

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*
- *After “The End” (Redux)*



After the End (Redux)



Funky little teaching moment...

- The world is not at rest right now, and there's plenty going on to be agitated about
 - Then again, isn't there *always*?



After the End (Redux)



Funky little teaching moment...

- The world is not at rest right now, and there's plenty going on to be agitated about
 - Then again, isn't there *always*?
 - Not to diminish or dismiss anything important that's going on in the world right now, but isn't there *always* something to be agitated about? Anxious about? Outraged about? Divided about? Fearful about?



After the End (Redux)



Funky little teaching moment...

- The world is not at rest right now, and there's plenty going on to be agitated about
- And yet, in the Bible, the Lord naïvely tells us to “be still, and know that I am God”
 - Isn't that a platitude when people are struggling in life—and thus, a potentially *offensive* platitude?
 - How is that even supposed to work?
 - Are we supposed to not *care* about things?
 - Are we supposed to just shrug and quietly *acquiesce*?
 - Are we supposed to step away from “real life” to find the time to have a quiet worship service to “be still”?



After the End (Redux)



Crazy deep dive into the question...

- Let's read the Psalm we're quoting from
 - Please read Psalm 46:1-3
 - When *exactly* is God our refuge, strength, and help?
 - 1) When is He present in our troubles?
 - 2) What is the situation around us like when God is helping us in these verses?
 - So is God saying that He will pull us *out* of these times of trouble, so that we can "be still" before Him?
 - So technically, it's really more about "being still" *within* times of trouble, isn't it?
 - Why don't we design our motivational posters to reflect that?
 - What exactly does the phrase "be still" actually *mean*, then?
 - Is it to "be quiet" or to "have a nice, restrained, and subdued worship service"?



After the End (Redux)



Crazy deep dive into the question...

- Let's read the Psalm we're quoting from
 - Please read Psalm 46:1-3
 - Please read Psalm 46:4-7
 - There is no river running through Jerusalem
 - So what's God talking about here?
 - What is this running water that refreshes the people of God where "the Most High dwells"?

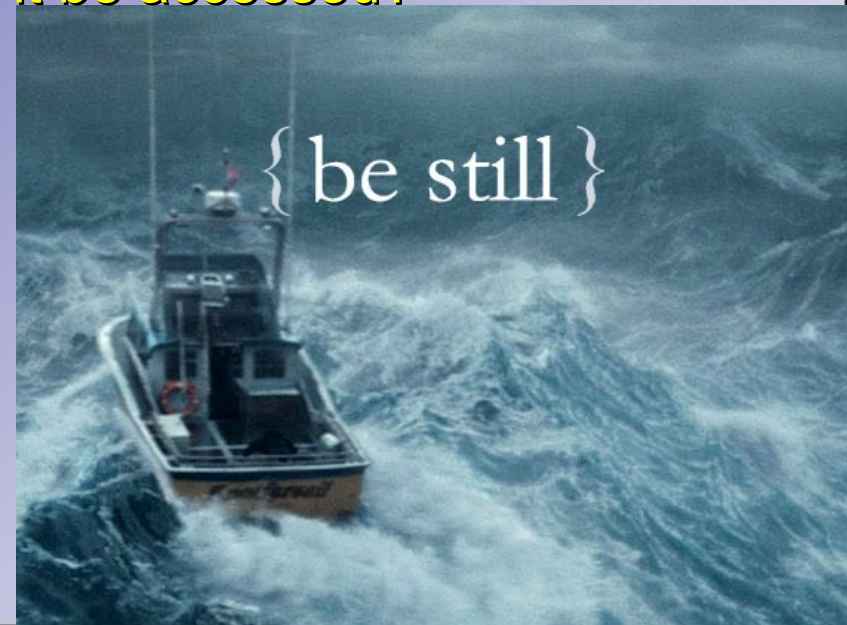


After the End (Redux)



Crazy deep dive into the question...

- Let's read the Psalm we're quoting from
 - Please read Psalm 46:1-3
 - Please read Psalm 46:4-7
 - *There is no river running through Jerusalem*
 - So what's God talking about here?
 - Please read 1 Corinthians 3:16
 - Please read Ephesians 2:22
 - Where does the Most High dwell?
 - Please read John 4:13-14
 - Please read John 7:37-39
 - Where is His refreshing river?
 - And when can it be accessed?



After the End (Redux)



Crazy deep dive into the question...

- Let's read the Psalm we're quoting from
 - Please read Psalm 46:1-3
 - Please read Psalm 46:4-7
 - There *is* no river running through Jerusalem
 - When *exactly* is God our refuge, strength, and help?
 - 1) When is He present in our troubles?
 - 2) What is the situation around us like when God is helping us in *these* verses?
 - Is the Psalm—is the *Bible*—being fairly consistent about these details?
 - So why do we often struggle to see it that way?



After the End (Redux)



Crazy deep dive into the question...

- Let's read the Psalm we're quoting from
 - Please read Psalm 46:1-3
 - Please read Psalm 46:4-7
 - Please read Psalm 46:8-11
 - So when—and under what conditions—should we “be still” and exalt the Lord?
 - God will be exalted among the nations—but what are the nations like in verse 6?
 - God will be exalted in the earth—but what's the earth like in verses 2-3?



After the End (Redux)



Crazy deep dive into the question...

- Let's read the Psalm we're quoting from
 - Please read Psalm 46:1-3
 - Please read Psalm 46:4-7
 - Please read Psalm 46:8-11
 - So when—and under what conditions—should we “be still” and exalt the Lord?
 - When *exactly* is God our refuge, strength, and help?
 - 1) When is He present in our world?
 - 2) What is the situation around us like when God is engaged and exalted in *these* verses?
 - Is the Psalm—is the *Bible*—being fairly consistent about these details?
 - So why do we often struggle to look at it that way?
 - Why do we still struggle to truly, genuinely exalt God *within* our times of stress and agitation?



