

Hope Revived ~ After the Fall

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Date: 30 April 2023

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[0 : 00] If you're able, please stand as I read from God's Word, Haggai the prophet. In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest.

Thus says the Lord of hosts, these people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord. Then the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet.

Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies in ruin? Now, therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, consider your ways.

You have sown much and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough. You drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm.

And he who earns wages does not so put them into a bag with holes. Thus says the Lord of hosts, consider your ways. Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the Lord.

[1 : 33] You looked for much and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, it blew away. Why declares the Lord of hosts?

Because of my house that lies in ruins. While each of you busies himself with his own house. Therefore, the heavens above you shall have withheld their due.

And the earth has withheld its produce. And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills. On the grain, the new wine, the oil. On what has and what the ground brings forth.

On man and beast and on all their labors. Then Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel. And Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest.

With all the remnant of the people. Obeyed the voice of the Lord their God. And the words of Haggai the prophet. As the Lord their God had sent them.

[2 : 39] And the people feared the Lord. Then Haggai, the messenger of the Lord. Spoke to the people with the Lord's message. I am with you, declares the Lord. And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel.

The son of Shealtiel. Governor of Judah. And the spirit of Joshua. The son of Jehozadak. The high priest. And the spirit of all the remnant of the people.

And they came and worked on the house of the Lord of hosts. Their God. On the 24th day of the month. In the 6th month. In the 2nd year of Darius the king. In the 7th month.

On the 21st day of the month. The word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet. Speak now to Zerubbabel. The son of Shealtiel. Governor of Judah.

And to Joshua. The son of Jehozadak. The high priest. And to all the remnant of the people. And say. Who is left among you. Who saw this house.

[3 : 40] In its former glory. How do you see it now. Is it as nothing in your eyes. Yet now be strong.

O Zerubbabel. Declares the Lord. Be strong. O Joshua. Son of Jehozadak. The high priest. Be strong. All you people of the land. Declares the Lord.

Work. Work. For I am with you. Declares the Lord of hosts. According to the covenant. That I made with you. When you came out of Egypt. My spirit remains in your midst.

Fear not. For thus says the Lord of hosts. Yet once more. In a little while. I will shake the heavens. And the earth.

And the sea. And the dry land. And I will shake all nations. So that the treasures of all nations. Shall come in. And I will fill this house with glory. Says the Lord of hosts.

[4 : 37] The silver is mine. The gold is mine. Declares the Lord of hosts. The latter glory of this house. Shall be greater. Than the former. Says the Lord of hosts.

And in this place. I will give peace. Declares the Lord of hosts. So reads the word. Let us pray. Father guide us today. As we finish this story. As we come to the close. Of the history of the Old Testament.

Help us to see again its flow. Help us to see where it has gone. And how now it prepares us. For the greatest moment in history.

When you yourself. Send your son. To step into. This world. And fulfill all your promises.

[5 : 36] And to redempt. To remedy all of what we have ruined. In our sin. Show us your glory. We pray in Christ's name.

Amen. Please be seated. Amen. You've all heard of Murphy's Law, right?

If anything can go wrong. It will go wrong. Right? There's other laws related to Murphy's Law.

There's the law of gravity.

any tool, nut, bolt, screw, when dropped, will roll to the least accessible place in the universe.

Law of probability. The probability of being watched is directly proportional to the stupidity of your act. The law of random numbers.

[6 : 44] If you dial the wrong number, you never get a busy signal, someone always answers. Law of variation. If you change lines in the store or in traffic, the one you were in will always move, the one you were in will always move faster than the one you moved to, right?

I mean, that's just fact. That's just a law. The law of result. If you try to prove to someone that a machine won't work, it will.

If you take your car to the mechanic and say it's got a knock and you take it and it won't knock, right? Or you say it won't start and it'll start every time he turns the key. I just did that with a truck not really strong.

We tried it about 50 times, Mr. Story. Know what you're talking about. Here's the coffee law. As soon as you sit down to a cup of hot coffee, your boss will ask you to do something which will last until the coffee is cold.

