

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*
- *Nehemiah Comes to Jerusalem*
- *Rebuilding the Wall (part 4—The Next Opposition)*



Rebuilding the Wall



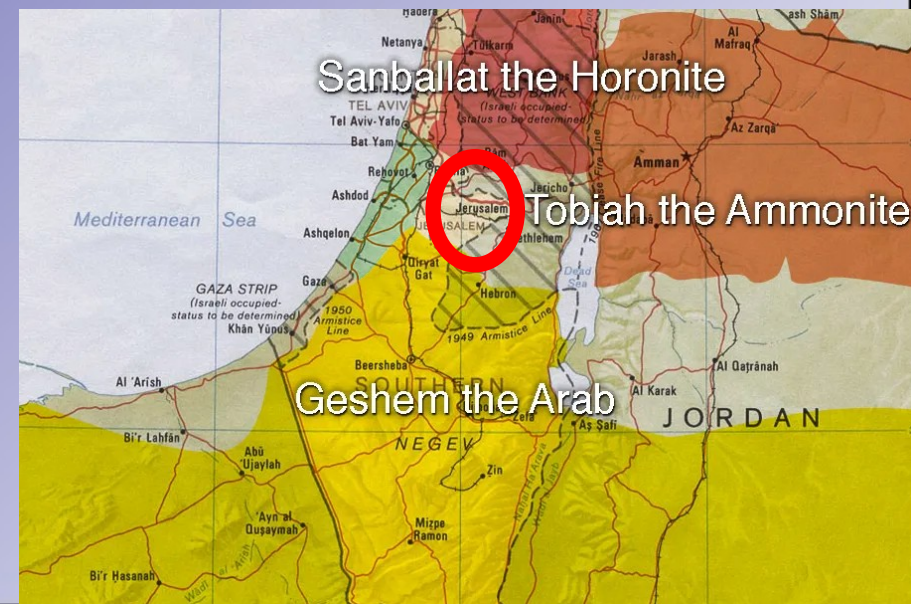
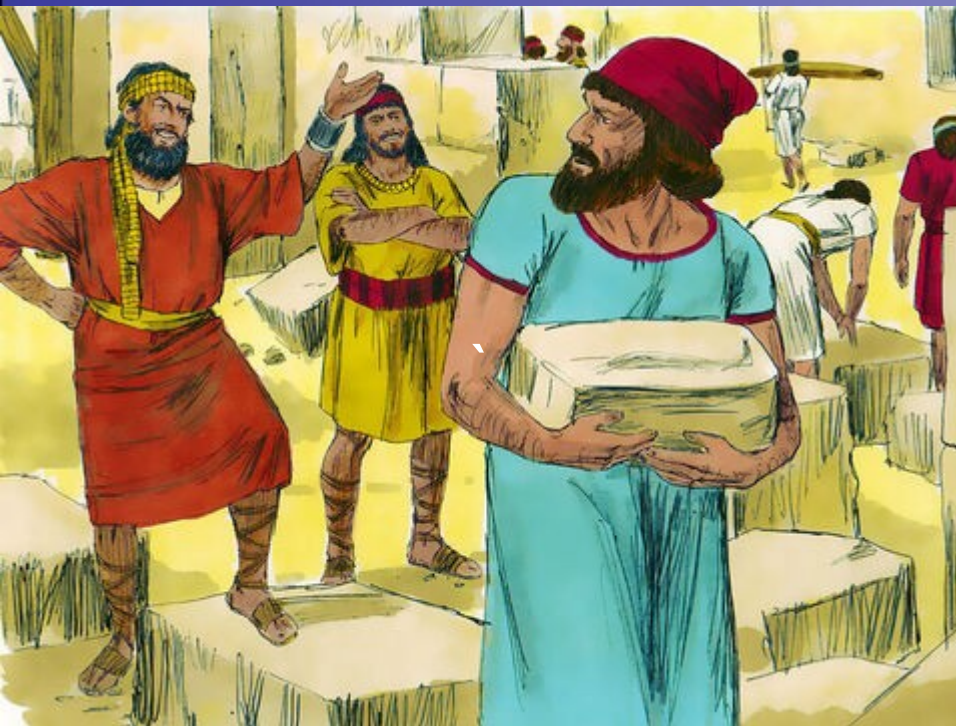
Funky little teaching moment...