After the End (Redux)



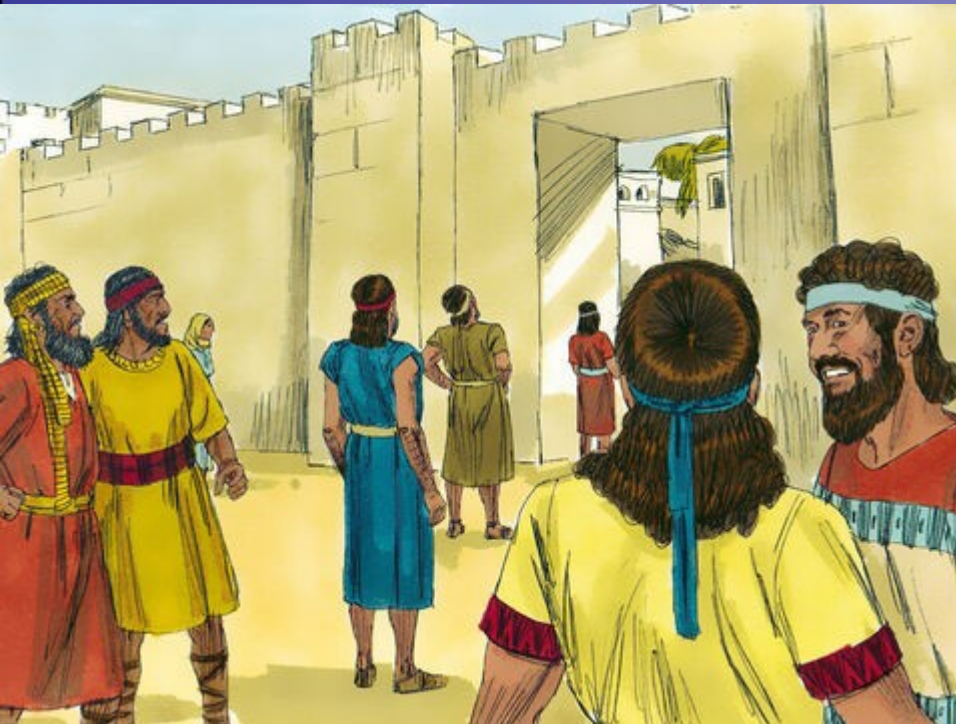
Crazy deep dive into the question...

- Let's read the Psalm we're quoting from
 - Please read Psalm 46:1-3
 - Please read Psalm 46:4-7
 - Please read Psalm 46:8-11
 - Jesus can *totally* calm the storms around us, right? But He *doesn't* promise that He'll always *do* that
 - He *does* promise that He can calm the storms *within* us—that His refreshing river, His dwelling within us, can make *us* a calm place, even when the *world* isn't
 - But He's not saying that you should take the time to relax when you can get away it all and get quiet
 - What He's saying is, "When the world is thundering around you, when you *can't* get away from the storm, *you* be still, and know that I am God—you be a calm place in the storm, be *still* like the still waters of a pond... even in the midst of the *worst* kinds of storms..."



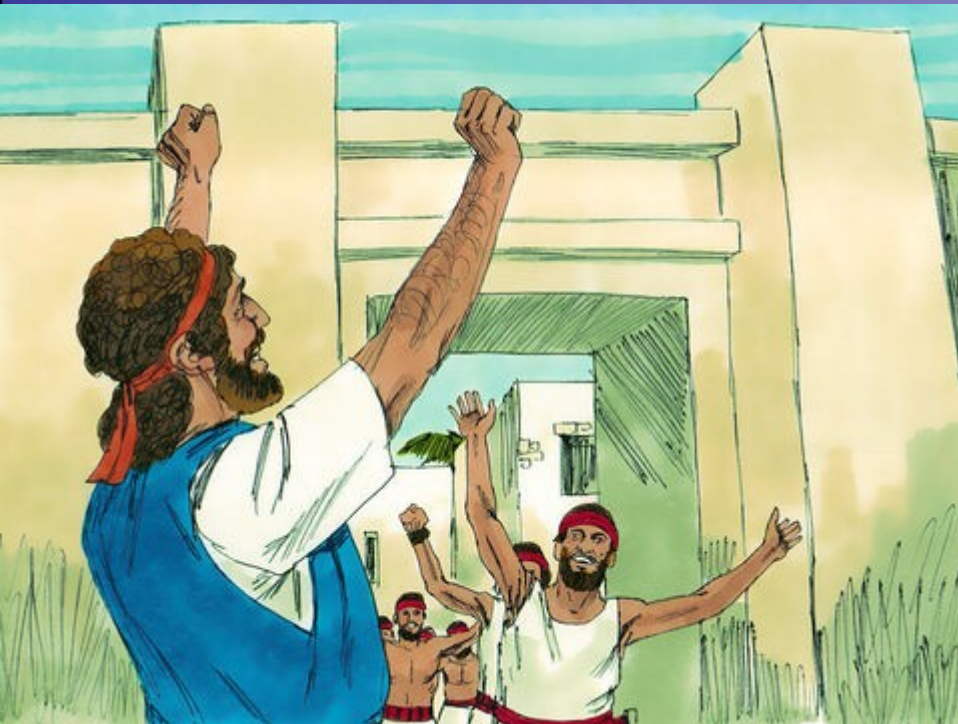
After the End (Redux)

- Nehemiah has built the wall. The End.
 - Where did we leave Nehemiah last week?
 - Please re-read Nehemiah 6:15-19
 - Would you consider this a peaceful time for Nehemiah when he could sit back, be calm, and be still, because all of the *stressful* stuff was over?
 - So how should he look for peace *within* the storm?
 - How should we do it today?



