

**TEMPLE – Rebuild and Renew**

Review of Ezra

- 539 BC: Cyrus of Persia declared the Jews could go back and rebuild the Temple
- 538 BC: The Samaritans came to Judah and offered to help them rebuild because they worshiped Yahweh too. The Jews said no because they worship Yahweh *with* other gods, not Him alone. The people stopped rebuilding the Temple.
- 520 BC: Haggai 1: preached to the people, condemning them for living in paneled houses while the Temple lay in ruins.
- 518 BC: Zechariah 7-14: they were still rebuilding...
- 516 BC: They finished rebuilding the Temple
- 483 BC – 474 BC: Esther, during the reign of Xerxes, 3<sup>rd</sup> year to 12<sup>th</sup> year
- 458 BC: Ezra 7-10, 7<sup>th</sup> year of Artaxerxes, Ezra returned to re-institute Mosaic Law in Israel.

**Pattern of Ezra and Nehemiah**

Ezra 1-6: Rebuilding the Temple	Nehemiah 1-7: Rebuilding the City Walls
Ezra 7-10: Rebuilding Israel's spiritual life	Nehemiah 8-13: Rebuilding Israel's spiritual life

NEHEMIAH

**Timeframe:**

- 445 BC: Nehemiah's story picks up 13 years after Ezra returned to Israel to reinstate the Mosaic law, the 20<sup>th</sup> year of Artaxerxes.
- The building of the walls in 52 days.
- Then Nehemiah rules as governor of Judah for 12 years.
- 433 BC: Nehemiah returns to Persia, back to his old job as the cupbearer for the king.
- 430 BC: Malachi preached repentance, prophesied about the Messianic kingdom and Day of Yahweh.
- "After some time" Nehemiah came back to Jerusalem and purified the people again.

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### **Nehemiah's Prayer: 1:1-11**

- Called on the God of covenant and steadfast love
- Confessed the sins of Israel
- Reminded God of His promise to bring them back after the exile
- Humbly asked God to hear his prayer as "your servant" who delights to fear Your Name

### **Nehemiah's Request: 2:1-16**

Nehemiah - like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and Esther – was a high official in the palace of a pagan king while in exile and yet remained faithful to God.

### **God's Grace: Nehemiah 2:8**

"And the king granted me what I asked, for the gracious hand of my God was upon me."

### **Rebuilding the Walls: 2:17-4:6**

Many people worked together to build. Nehemiah 3 (not part of our readings) gives us details of who rebuilt each section of the wall and each gate.

### **Opposition: 4:7-23**

*"Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes... Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there. Our God will fight for us!" (4:14,20).*

### **Nehemiah's Servant Leadership: 5:1-19**

*"Instead, I devoted myself to the work on this wall." (5:16)*

### **Nehemiah's Dedication to God and Faith in God's Provision: 6:1-19**

*"I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?" (6:3).*

### **Nehemiah 8-12: Rebuilding Israel's Spiritual Life**

#### **Reading the Law: 8:1-18**


Now that the wall was finished, they decided to rededicate the people to the covenant. Ezra and the Levites stood on special platforms and read and explained the law to the people (8:1-8). The people wept when they heard it, because they had failed at keeping the law. Ezra and

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Nehemiah told them not weep because this was a holy day for celebration. Even though they had failed in keeping the law time and time again, God wanted to renew His covenant with them. He still loved them. He still wanted a relationship with them. Nehemiah said, *“Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength”* (8:10).

### **Confession and Recommitment: 9:1-12:47**

A recounting of the history of the Israelites and their covenant relationship with God. The people confessed their sin and recommitted to the covenant, writing a binding agreement and putting their seals on it (9:38). They sang thanksgiving to God from the top of the wall they had built – two large choirs spread out over the wall (12:31 – not one of our readings).

 God started over again, with a remnant, reestablishing His covenant with a new generation of His people. Would they finally be the ones to keep the covenant as they promised?

### **Nehemiah Returns: Nehemiah 13**

Nehemiah had settled back into his role as the cupbearer to the king in Persia, as he had promised. But “some time later” he heard that the people in Judah had gone back to their old ways! When Nehemiah heard all of this, he went back to Jerusalem.

### **MALACHI (“my messenger”)**

Malachi contains a series of six disputes, arguments God had with Israel, about:

- His love (1:2–5)
- His honor and fearing Him (1:6–2:9)
- Israel’s faithlessness (2:10–16)
- His justice (2:17–3:5)
- Repentance (3:6–12)
- Speaking against Him (3:13–4:3)

#### **DISPUTE #1: YAHWEH’S LOVE (1:2–5)**

- Yahweh has loved them by punishing their enemies (Esau/Edom)
- Their response should be to praise YHWH

#### **DISPUTE #2: GOD’S HONOR AND FEARING HIM: OFFERING UNACCEPTABLE SACRIFICES (1:6–2:9)**

- The Israelites did not love Yahweh, revealed by offering blemished animals they would not even offer to a governor. (Leviticus 22:17–25)
- This dishonors Yahweh’s name (reputation) among the nations.
- It would be better to close the Temple than do this.
- If the priests did not change their ways, Yahweh would curse them.

*“My name will be great among the nations, from where the sun rises to where it sets”* (1:11).

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### DISPUTE #3: ISRAEL'S FAITHLESSNESS: INTERMARRIAGE AND DIVORCE (2:10–16)

- Intermarriage with pagans was akin to idolatry. It wasn't about race or nationality or ethnicity. Foreigners were allowed to marry into the covenant if they converted. In these cases, they married foreigners and took on their religions.
- God did not accept their offerings because they divorced the wives of their youth, breaking the covenant of marriage.
- Those who have the Spirit will not divorce a godly wife/husband.

### DISPUTE #4: GOD'S JUSTICE: WEARYING YAHWEH WITH WORDS (2:17–3:5)

- They said evil things were good, but then asked why God didn't give them justice.
- Yahweh (whom they said they sought) would come suddenly to His temple as a refining fire and like fullers' soap—who could endure it?
- He would purify and refine the priests so the offerings of Jerusalem would be pleasing to Him.
- Then there would be justice and judgment of the wicked.

### DISPUTE #5: REPENTANCE: RETURNING TO YAHWEH (3:6–12)

- If you want Yahweh to give you justice, you must return to Him and stop your own injustice.
- They robbed God in their tithes and offerings.
- If you offer your life to Yahweh, He will bless it beyond comprehension.

### DISPUTE #6: SPEAKING HARSHLY ABOUT YAHWEH (3:13–4:3)

- The people had been saying that serving Yahweh was useless because the arrogant and wicked prospered while those who considered themselves righteous did not.
- Yahweh's answered, "That is how the world is, for now." At the day of Yahweh, He would indeed divide the righteous from the wicked. The question is, who is really righteous? (not those who are Jews by birth, but those who fear/serve Yahweh—3:16–18)
- There were some who feared the Lord in Israel. Not everyone was wicked. A book of remembrance of those who feared and honored His name was written before the Lord, and God said they would be His. On that day He will prepare His own possession and have compassion for them just as a man has compassion for his own son who serves him. Those who honor and fear the Lord will be saved in the judgment at the last day.

### LOOKING AHEAD...

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction."