

Rebuilding What Was Lost
The Book of Ezra-Nehemiah



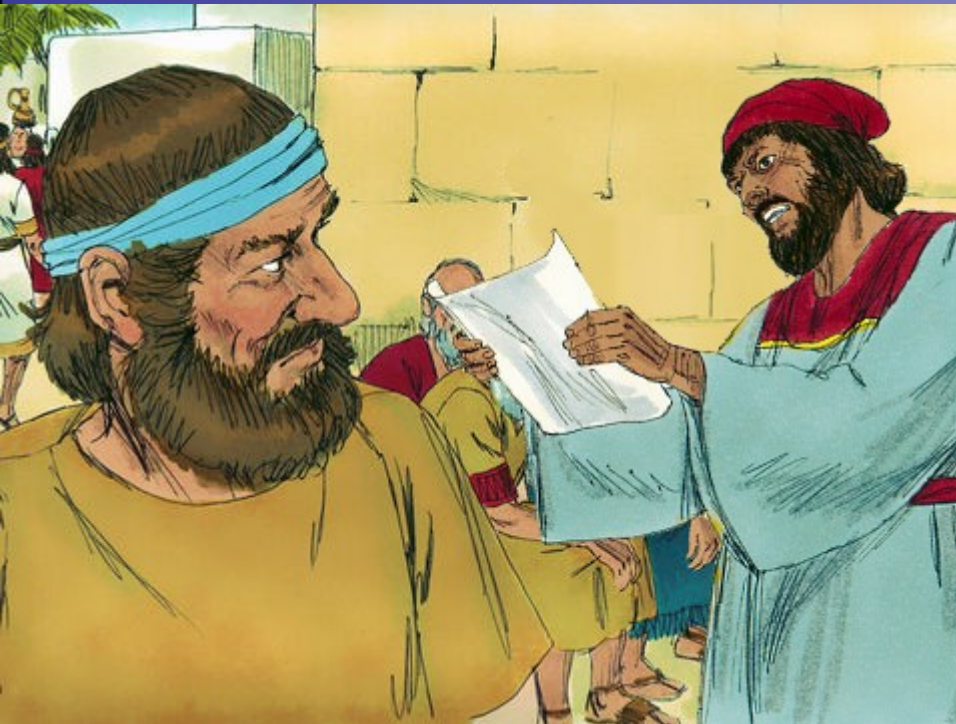
Rebuilding What Was Lost

- *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”*
- ***Making Things Right (Part 2)***



Making Things Right

- Jerusalem is a "bad neighborhood"
 - It's been largely ignored as an empty, urban decay
 - Please read Nehemiah 7:4
 - Jews had been back in the area for a century
 - They'd rebuilt the Temple over a decade ago
 - So why haven't very many people—especially a lot of the leaders—been living in Jerusalem itself?
 - So what did Nehemiah decide to do in the following verses (and how did he say that he came up with the idea)?