Right? The law of surfaces. Oh, I like this one. The law of lockers. If there are only two people in a locker room, they will have adjacent lockers.

[8 : 06] All right? Really? The law of physical surfaces. Now, maybe you know this one. The chances of an open-faced jelly sandwich landing face down on a floor are directly correlated to the newness and cost of the carpet or rug.

There's the law of the airplane. As soon as a steward serves coffee, the plane will experience turbulence.

There's the law of mothers. No child throws up in a bathroom. There's the law of expectation. Nothing is ever so bad. That it can't get worse. Now, I thought about some laws for Christians, some Murphy laws for Christians.

Never pray for patience because you'll just lose yours. Rejoice when you experience various trials.

[9 : 14] Or just cry. I couldn't think of a good one. You know how the Scripture says the Lord will never tempt you beyond what you're able? There's got to be one for that one, right?

Here's some I thought of, though. Because we're thinking of Israel coming back to the promised land and they're a bit of a Murphy Law kind of people. Okay? It's going to go wrong.

It's going to go wrong. If it can go wrong, it'll go wrong. So, but we might think of these things ourselves. If I step up for the Lord, I'll just mess it up.

If I speak for Jesus, I'll just say the wrong thing. If I give more to God, then I'll lose more.

If I join the church, I'll just be disappointed or hurt or betrayed or burned because I've done it before.

[10 : 19] So, what about Israel? They're returning to the land. What do you think their expectations are? Right? What shape is Jerusalem in?

When they left it, they were exiled and Babylon had destroyed Jerusalem and leveled the temple. So, what are they coming back to? Ruins. Rubble. Who's returning? Is it like the great crowd that left Egypt?

The 600,000 men plus women and children? Who's returning? Who's returning? Well, it's actually a small remnant. They're down to two tribes plus the Levites.

They're just Judah and Benjamin and the Levites. A few priests. There's no king and no kingdom.

[11 : 18] They've lost all of that. But they are coming back to the land. And the mission of Ezra and Nehemiah, there will be three parts to this return.

Zerubbabel will come back and build the temple. Ezra will come back and teach the word. Nehemiah will come back and build the walls of Jerusalem. And by force, restore order. I like Nehemiah. I don't think I'd be a friend of his because he pulls your hair out and your beard. He makes you do what's right. He's a governor for God. He's a governor for God. So, Ezra and Nehemiah. We're looking at today, Ezra and Nehemiah. After the fall. Right? After the big fall and the destruction. After the fall, hope is revived. That's what we're going to look at today. The hope revived. And how God revives that hope. God does not give up on his people. [12 : 20] And as Ezra says in one of his prayers, he says, for a brief moment, God is reviving us by bringing us back to the land.

There's a spark of hope. So, where have we been? How do we get here? Where have we been? We've been in Genesis. What do we see in Genesis? This is your time to respond. What do we see in Genesis? Promises. Exodus. What do we see? Redemption. Redemption. Redemption. As he redeems them from slavery. In Numbers, what do we see as they go toward the promised land?

Rebellion. Rebellion in the wilderness. Finally, Joshua comes along 40 years later and what do we see? Promise kept. Promise kept. God takes him to the promised land and it's clear that's the message of Joshua.

Not that the people conquered the land, but that God fulfilled his promise and not one word fell to the ground. He's a promise keeper for promise breakers.

[13 : 25] Okay, then 400 years after Joshua comes, David, and what does David do? Faithfulness, and he unites a kingdom. So, during the time of David and Solomon, Israel is at their apex.

They're at their glory years, the golden years. They have an established kingdom. They are in the land and Gentiles with Solomon start to come to see the wisdom of Solomon from the Lord God. So, the original three promises back in Genesis of God to Abraham, I'll make you a great nation. In David, they're a great nation. They're a great kingdom. I will give you an everlasting land.

They've got the land and David has secured it on every edge. There is peace on every side. And in your seed, in your descendant, I will bless all the families of the earth.