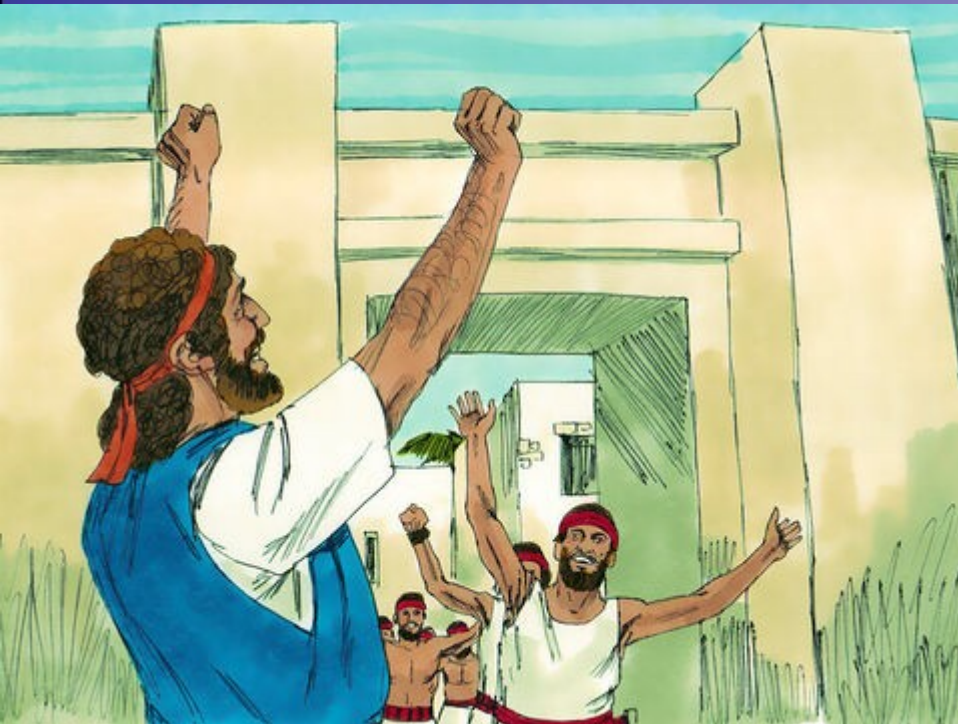
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 - Where did we leave Nehemiah last week?
 - Please re-read Nehemiah 6:15-19
 - Please read Nehemiah 7:1
 - I get that gates need gatekeepers, but why do they need singers and Levites—isn't that a strange way to finish an engineering project?
 - 1) It was *never* just an engineering project
 - Why not?



After the End (Redux)

- Nehemiah has built the wall. The End.
 - Where did we leave Nehemiah last week?
 - Please re-read Nehemiah 6:15-19
 - Please read Nehemiah 7:1
 - I get that gates need gatekeepers, but why do they need singers and Levites—isn't that a strange way to finish an engineering project?
 - 1) It was *never* just an engineering project
 - 2) This was just a book-end to how they'd started

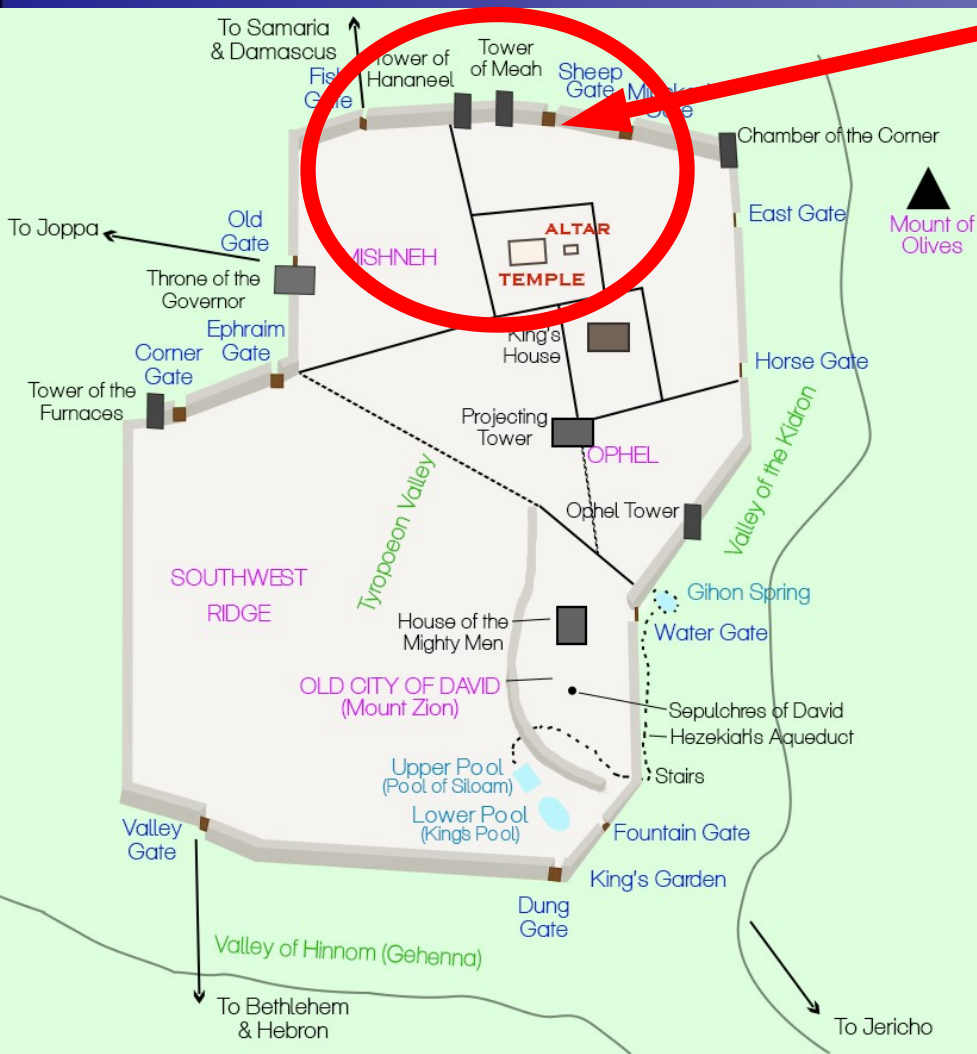


After the End (Redux)



Funky little teaching moment...

- Remember how they'd *started* building the wall?
 - Go ahead and let's re-read Nehemiah 3:1
 - Where and how did they *start* the whole project?
 - Why start at the Sheep Gate?
 - And why start with a full-on dedication service?
 - So why might you *end* by making sure you have all of the worship people in place?



