *that* tell us more about Nehemiah?)





# *The Cupbearer to the King*

- **Nehemiah has finally joined our story...**
  - Remind me what we saw in Nehemiah 1
  - **Please read Nehemiah 2:1-3**
    - In March or April of 444 BC, after praying for months for an opening, Nehemiah got his opening
    - **Go ahead and read that last snippet of verse 2**
      - So why was Nehemiah afraid, if this is precisely what he'd spent months praying for?
        - Because all of this was new and big and scary—and remember how scary it'd been for Esther?



- You have to have permission to talk with the king—and in general, it's not usually healthy to ask for favors from kings or mafia dons...
- So Nehemiah tells us,  
“I was very much afraid, but I said to the king, 'May the king live forever!'”  
(Nehemiah 2:2-3)
- Does that sound familiar?
  - Daniel 2:1-4
  - Daniel 5:8-10
  - Daniel 6:6-21
  - 1 King 1:31





# The Cupbearer to the King

- Nehemiah has finally joined our story...
  - Remind me what we saw in Nehemiah 1
  - Please read Nehemiah 2:1-3
    - In March or April of 444 BC, after praying for months for an opening, Nehemiah got his opening
    - Go ahead and read that last snippet of verse 2
      - So why was Nehemiah afraid, if this is precisely what he'd spent months praying for?
        - Because all of this was new and big and scary—and remember how scary it'd been for Esther?



- You have to have permission to talk with the king—and in general, it's not usually healthy to ask for favors from kings or mafia dons...
  - So Nehemiah tells us,  
"I was very much afraid, but I said to the king, 'May the king live forever!'"  
(Nehemiah 2:2-3)
  - Does that sound familiar?
  - How does Nehemiah reply to the king's question in verse 3—and why?



# *The Cupbearer to the King*

- **Nehemiah has finally joined our story...**
  - Remind me what we saw in Nehemiah 1
  - Please read Nehemiah 2:1-3
  - **Please read the king's response in Nehemiah 2:4**
    - How much of a relief would that have been?
      - So why was the king so positive in his response?  
(NOTE: We can't just say, "Because he liked Nehemiah," since even Nehemiah himself wasn't completely confident it would go down that way)
    - How important were those months of prayer?





# *The Cupbearer to the King*

- Nehemiah has finally joined our story...
  - Remind me what we saw in Nehemiah 1
  - Please read Nehemiah 2:1-3
  - Please read the king's response in Nehemiah 2:4
    - How much of a relief would that have been?
    - So the verse reads,  
"The king said to me, "What is it you want?"  
Then I told him about the wall of Jerusalem."—right?
      - So how does the verse *actually* read?
        - But wasn't the wall the *whole* reason that Nehemiah was going to talk with the king in the first place?
          - And wasn't this precisely the "open door" that he'd been *specifically praying for* over all of those months?
            - Why did Nehemiah stop and pray *AGAIN* before opening his mouth to answer?



# *The Cupbearer to the King*



Funky little teaching moment...

- The book of Nehemiah is often seen as an excellent guide for the successful leader (and rightly so)
  - But in many ways, Nehemiah is more about him listening to God first than it is about him making excellent leadership decisions  
(i.e.; for all of genuinely intelligent plans and actions, Nehemiah still considered himself—at his *core*—to be more *blessed* than *clever*)





# The Cupbearer to the King



## Funky little teaching moment...

- The book of Nehemiah is often seen as an excellent guide for the successful leader (and rightly so)
  - But in many ways, Nehemiah is more about him listening to God first than it is about him making excellent leadership decisions
  - Please read Proverbs 16:1-3
  - Please read Proverbs 19:21
  - Please read Proverbs 3:5-6
    - From a *leadership* standpoint, how would you apply these sorts of verses to achieve the best, most successful outcome to your plans?
    - From a *personal* standpoint, how does all of this also speak to Paul's injunction in Philippians 4:6-7, and how Nehemiah might be living *all* of that out here?
    - Everything that he'd been doing for three or four months had been leading up *to* this moment—so why *wouldn't* Nehemiah stop to pray *at* this moment?