- Winston Churchill was once asked to give the commencement address at Harvard University
 - The speaker introducing Churchill spent several minutes praising him to the students, sharing his many accomplishments and lauding him as one of the world's greatest leaders
 - Then Churchill himself got up and gave this speech:
 - “Never... ever... ever... give up...”
 - And then he sat down
 - He received a standing ovation that lasted far longer than his speech
- **Pop Quiz:** Was this Churchill just being lazy or what?



Rebuilding the Wall

- After a century, they're finally rebuilding
 - And that's when opposition started building too
 - Please re-read Nehemiah 4:1-3
 - Sanballat and Tobiah were stirring up trouble—focusing particularly on stirring up *discontent*
 - But we also know from verse 7 that they're rallying together *all* of the neighboring tribes
 - So what kinds of discontenting arguments are they bringing up again?



Rebuilding the Wall



Discontenting Arguments Tally:

- 1) Your worship is a joke
- 2) You'll never get the work done
- 3) It's all too far gone to fix
- 4) You all stink at this

- How can thoughts like this destroy people's morale?



Rebuilding the Wall

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 - Please re-read Nehemiah 4:1-3
 - Please re-read Nehemiah 4:10-12
 - What three-pronged morale-crushers do you see here in these verses?



Rebuilding the Wall



Discontenting Arguments Tally:

- 1) Your worship is a joke
- 2) You'll never get the work done
- 3) It's all too far gone to fix
- 4) You all stink at this
- 5) We're all tired and there's too much to do
- 6) Our enemies are constantly poised to attack
- 7) Even our allies are complaining, "Maybe you *should* give up, because *you're* endangering us"



- Do any of these Discontenting Arguments sound familiar to us today?
 - How toxic is it to let these sorts of thoughts fester?



Rebuilding the Wall

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 - Please re-read Nehemiah 4:1-3
 - Please re-read Nehemiah 4:10-12
 - Please read Nehemiah 5:1-2
 - So now the opposition is coming from *within the community itself*
 - But from these two verses, what exactly do they seem to be complaining about?



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 - Please re-read Nehemiah 4:10-12
 - Please read Nehemiah 5:1-2
 - Please read Nehemiah 5:3-5
 - From *these* verses, what exactly do they seem to be complaining about?
 - Are you familiar with the term “war profiteering”? What does it mean?



- So how are the rich and powerful Jews “crisis profiteering” off of their poorer brothers and sisters?
- How did people in Christ's day engage in “crisis profiteering”—or maybe “worship profiteering”—even within the Temple?
- How do people—even within the church—engage in similar “crisis profiteering” today?



Rebuilding the Wall



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- 3) It's all too far gone to fix
- 4) You all stink at this
- 5) We're all tired and there's too much to do
- 6) Our enemies are constantly poised to attack
- 7) Even our allies are complaining
- 8) Our own people are taking advantage of us