After the End (Redux)



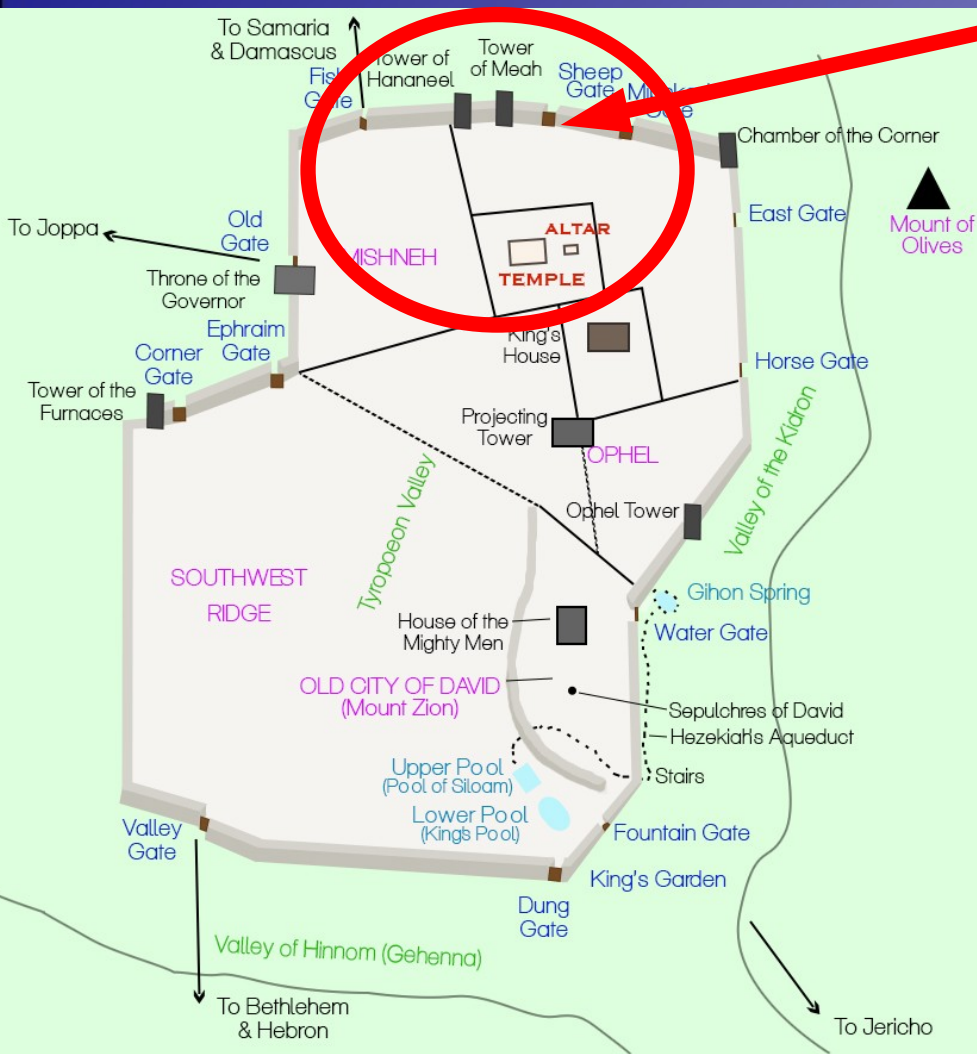
Funky little teaching moment...

- Remember how they'd *started* building the wall?
 - Go ahead and let's re-read Nehemiah 3:1
 - Where and how did they *start* the whole project?

Why start at the Sheep Gate?
And why start with a full-on dedication service?

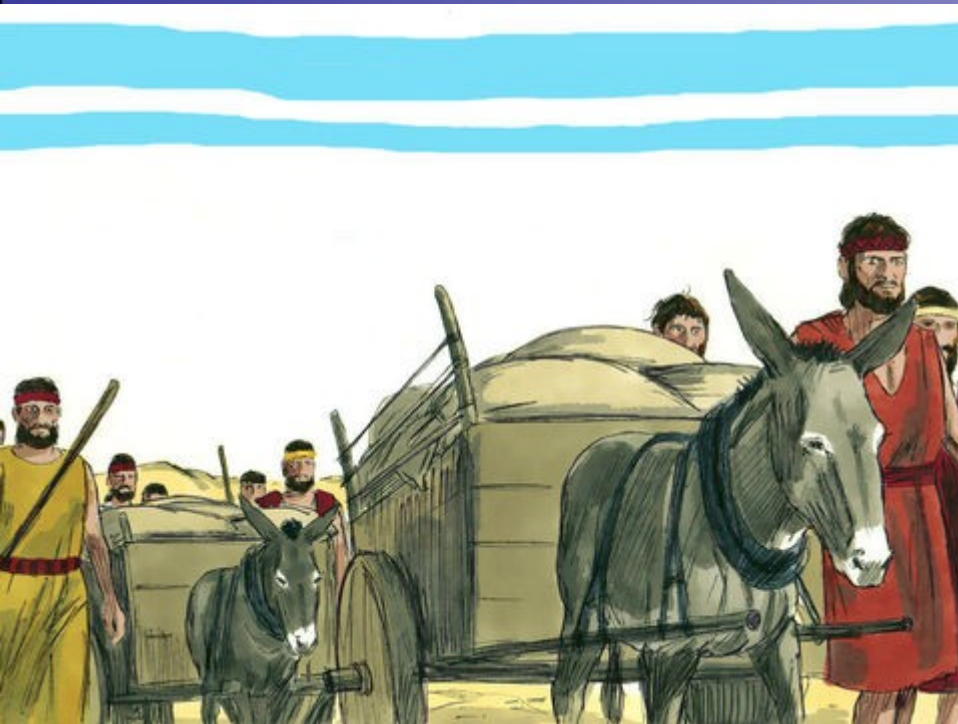
Technically, the worship service that we see in Nehemiah 7-10 actually *started* in Nehemiah 3:1 —meaning that the building of the wall was *itself* worship, right?

- Is that how we tend to see things like building projects?
 - Why or why not?