And we see in Solomon the nations starting to come. As Kings talks about, the whole world began to come to hear the wisdom of Solomon.

[14 : 31] Solomon. He's part of the glory and he's also part of the grief. So, with Solomon, the end of his life, what do we see with Solomon?

Apostasy. He doesn't just fail like David. David failed big, big time. Horrible sin. But he repented. He repented genuinely.

And he never sought other gods. So, he continued to be the model and the standard of faithfulness. not because he kept the law perfectly, but because he loved the Lord and he depended on grace alone, through faith alone, in a redeemer alone.

Salvation in the Old Testament is the same as the New Testament. It's not by keeping that law, but it's by mercy of God, of those who believe.

in God. Solomon, on the other hand, did what? He fell away and what happened to him? There's no record of a return, no record of repentance.

[15 : 49] He was led astray, not like David to sin in some horrible contained manner. I don't know. But he just had a practice of following the gods of his wives, of his foreign wives and he's straight.

And that began the breakdown of the kingdom. So we go from Solomon to the ten tribes being separated and then exiled to Assyria, never to be heard from again.

And then, finally, the stage of wrath, the fall in the exile, fall of Jerusalem, and the exile to Babylon. But there, we have a promise of after the 70-year exile, they will return and that's where we are now.

They're returning from that 70-year exile. It's kind of like a second exodus. Right? They're slaves in another land and now, God is bringing them back.

Not with the big flare of exodus with the separated waters and the, you know, but kind of more gradual. Actually, they come back in stages.

[16 : 56] The first stage, they come back actually 22 years before the 70 years is up. Zerubbabel sent back to build the temple so that when the people come, the temple is there.

Ezra comes back to establish the word of God and then, Nehemiah will come back to build the protection, the wall of the city.

So that's the outline. So, we come to the last act. We call it hope. Hope revived. The return of the remnant, Ezra, Nehemiah.

So, how is hope revived? I think there's two things we can glean from this whole story. I want to give them to you up front because they apply to us.

There are two factors that restore or revive our hope we see in Ezra, Nehemiah. In Ezra, we see the factor of faith in God's sovereign prompting to revive his people.

[17 : 58] God is sovereignly working behind the scenes with the pagan kings. He's going to stir up Cyrus, king of Persia, to send them back and build the temple.

He's going to stir up Darius, king of Persia, to, yes, give them everything they need to rebuild the temple. He's going to later stir up Artaxerxes, king of Persia, to send Ezra and give him whatever he wants.

Later, he's going to stir up Artaxerxes, the king of Persia, different Artaxerxes. There's a bunch of them actually, but another king to give permission to Nehemiah to leave his service to go and build that city back up, to build the walls and the gates and he's going to fund it.

In fact, each of these kings God stirs up, he also says, you pay the price because these are Artaxerxes, they don't have anything.

So we see God moving in the kings. What does Proverbs say? Like the channels of a river, so God turns the heart of kings to do what he wants.

[19 : 19] He's still doing that. Say, well, yeah, no, he does it when he wants it, right? Could we go now? That would be great. He moves to revive his people.

And the second thing we will see at the end of Ezra and into Nehemiah is the factor of fighting. How is hope revived? It's revived by faith that God moves behind the scenes.

And secondly, by our fighting, we have to fight to realize the promises. we have to combat the obstacles to walk in faith with God.

Remember when they came into the land? They come into the promised land. I've given you the land. Remember when they got there, what happened? There's other people in the land. And they're giants and they have lived in fortified cities.

What does Israel have to do to get those cities? Well, God's just going to give it to them, isn't he? In a way, they walk around Jericho, right, and the walls fall down. But they must go in and fight.

[20 : 26] They must go in and fight. They must go in and fight. They must go in and fight to realize the promise. Same today. God has made us promises.

We must fight to realize those promises. God says, I will never leave you or forsake you. Do you not have experiences where it does not feel at all like God is with you?

Does it not feel at time like God has forsaken you? So how do you fight that? Faith? I believe his promise. God promises that he will work everything out for good, right, for those who love him and do his work.