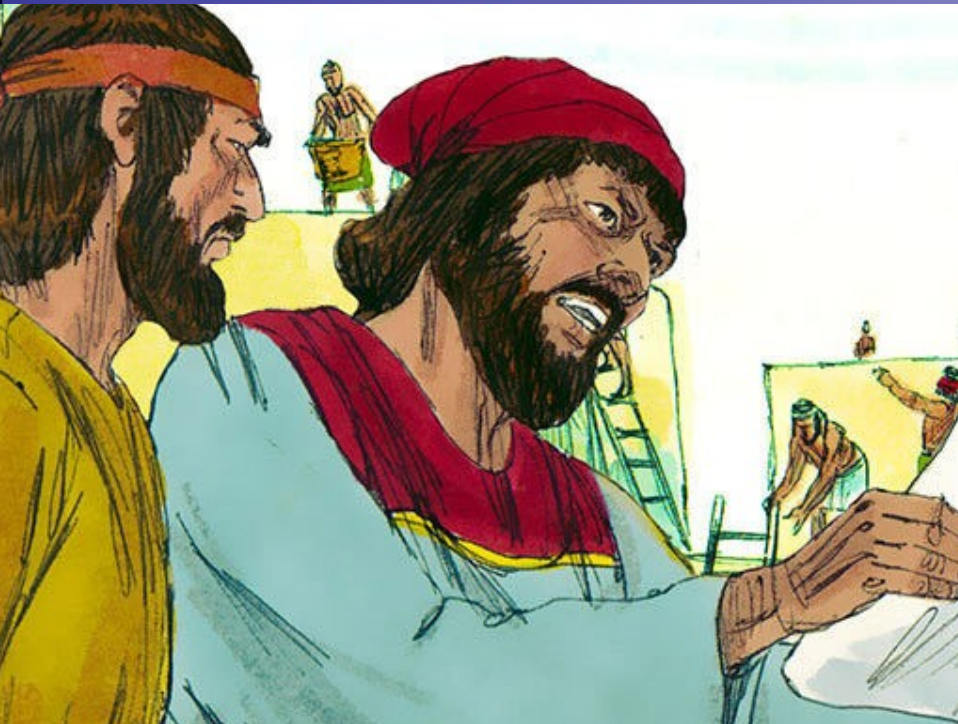


- Literally just physically building the wall was hard enough—how much harder are humans making it by acting so human?
 - So why do we do that?



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 - Please re-read Nehemiah 4:10-12
 - Please read Nehemiah 5:1-2
 - Please read Nehemiah 5:3-5
 - Please read Nehemiah 5:6
 - What was Nehemiah's reaction to hearing this?
 - Does he strike you as the kind of guy that you'd want to make "burning with anger" at you?
 - How does that prefigure how angry Jesus gets in John 2 at the money-changers in the Temple?
(NOTE: Jesus had the added issue that the profiteering was going on within the Temple itself and disrupting worship for women and Gentiles)



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 - Please read Nehemiah 5:3-5
 - Please read Nehemiah 5:6
 - Please read Nehemiah 5:7-8
 - What's going on here? How would you summarize what's making Nehemiah so angry?



- We're all working together, trying to build this together like brothers but our brothers are using the opportunity—the work God called us to—to make money off of us (and to do it in such a way that it looks not only like “business as usual” but actually like it’s to support the work effort—as if it *honors God to enslave others*)



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 - Please read Nehemiah 5:7-8
 - Please read Nehemiah 5:9
 - What is Nehemiah getting at here?



- You've lived in fear of men for so long—in “scramble mode,” just trying to survive—that you've forgotten the fear of the Lord
 - And because of your actions, your *enemies* have no fear of God either

(NOTE: Their Discontenting Argument #1 was that Your worship is a joke)



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 - What is Nehemiah getting at here?



- You've lived in fear of men for so long—in “scramble mode,” just trying to survive—that you've forgotten the fear of the Lord
- Out of fear, you scramble for this or that, you cling to this or that for comfort... assurance... survival...
(all the stuff that you *should've* been turning to *God* for first and foremost)



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- You've lived in fear of men for so long—in “scramble mode,” just trying to survive—that you've forgotten the fear of the Lord
- Out of fear, you scramble for this or that, you cling to this or that for comfort... assurance... survival...
- Fears like that don't just paralyze your faith—they butcher it
 - You feed on your brothers to fatten yourself out of fear that otherwise, the God who loves you might let you starve



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- Out of fear, you scramble for this or that, you cling to this or that for comfort... assurance... survival...
- Fears like that don't just paralyze your faith—they butcher it
- Fears like that make you lose sight of a healthy fear of God that recognizes *Him first* and places your needs within *His context*



Rebuilding the Wall



Funky little teaching moment...