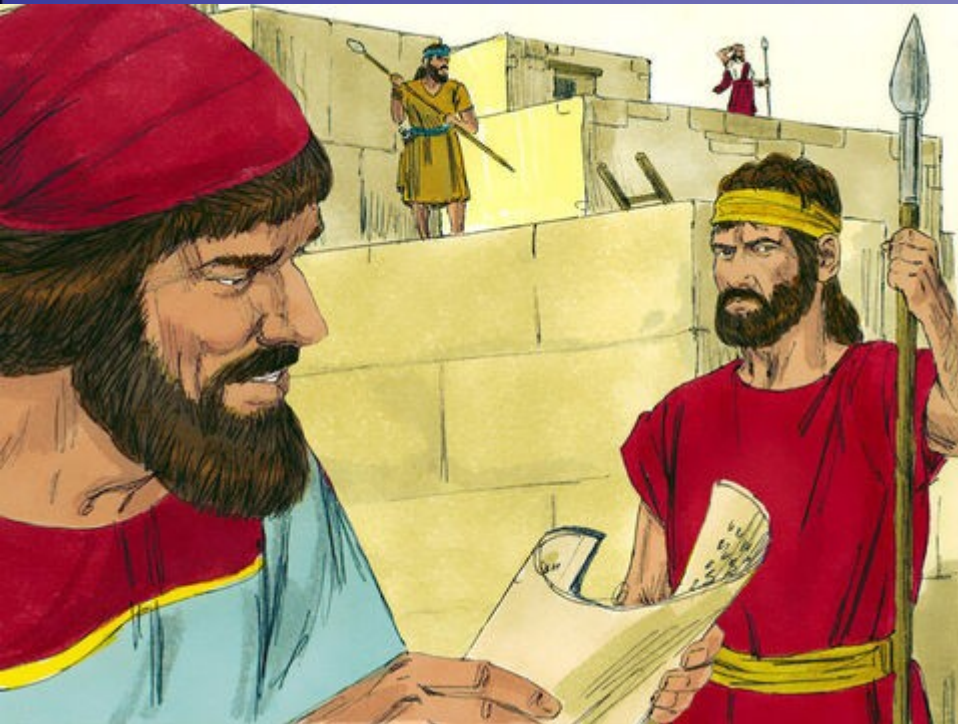
After the End (Redux)

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 - Where did we leave Nehemiah last week?
 - Please re-read Nehemiah 6:15-19
 - Please read Nehemiah 7:1
 - I get that gates need gatekeepers, but why do they need singers and Levites—isn't that a strange way to finish an engineering project?
 - Remind me—why did Ezra have to stop and regroup at the Ahava Canal (before he'd even left Babylonian territory) on his way to Jerusalem back in Ezra 8?
 - So how important is it to worship the Lord—to ascribe to *God* true *worth*—in this whole process?
 - And how important is it to do that worship *right*, in way that *honor* the God whom you're trying to honor?



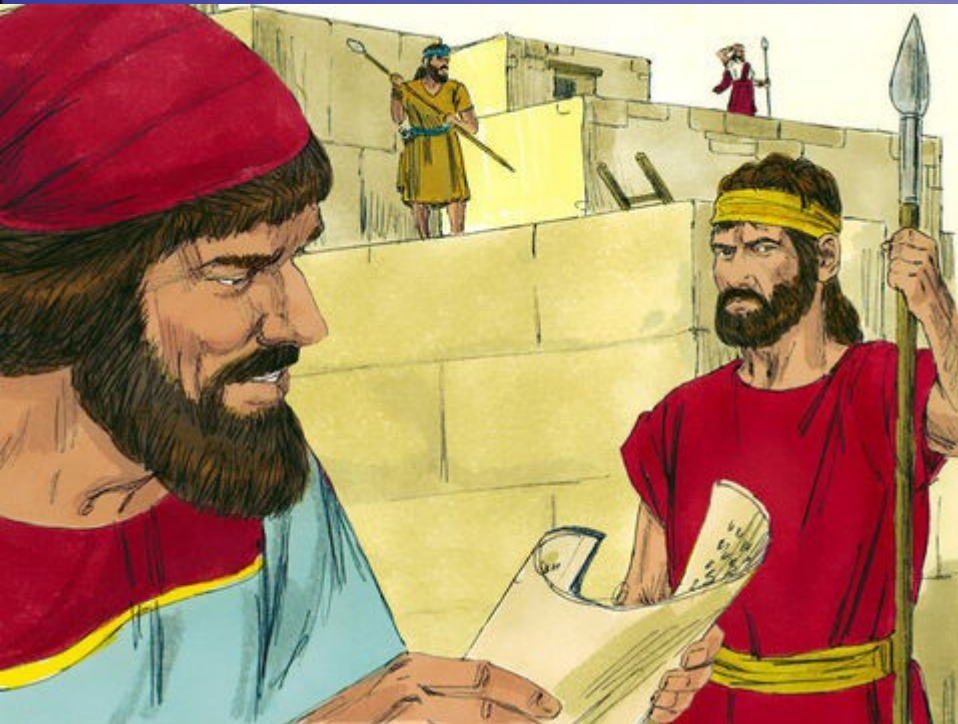
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- Nehemiah has built the wall. The End.
 - Where did we leave Nehemiah last week?
 - Please re-read Nehemiah 6:15-19
 - Please read Nehemiah 7:1
 - Please read Nehemiah 7:2a
(only up to the “because” or the “for” that starts to explain the choice being made)



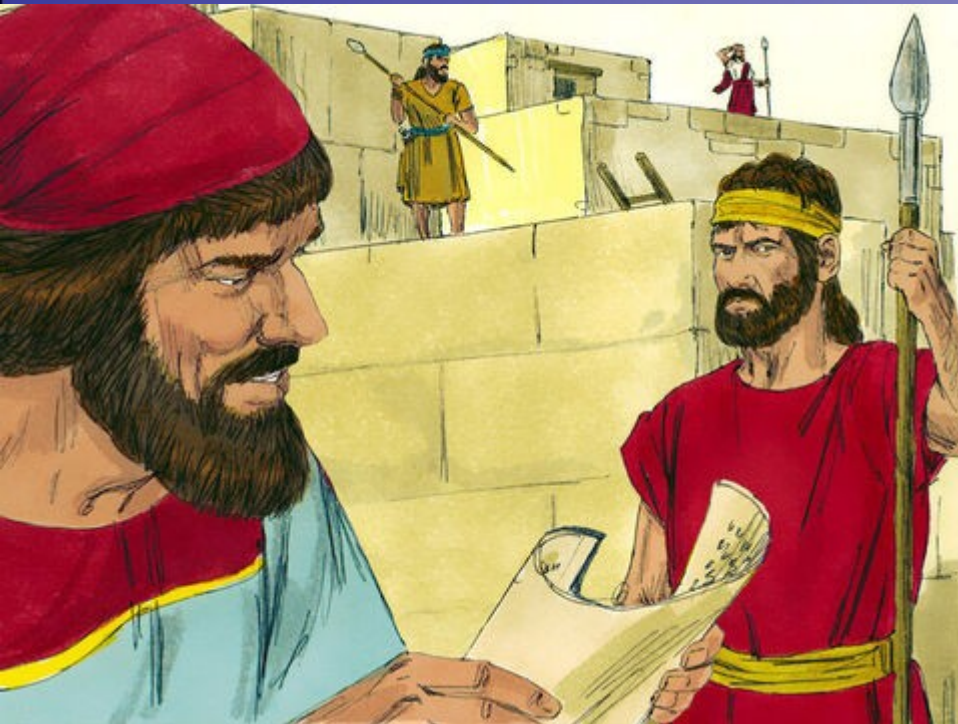
After the End (Redux)

