

March 5, 2017 Rebuilding Walls & Lives

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NEHEMIAH 8:1-12

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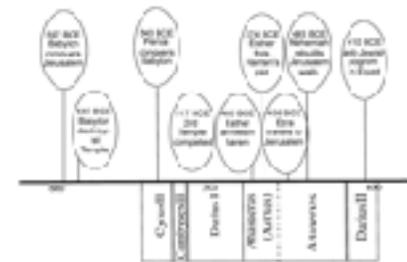
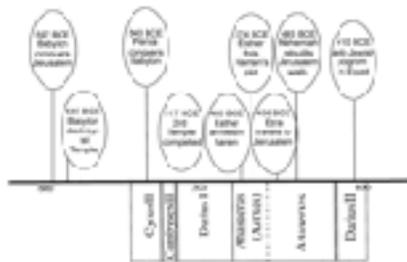
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Nehemiah, a civic leader and political force, lives in the world of Ezra. He is a Jew living under Persian rule, having established himself as an important official in the Persian imperial regime with access to the emperor. He is a competent, trusted servant of the empire, but he is a Jew whose heart and passion continue to be rooted in Jerusalem. He is a descendant of those deported from Jerusalem by the Babylonians; his family has well survived the transition from Babylonian to Persian hegemony (*dominance*), all the while with an abiding Jewish passion (W. Brueggemann, 2008).

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Nehemiah started out as a government worker in the employ of a foreign king. Then he became—and this is the work he tells us of in these memoirs—a building contractor, called in to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. His coworker Ezra was a scholar and teacher, working with the Scriptures. Nehemiah worked with stones and mortar. The stories of the two men are interwoven in a seamless fabric of vocational holiness. Neither job was more or less important or holy than the other. Nehemiah needed Ezra; Ezra needed Nehemiah. God's people needed the work of both of them. We still do (E. Peterson, 2002).

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Next week: Jesus - The Birth of the King!

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THE STORY

FINDING YOUR STORY IN GOD'S STORY

Ezra was devoted to studying God's Word.

He lived according to the Scripture.

Nehemiah was a man of prayer.

He worked as hard as he prayed.

The people rebuilt their relationship with God.

Reading the Bible with those who could interpret...

...helped everyone understand God's meaning.

Malachi was the last prophet of the Old Testament.

He challenged people to give their best to God.

Leftovers were not worthy gifts for the LORD.

People heard God's Word and were moved to act.

God's Word—prayer—action and—first-fruit gifts.

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