- Technically—according to the prophets— isn't that the sort of thing that had originally gotten them thrown into exile in the first place?
 - This craving for comfort, shelter, wealth, stability, etc. (apart from God) that had left them hollow and lost and vulnerable...? (which then made them crave even *more* comfort, shelter, wealth, and stability apart from God...?)
- How do we do similar things today?



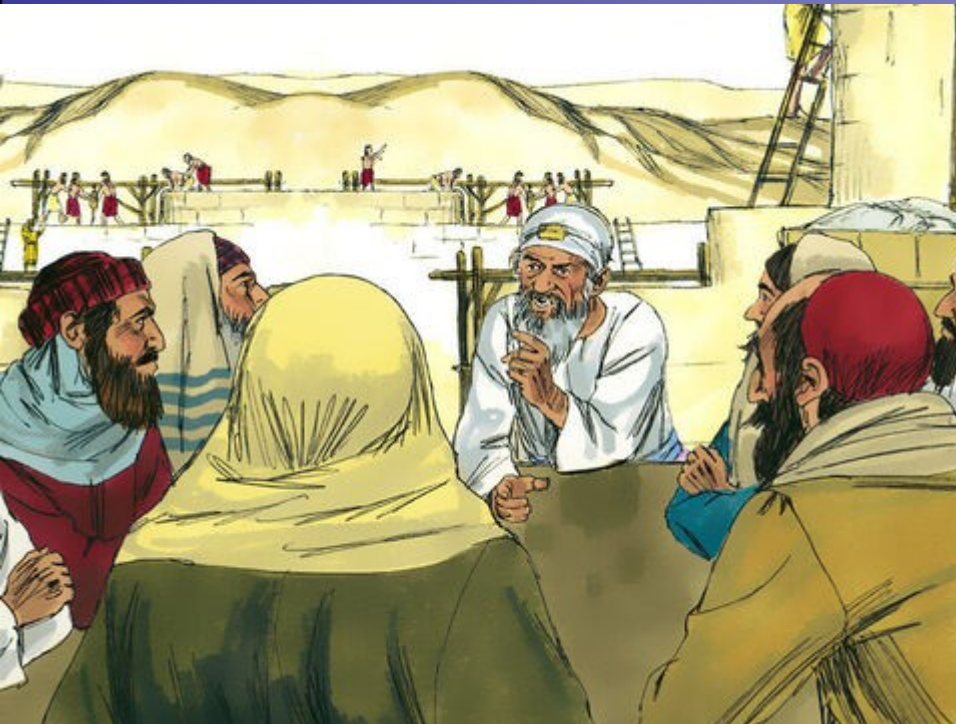
Rebuilding the Wall

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 - Please read Nehemiah 5:9-11
 - What crucial detail(s) jump out at you in verse 10?
 - Is Nehemiah saying that he and his family had *also* been defrauding and abusing people?
 - Or is he saying that even his own family's totally *valid* business investment interests have to stop as well during this time of crisis?
 - Either way, what does it say about Nehemiah as a leader that he calls on everyone in Judea—
—including himself and his own kin—to pay it all back?



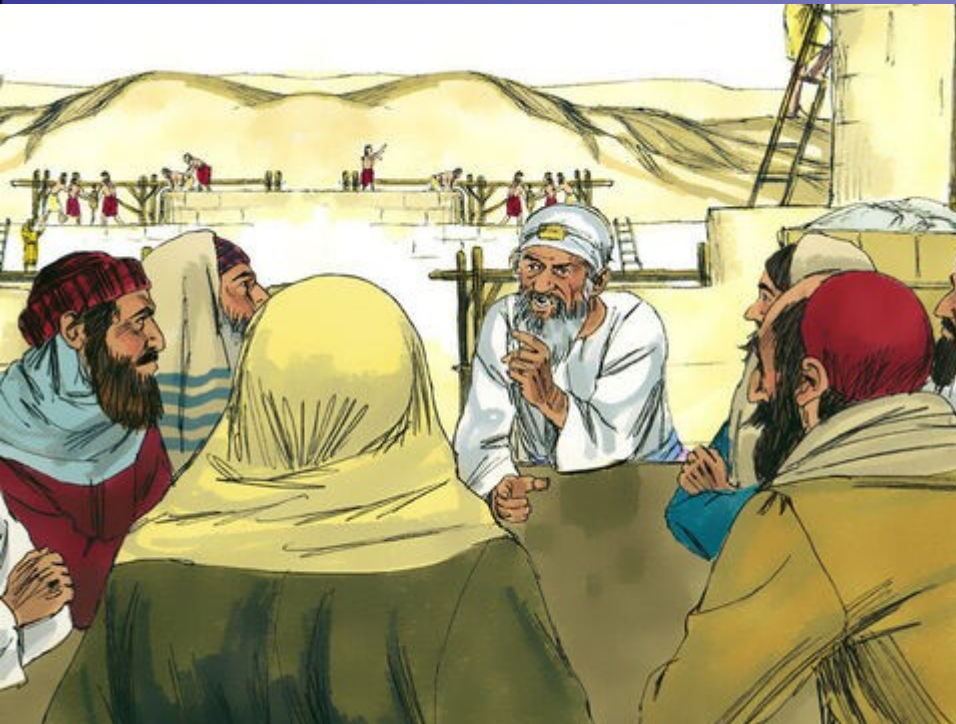
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 - Please read Nehemiah 5:9-11
 - Please read Nehemiah 5:12
 - They'd already promised—why does Nehemiah make everyone take an oath before the priests and God?
 - Is this sort of discipline punitive, distrustful, or just a smart way to undermine recidivism?



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 - They'd already promised—why does Nehemiah make everyone take an oath before the priests and God?
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 - How does Nehemiah follow that up in verse 13?



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 - Please read Nehemiah 5:9-11
 - Please read Nehemiah 5:12-13
 - Please read Nehemiah 5:14
 - We've been rightly calling Nehemiah the governor all this time, but note that this—5 chapters into his narrative, 15 chapters into the story itself—is the *first* time that *Nehemiah* has mentioned that he's actually Artaxerxes' governor
 - What does it suggest about Nehemiah that it's never really dawned on him to tell us that until the point that he's making right now?



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 - We've been rightly calling Nehemiah the governor all this time, but note that this—5 chapters into his narrative, 15 chapters into the story itself—is the *first* time that *Nehemiah* has mentioned that he's actually Artaxerxes' governor
 - What does he suggest in verse 14 about his take on being governor here—he and his brothers?
 - How does that echo things that he's already said earlier, such as in Nehemiah 4:21-23?



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 - Please read Nehemiah 5:14
 - Please read Nehemiah 5:14-15
 - Out of a love for his people in Jerusalem? Sure...
Out of respect for his king, Artaxerxes? Certainly...
But at its core, Nehemiah's solid leadership was out of reverence for his God...
 - What does that word mean, to have "reverence" for God?
 - It means, "out of healthy fear for God..."
 - Because I feared God—because I had a healthy terror of living in ways that dishonored my God—I didn't fall into the same *worldly* fears that others around me and before me fell into
 - How can we apply that to our own lives today?



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 - Please read Nehemiah 5:14
 - Please read Nehemiah 5:14-15
 - Please read **Nehemiah 5:16-18**
 - How would you summarize what he's saying here?
 - What kind of leadership did Nehemiah exhibit?



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 - Please read Nehemiah 5:14-15
 - Please read Nehemiah 5:16-18
 - Please read Nehemiah 5:19
 - What does Nehemiah finally do again here?
 - He prays
 - It's a simple prayer, but it totally counts
 - What can we put together from today's discussion about what it means to be a Godly leader—and to live as if we really fear the Lord?