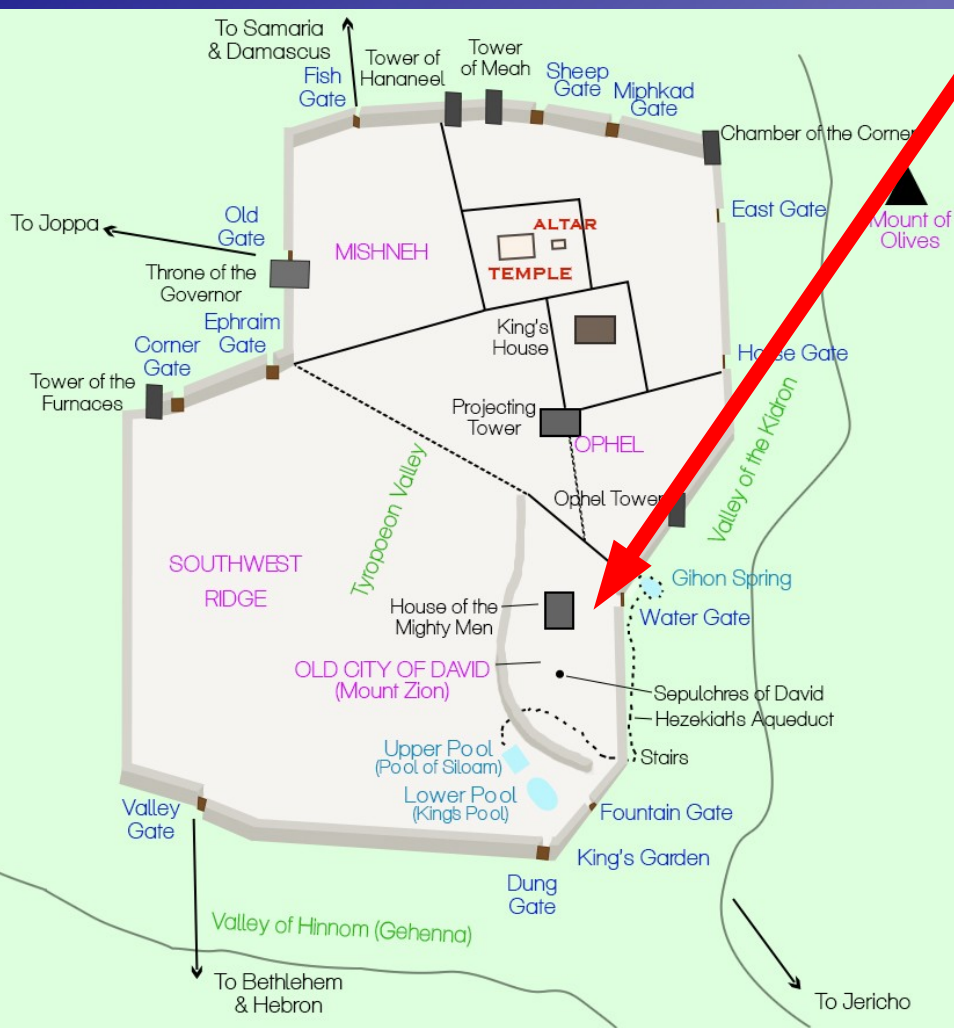


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That's near the center of town, right next to the newly rebuilt "Monuments" section of the city and the summit of Mount Zion

- Why choose *this* area to read the Bible from, instead of doing it in the Temple?



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 - **Please read Nehemiah 8:2-3**
 - That's six straight hours of non-stop reading from the Bible—why would Nehemiah have him do that?
 - This is first time in a century that the Word of God has been read aloud to the people—and the first time that most of these people have ever heard it
 - How powerful would that have been?
 - Would a six-hour public Scripture reading be as powerful for our own culture today? Why or why not?



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 - Please read Nehemiah 8:7-8
 - Again, why does Nehemiah keep emphasizing the importance of people being able to understand?
 - 1) Maybe *some* of the people *didn't* understand it —they needed to be taught and exhorted
 - As we discussed, most (if not all) of them had never *heard* the Word of God before, since reading it wasn't really part of the worship service or maybe Hebrew had become a *second* language to them while they were all in exile in Babylon or maybe they'd never been *taught* anything about God, even if they *had* somehow heard any of the Bible being—it was all just rote ritual to them