- Nehemiah has built the wall. The End.
 - Where did we leave Nehemiah last week?
 - Please re-read Nehemiah 6:15-19
 - Please read Nehemiah 7:1
 - Please read Nehemiah 7:2a
 - So why would *you* choose Hanani and Hananiah to be the city administrator and commander of the citadel?
 - Because Hanani was a capable administrator?
 - Because Hananiah was a mighty soldier?
 - Because their names kinda matched?



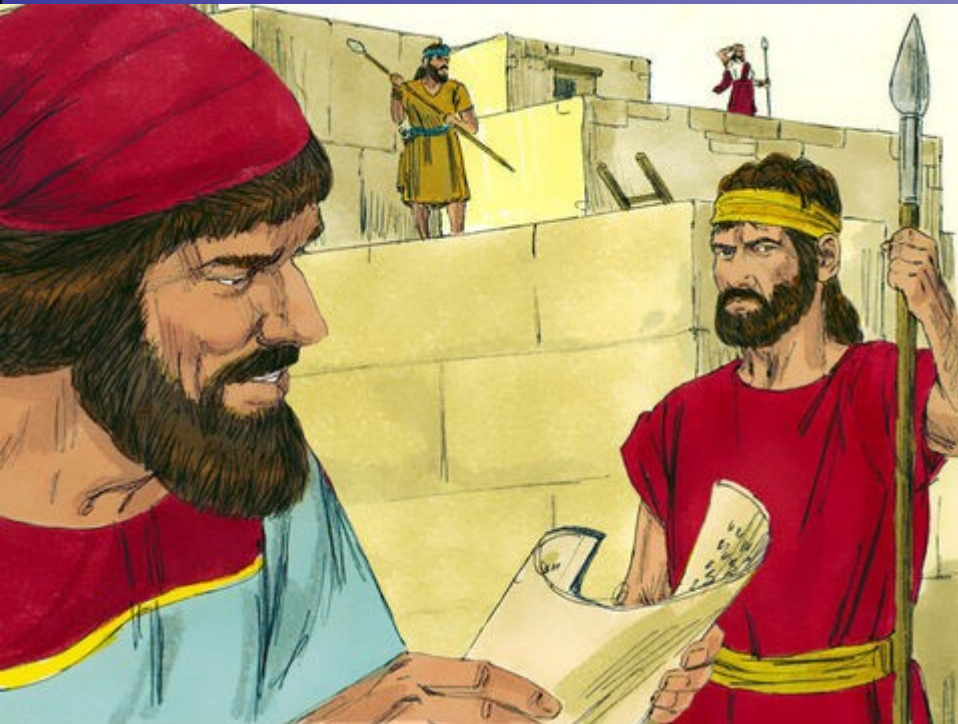
After the End (Redux)

- Nehemiah has built the wall. The End.
 - Where did we leave Nehemiah last week?
 - Please re-read Nehemiah 6:15-19
 - Please read Nehemiah 7:1
 - Please read Nehemiah 7:2 (*the whole verse*)
 - Why did *Nehemiah* choose Hanani and Hananiah to be the city administrator and commander of the citadel?
 - What's the *core* priority that Nehemiah is using in his choice here—competence or character?
 - What's the *core* priority that we look for in the people that *we* put *our* confidence in today?
 - If *you* were putting someone in place—hiring a new employee, calling a leader, etc.—and you could only prioritize *one* thing, would it be competence or would it be character?



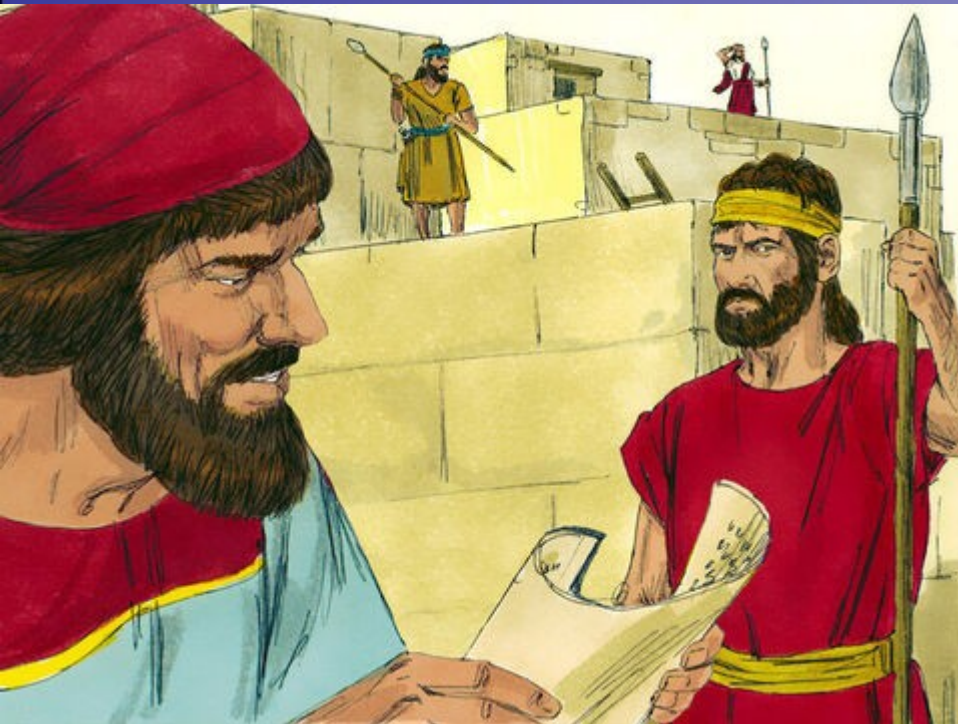
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 - Why did *Nehemiah* choose Hanani and Hananiah to be the city administrator and commander of the citadel?
 - What's the *core* priority that Nehemiah is using in his choice here—competence or character?
 - What's the core priority that we look for in the people that we put *our* confidence in today?
 - What does that suggest about Nehemiah—not only his own prioritization of character, but also his own trust in *how* and *why* things actually get done *successfully*?



