

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*
- *The Feast of Tabernacles (Part 1)*



The Feast of Tabernacles

- Ezra has been leading a "Bible study"
 - How's it already had a profound effect on people?
 - Please read Nehemiah 8:12
 - And that had been the whole point of the day's worship service / Bible study, hadn't it?
 - Do you understand the Word that has been made known to you?
 - If so, then how should that change you today?



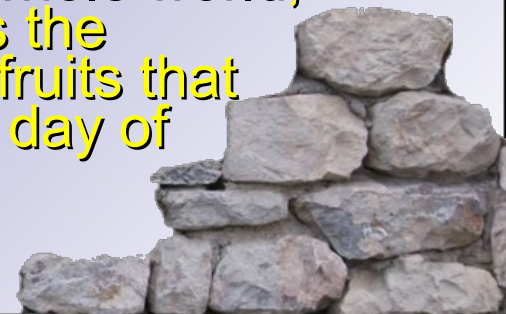
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 - How was the second day slightly different here?
 - Why would Ezra and Nehemiah do it this way?



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 - Please read Nehemiah 8:13
 - Please read Nehemiah 8:14-15
 - What on earth is this talking about?
 - This is *Sukkot*—the Feast of Tabernacles
 - Please read Leviticus 23:33-36, 40-43
 - Please summarize the point(s) of the feast
 - Back in the days of the Temple, the priests would draw water from the Pool of Siloam and pour it into a silver basin to symbolize God cleansing His people and the people would carry torches all around the Temple and light golden menorahs to remind them of God's holy light that led them in the wilderness —and that God's coming Messiah would be a light to the whole world, starting in Jerusalem as the "firstfruits" (just like the fruits that they picked on that first day of the feast)



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 - Jesus was in Jerusalem for the end of the feast
 - Please read John 7:37-38
 - Does the *context* help us understand this?
 - How so?



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 - Jesus was in Jerusalem for the end of the feast
 - Please read John 7:37-38
 - Please read John 8:2, 12
 - On the seventh and last day of the feast, Jesus declared *Himself* to be the *perfectly* thirst-quenching drink that everyone had been looking for—and then early in the morning, while people were still carrying torches to remind them of the Messiah bringing light to the world, Jesus declared *Himself* to be the light of the world
 - How does this context affect how you hear (okay, read) these words from Jesus?

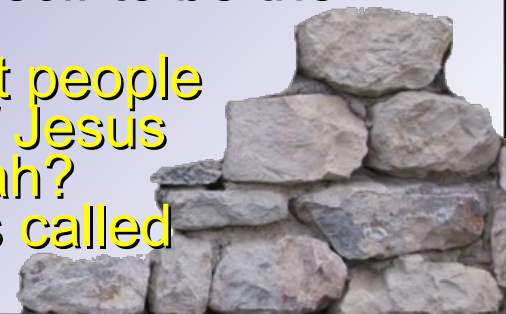


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- Is it any wonder that people started wondering if Jesus might be the Messiah?
- Or that their leaders called Him a blasphemer?



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 - This is *Sukkot*—the Feast of Tabernacles
 - Jesus was in Jerusalem for the end of the feast
 - So why did God institute this feast for His people to so tangibly remember all of these things?
 - So how crucial is it that Ezra and Nehemiah re-read the Word of God and thus re-introduced the Feast of Tabernacles here?
 - How important is it for *us* to really dig in and study the Word of God so that *we* can understand things more fully *ourselves* today?



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 - Please read Nehemiah 8:16-18
 - So this is no longer just a daily Bible study, right?
 - This is *now* the people reading the Word of God as part of celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles to remind themselves of God's gracious provision
 - And on the *eighth* day, they were supposed to *sacrifice*—a sin offering
 - So was there any corporate sin that they should probably make it a point to make a sacrifice for?



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 - Please read Nehemiah 9:1-3
 - And everything that comes next is specifically their sacrificial response on the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles—remembering the tents of the Exodus (and, by extension, what a true blessing it is that they were given a *home*—and that they have now finally *returned* to that home —and that they'd now been given *houses* instead of tents, and thus a *future* there instead of in exile)



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 - And *everything that comes next* is specifically their sacrificial response on the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles—remembering the tents of the Exodus
 - But that's a quarter of the day—3 to 4 hours—spent standing in place while Ezra read the Bible to you and then *another* 3 to 4 hours spent in a worship service where you focus on all of the stuff you've ever done that was wrong
 - Was this a *fun* worship service?
 - Was it *supposed* to be?
 - What is the *point* of having a worship service like this, rather than just killing a bull?



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 - Please read Nehemiah 9:4-5
 - But I thought that they were confessing their sins for hours in this "not fun" service—how does this work?
 - How can our praises of God be intermingled with our confessions?
 - And how does *that* relate to what we were talking about last week about balancing God's intense take on sin with God's intense take on grace?