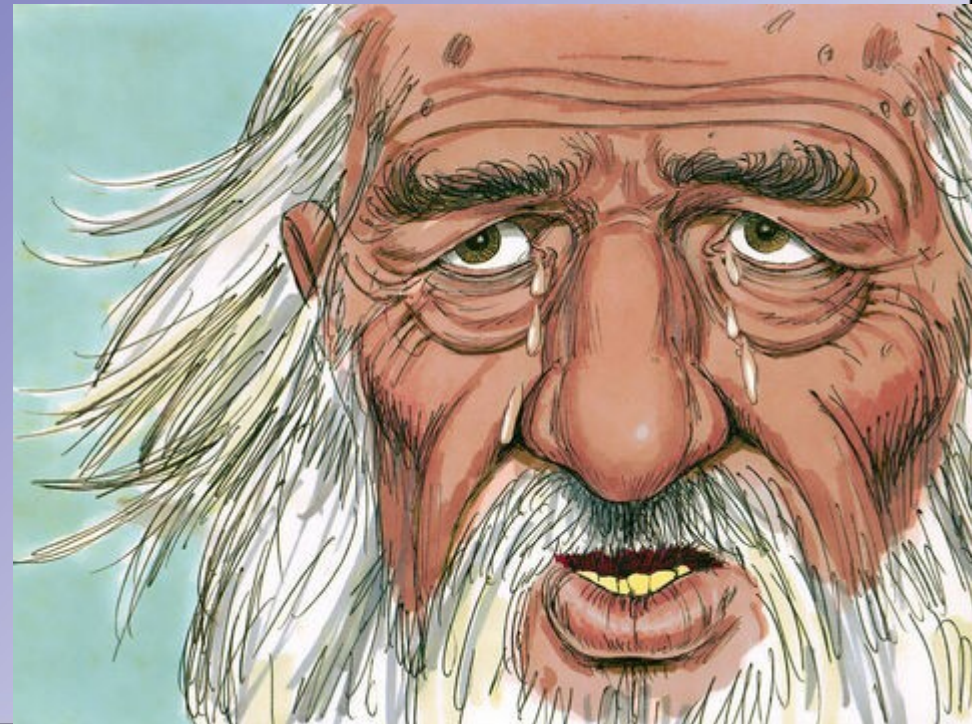
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 - Please read Nehemiah 8:7-8
 - Again, why does Nehemiah keep emphasizing the importance of people being able to understand?
 - 1) Maybe some of the people *didn't* understand!
 - 2) Their understanding was *important* to God
 - God doesn't want us to be *puppets*
 - He wants us to be *family*
 - So, thanks to the Levites, this *wasn't* just a six-hour *recitation*
 - this was a six-hour *Bible* study (kinda like Sojourners)



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 - Please read **Nehemiah 8:9-11**
 - Why would the people be *mournful*?
 - And yet, what's *Nehemiah's* perspective on it?
 - Why *is* that, do you think?



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 - **Please read Nehemiah 8:9-11**
 - **Three times in rapid succession, we're told to have joy in God's holy Word and joy in our worship because "the joy of YAHWEH is our strength"**

- I can't help but think of Scriptures like Psalm 118:23-24—
"YAHWEH has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day YAHWEH has made; let us *rejoice* and be *glad* in it."

- Why can seeing God in His wonder and holiness be hard for us to feel joyful about today?

- And how does that relate to what we were talking about the other week about being "still" and knowing that He is truly God?



Making Things Right



Funky little teaching moment...

- Note that the Levites also told the people to “Be still”
 - When the Psalmist led the people in singing, “Be still and know that I am God” in Psalm 46:10, the word used there was “רָפָה”
 (“*rāpā*” meaning “go slack”)
 - What's God trying to tell people there?
 - Stressing is the *opposite* of faithing—so why is unclenching and letting God be God so hard for us to *actually do* today?



Making Things Right



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 (“*rāpâ*” meaning “go slack”)
 - When the Levites told the people to “Be still, for this is a sacred day” the word they used was “חָשָׂה”
 (“*ḥāšâ*” meaning “hush”—kinda onomatopoeic)
 (a sweet, “shhh... you can stop crying now”)
 - What was God trying to tell His people there?
 - Why was that so hard for the people in Nehemiah 8?
 - How can what *they* were struggling with still mess up our *own* “still-being” before God today?



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- For comparison, when Jesus said, “Be still!” to the storm, it's yet another completely different word—'cuz He's speaking Greek so He says, “Peace, be still”
 (“*Σιῶπα, πεφίμωσο!*”)
 (“*Siōpa, pephimōso!*”—a terse command meaning “Shut up! Muzzle it!”)
- What's Jesus trying to show people at that point in the Gospels?
- Can even *that* still be hard for us too?



Making Things Right



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- Note that the Levites also told the people to “Be still”
- So you see any common threads that might thematically link all three “Be still” commands...?