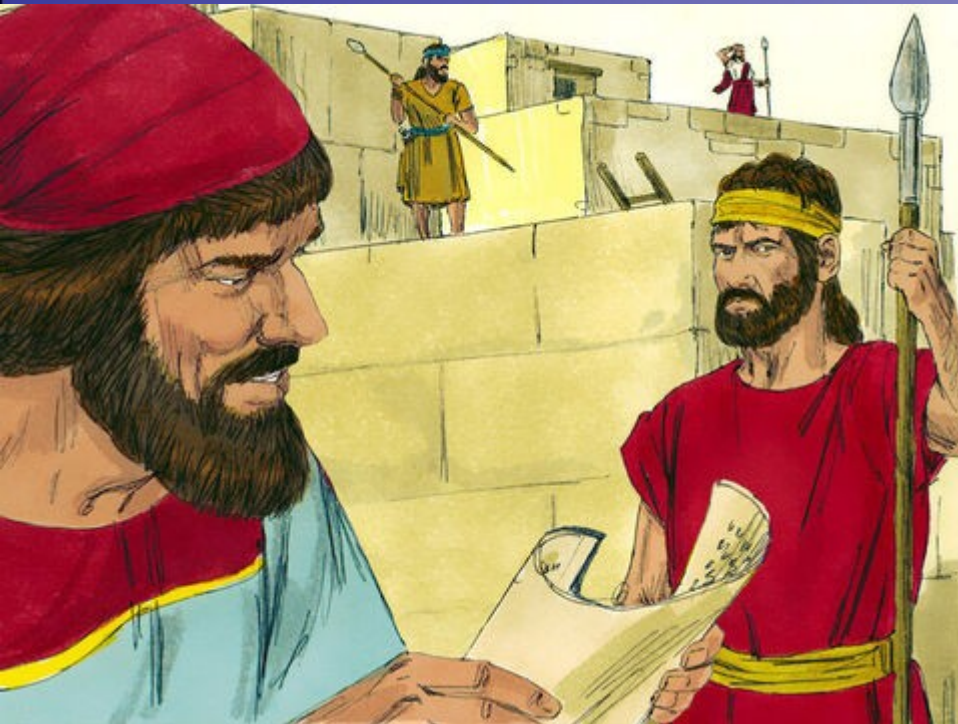
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 - Please re-read Nehemiah 6:15-19
 - Please read Nehemiah 7:1
 - Please read Nehemiah 7:2
 - Please read Nehemiah 7:3
 - What's the rationale for only opening the gates in the afternoons?
(closed and locked in the morning, and when the gatekeepers go in for the evening)



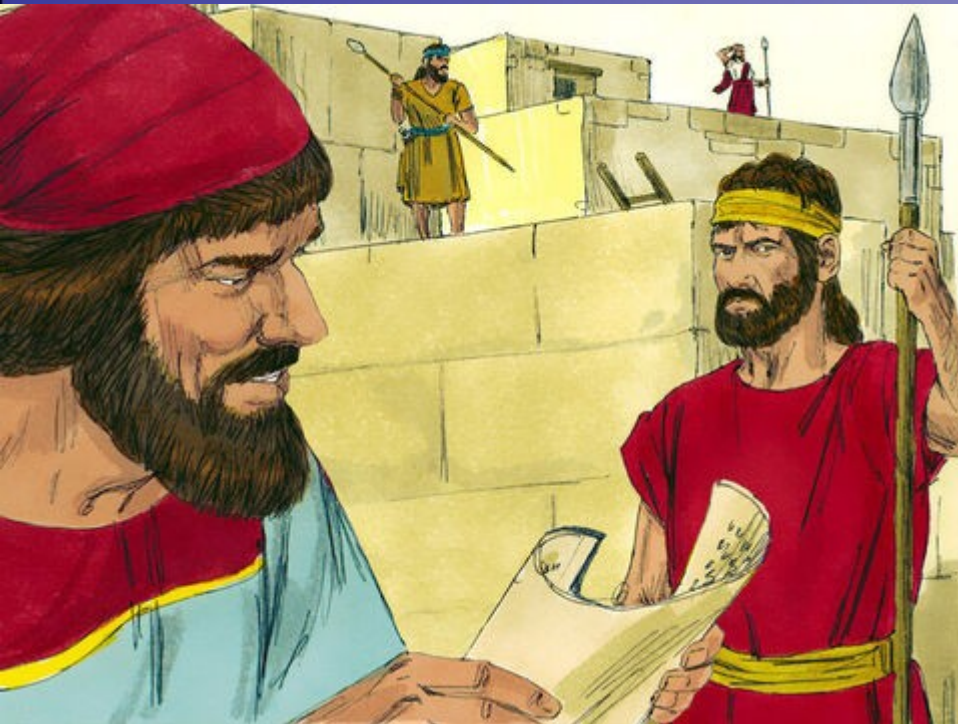
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 - Please read Nehemiah 7:1
 - Please read Nehemiah 7:2
 - Please read Nehemiah 7:3
 - What's the rationale for only opening the gates in the afternoons?
 - Is Nehemiah *worried* about trouble?
 - Is Nehemiah *preparing* against trouble?
 - Discuss the wisdom of *not* doing the former, but *totally* doing the latter