The Feast of Tabernacles



Funky little teaching moment...

- There's an argument that we do confession wrong
 - Yes, contrition requires sobriety, and a recognition of wrongdoing should create healthy feelings of guilt—but for the people of God, that's not all that's going on in a time of confession
 - It's a time to remember all that God has done for us and all that we've done to *Him... and to one another*
 - So it's a time to remember His goodness and our wrongness and to genuinely say, "I'm sorry..."
 - And then to *accept* His *forgiveness* repent (turn around), and *commit* to not *doing* that wrongness any more—and then to move *past* it all to something more God-honoring
 - Thus, to *focus* on teeth-gnashing and on feeling guilty is to put the emphasis more on *our sin* than on *His grace*, and that arguably misses the point



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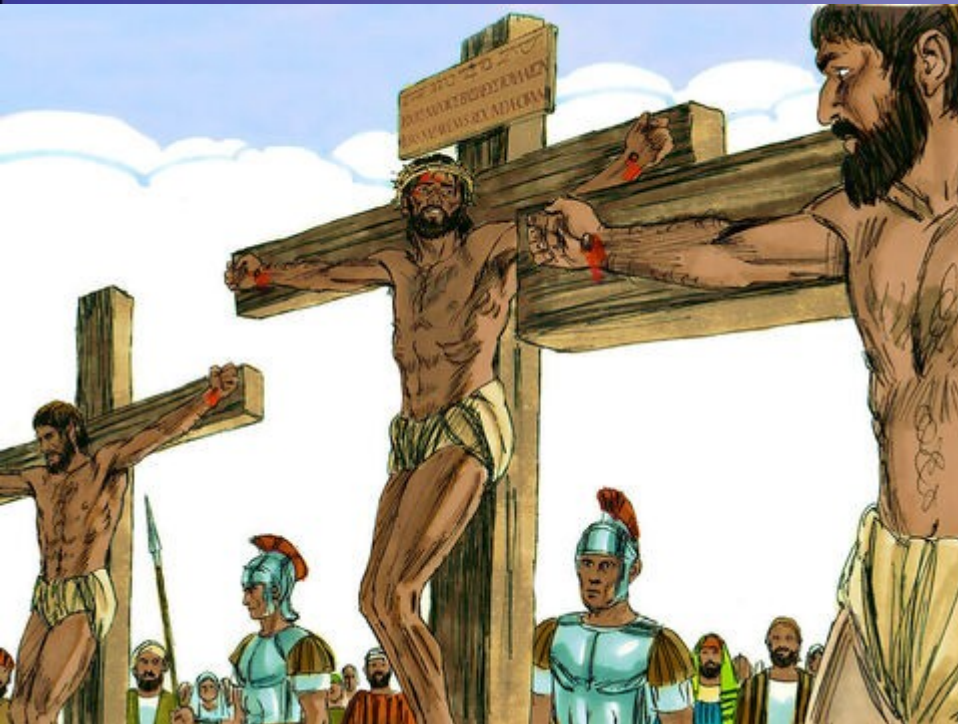


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- There's an argument that we do confession wrong
 - Yes, contrition requires sobriety, and a recognition of wrongdoing should create healthy feelings of guilt—but for the people of God, that's not all that's going on in a time of confession
 - Obviously, you can go too far the other way and be flippantly casual about what Jesus did to forgive us—but even then, we call it “Good Friday” and praise God for His costly exercise of His freely-given grace

- And even though we're told to take up our own crosses daily, it's within a context of the denial of our sinful natures that bring about guilt, not of the continuance of feelings of guilt from actions of our sinful natures
- In short:

To be able to be forgiven for sin is an amazing blessing that is worth praising God about



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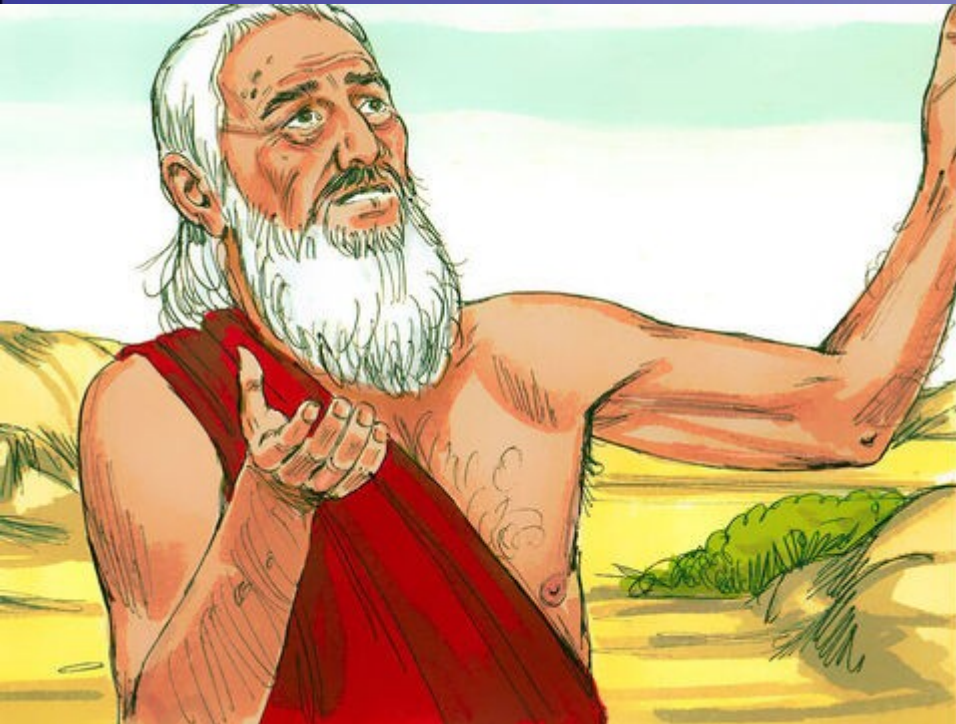
- There's an argument that we do confession wrong
- So as part of their confession time, the people spent 3-4 hours reading the Bible, then 3-4 hours focusing on their sin, and then the Levites preached about what God had done for them over the years
 - How is this all "confession" time?

(NOTE: our word "confession" comes from the Latin "confessare," a form of "confiteri"—a compound word using "con-" meaning "together" and "fateri" meaning "to admit" or "to speak"—so "confession" means "to speak something together")



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 - What do we learn about God (and us) from this story?



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 - What do we learn about God (and us) from this story?
 - How has the narrative shifted here?



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 - Please read Nehemiah 9:19-25
 - What do we learn about God (and us) from this story?
 - How has the narrative shifted *again* here, and why is it significant?



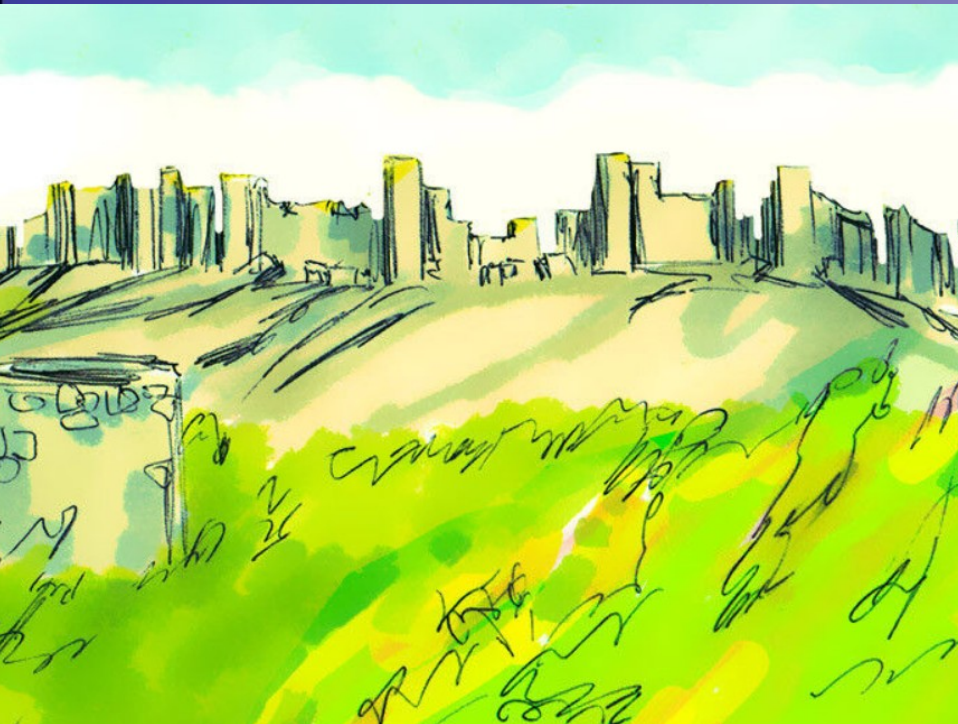
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 - Please read Nehemiah 9:16-18
 - Please read Nehemiah 9:19-25
 - Please read Nehemiah 9:25-30
 - What do we learn about God (and us) from this story?
 - How does the narrative keep shifting over and over, and why is it significant?
 - How is the confession of God's goodness interwoven with the confession of His own people's sinfulness—and to what purpose?



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 - Please read Nehemiah 9:25-30
 - What do we learn about God (and us) from this story?
 - How does the narrative keep shifting over and over, and why is it significant?
 - And all of this brought them up to where they were before Ezra and Nehemiah stepped into the cultural narrative...



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 - But how do the Levites sum up the flow of the narrative in Nehemiah 9:31-33?