# *The Cupbearer to the King*

- **Nehemiah has finally joined our story...**
  - Remind me what we saw in Nehemiah 1
  - Please read Nehemiah 2:1-3
  - **Please read Nehemiah 2:4-5**
    - Nehemiah has now referred to Jerusalem *twice* without mentioning it by name—why is that?
      - It's possible the last thing Artaxerxes heard about the city is that they'd sunk \$500 million into rebuilding it and had given Ezra all the authority in the world to do whatever needed to be done to fix things up
      - Thirteen years later, it's still a ruin?
      - After having heard for years that Jerusalem would be nothing but a major pain for Persia, would any of this be an effective selling point for Artaxerxes?





# *The Cupbearer to the King*

- **Nehemiah has finally joined our story...**
  - Remind me what we saw in Nehemiah 1
  - Please read Nehemiah 2:1-3
  - **Please read Nehemiah 2:4-5**
    - Nehemiah has now referred to Jerusalem *twice* without mentioning it by name—why is that?
    - **So how *did* Nehemiah frame his request?**
      - How important was it that Nehemiah had built up a *relationship* with Artaxerxes, rather than to merely try to color the request as a political expediency?



# *The Cupbearer to the King*

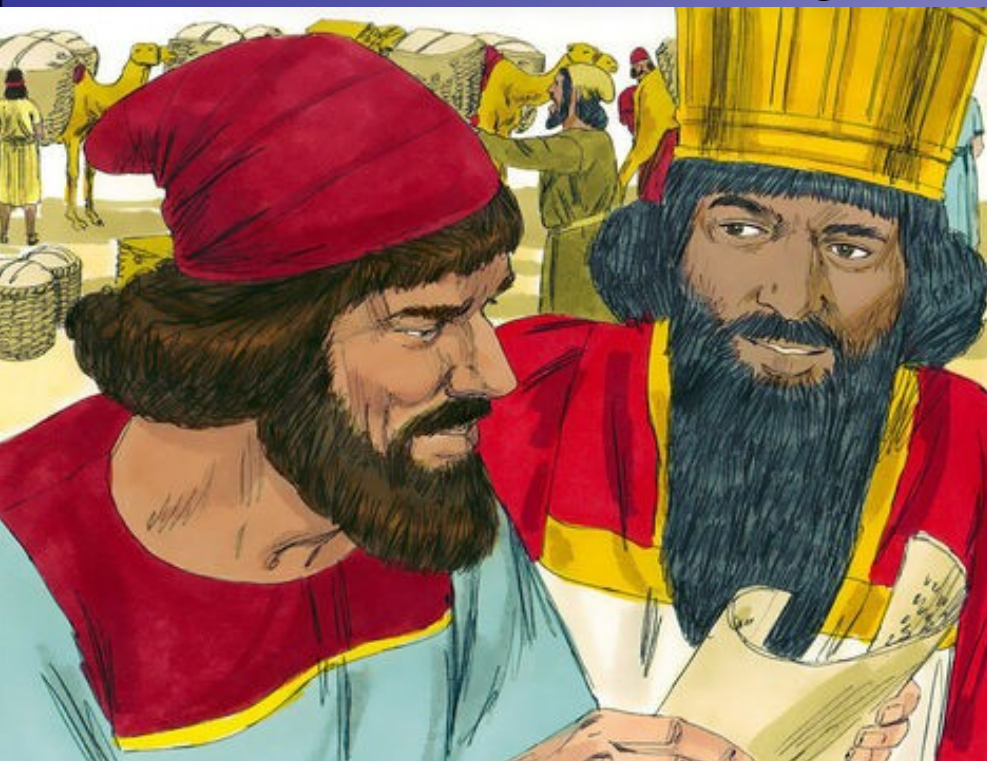
- **Nehemiah has finally joined our story...**
  - Remind me what we saw in Nehemiah 1
  - Please read Nehemiah 2:1-3
  - Please read Nehemiah 2:4-5
  - **Please read Nehemiah 2:6**
    - **What was the king's immediate response?**
      - **What detail do we get here about the level of intimacy of this interaction—a detail which we talked about last week as being very telling about Nehemiah himself?**  
(NOTE: It's small-seeming thing, but what does it say about Nehemiah that when the king asked him about the details, he had enough of a plan in place to be able to answer him intelligently?)  
(and yet, Nehemiah still considered his plan to be nonetheless completely dependent upon God)