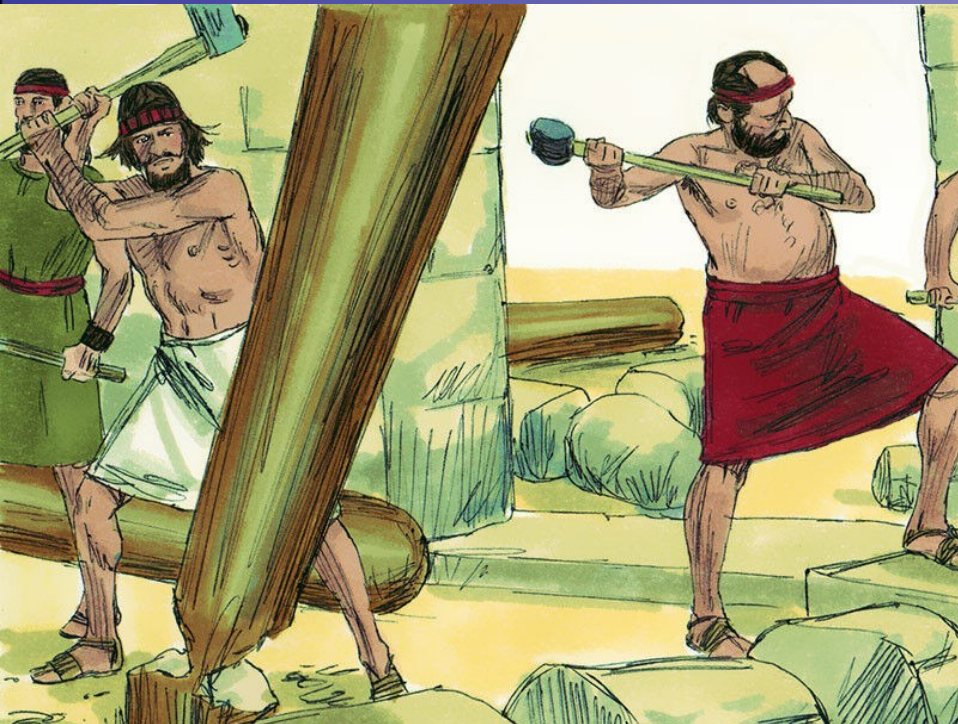
After the End (Redux)

- **Nehemiah has built the wall. The End.**
 - **Where did we leave Nehemiah last week?**
 - Please re-read Nehemiah 6:15-19
 - Please read Nehemiah 7:1
 - Please read Nehemiah 7:2
 - **Please read Nehemiah 7:3**
 - What's the rationale for only opening the gates in the afternoons?
 - **What's the rationale for “deputizing” common citizens to help guard the wall?**
 - **Hadn't they already done their “ownership bit” of the wall, just by building it?**



After the End (Redux)

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 - Please re-read Nehemiah 6:15-19
 - Please read Nehemiah 7:1
 - Please read Nehemiah 7:2
 - Please read Nehemiah 7:3
 - Please read Nehemiah 7:4
 - What's up with that?
 - Jews had been back in the area for a century
 - They'd rebuilt the Temple over a decade ago
 - In fact, wasn't Haggai's whole problem with the people of God that they had been rebuilding their own houses, but *not* God's house when they came back?



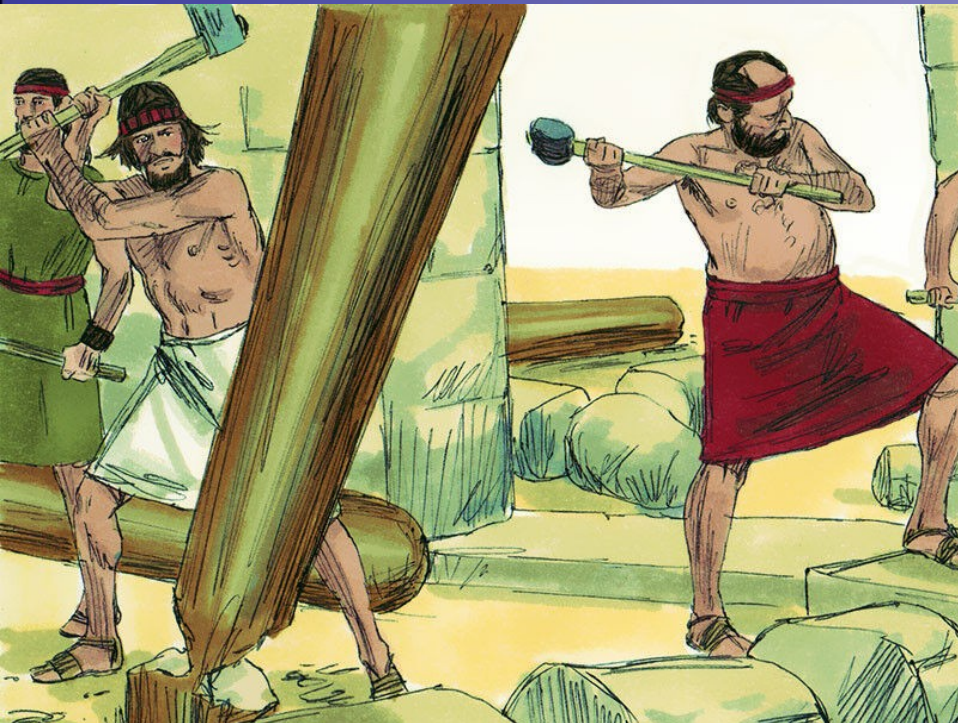
After the End (Redux)



Funky little teaching moment...

- Quick side-trip to Haggai...
 - Please read Haggai 1:1-4
 - Apparently, the people being condemned here *aren't* the general populace of Jerusalem
 - They're the *leaders*—the otherwise really pretty *decent* leaders like Zerubbabel and Joshua—and perhaps the people living in the suburbs and surrounding towns

(remind me again why Nehemiah was most interested in *his* leaders having integrity and strength of character)



After the End (Redux)



Funky little teaching moment...

- Quick side-trip to Haggai...
 - Please read Haggai 1:1-4
 - Apparently, the people being condemned here *aren't* the general populace of Jerusalem
 - The issue in Haggai wasn't that the people in the area should have just prioritized building a Temple more than putting a roof over their own heads
 - The issue was that they didn't prioritize Jerusalem at all—not the Temple, nor the wall, nor *any* of the interior civic structures that make the place work
 - And *beyond* that, their leaders weren't just “putting a roof over their heads”—they were building fancy, luxurious, paneled mansions in better “gentrified” neighborhoods and disregarding the City of God altogether
 - Do you see why Nehemiah had been so broken-hearted when he had heard about all of this in a far-off land?
 - How can we apply this within our *own* contexts today?