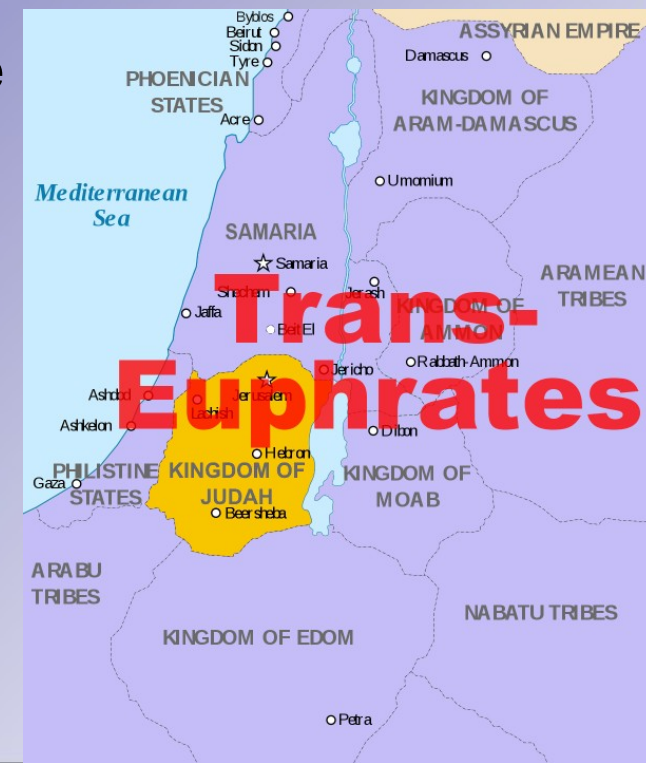


# *The Cupbearer to the King*

- **Nehemiah has finally joined our story...**
  - Remind me what we saw in Nehemiah 1
  - Please read Nehemiah 2:1-3
  - Please read Nehemiah 2:4-5
  - Please read Nehemiah 2:6
  - **Please read Nehemiah 2:7-8**
    - If you'll remember, after the Assyrians had invaded the region originally, they had dismissively called the whole thing "Trans-Euphrates"



(i.e.; "everything on the other side of the Euphrates River from us")  
(i.e.; "all of those crazy barbarians")





# *The Cupbearer to the King*

- **Nehemiah has finally joined our story...**
  - Remind me what we saw in Nehemiah 1
  - Please read Nehemiah 2:1-3
  - Please read Nehemiah 2:4-5
  - Please read Nehemiah 2:6
  - **Please read Nehemiah 2:7-8**
    - If you'll remember, after the Assyrians had invaded the region originally, they had dismissively called the whole thing "Trans-Euphrates"



- But what does Nehemiah's reply tell us about him and his plans?
  - He knew his plan's timeframe
  - He knew he needed protection
  - He knew exactly what work needed to be done
  - He knew exactly what materials he would need to do the work
  - He knew all of this—*planned for all of this—before he'd ever even set foot in Jerusalem—and without even knowing if he would survive the request*





# The Cupbearer to the King

- Nehemiah has finally joined our story...
  - Remind me what we saw in Nehemiah 1
  - Please read Nehemiah 2:1-3
  - Please read Nehemiah 2:4-5
  - Please read Nehemiah 2:6
  - Please read Nehemiah 2:7-8
    - If you'll remember, after the Assyrians had invaded the region originally, they had dismissively called the whole thing "Trans-Euphrates"



- But what does Nehemiah's reply tell us about him and his plans?
- And yet—even with all of those carefully considered plans already in his head—how does Nehemiah end verse 8?
  - Did he consider his success to be due to careful planning or courage or moxy or heart or standing up for what you believe in difficult times?
  - Or did he consider it to ultimately be due to God's grace—His unmerited favor?



# *The Cupbearer to the King*

- **Nehemiah has finally joined our story...**
  - Remind me what we saw in Nehemiah 1
  - Please read Nehemiah 2:1-3
  - Please read Nehemiah 2:4-5
  - Please read Nehemiah 2:6
  - **Please read Nehemiah 2:7-8**
    - If you'll remember, after the Assyrians had invaded the region originally, they had dismissively called the whole thing "Trans-Euphrates"



- But what does Nehemiah's reply tell us about him and his plans?
- And yet—even with all of those carefully considered plans already in his head—how does Nehemiah end verse 8?
- **What can we learn and apply to our own lives today from what we've read so far in the Book of Nehemiah?**