But for all those months and sometimes years of struggle, I don't see the good. How do I fight for that? God promised it will be good.

Why fight by persevering? Jesus, Paul says, do not be anxious for anything, right, but by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving make your requests be known unto God and what?

[21 : 37] The peace of God that passes understanding, so incomprehensible peace in the midst of anxiety shall guard your hearts and minds in Jesus Christ.

How does that come? How do I get that peace of passage understanding when I am anxious about everything? Faith, and what does Paul say? Pray.

Stop worrying. Don't worry. Be happy. No, don't worry. Pray. With supplication and with thanksgiving is the key because how do I thank God for things I'm just stressed out about?

By faith. So there's the faith part. He's going to make this okay and when I can come to that he will flood me with peace. So we have to fight for the promises.

God promises many promises. How do we get them? I just sit back and oh, you know, it'll come.

Unanswered prayer. How does Jesus teach us how to pray? Ask and it shall be given.

[22 : 44] Seek and you shall find. Knock and knock and knock and knock and knock and gradually the person on the other side of the door who doesn't want to open the door because you bothered him so much he will finally open the door.

That's how Jesus teaches about prayer, right? The unjust judge. The widow wanting justice. He doesn't care about justice.

Why does he give her justice? Because she's bothering me. And Jesus says prayers like that. Hound God. Give him no rest.

That sounds rude. Why does Jesus teach it this way? To get into our minds, keep coming. What is great faith?

Great faith isn't walking on the water for a minute. It's coming after Jesus and coming after Jesus and coming after Jesus because I believe he's going to give it to me but I got to keep coming.

[23 : 50] fight. Combat the obstacles. Sometimes the obstacle is other believers saying you got to give up.

Sometimes the obstacles are worldly people jeering and mocking you. Sometimes the obstacles are just my own discouragement within. I have to fight to realize the promises.

So that's the big picture of this. So if you see the outline, once again, surprise, surprise, there's another chiasm of this story. It flows right to a turning point and then it comes back.

The theme is revealed in the first part of the story and then it's repeated in reverse in the second part of the story. So you see that the story, if you're looking at your outline, you see the story starts with revelation.

God reveals to Cyrus, oh, look at there. He reveals to Cyrus, king of Persia, to go build the house in my name.

[24 : 54] And then it ends with revelation. God will speak through Ezra to talk about reformation and revival and renewing the covenant. Then we see the return of Zerubbabel as a result of Cyrus' decree.

And so you read Ezra chapter 2, which is a whole big list of names, right? 42,000 people coming. And then you see at the end that return of Zerubbabel and Nehemiah basically is a carbon copy. Nehemiah 7 is basically a carbon copy of Ezra 2. He's just there reviewing that list. Then we come to the big parts, right? So C is rebuilding the temple amid opposition.

So Zerubbabel comes to rebuild the temple, but he will be opposed. He has to fight for this. He has to fight for this. And at one point the building is stopped, right?

Haggai and Zechariah get all over, as we read, Haggai gets all over Zerubbabel. It's like, what are you doing? Get to work. Get to work. Why? Because my spirit's with you.

[25 : 58] Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid of the king. I'll take care of the king. Get to work. And then, of course, God deals with the king on his behalf. Yeah, in fact, I'll fund it. Yeah.

Right? So you get the rebuilding of the temple. And then Nehemiah has the same kind of thing. He rebuilds the walls and see below, but again there's opposition. There's bullies come in and taunting and there's people threatening.

And Nehemiah is just, you know, he knows how to deal with this kind of stuff. And then in the middle, you got the return of Ezra and then the return of Nehemiah in the very middle of the whole story.

The turning point to the whole story is Ezra refining or purifying the people. Because it's all well and good to rebuild the temple, get the physical structure up.

It's all well and good to get the place secure, have the, you know, to be proud of Jerusalem again with the walls and it's not rubble anymore. But unless their hearts are changed, it's all nothing.

[26 : 58] And so in the middle of the story we have Ezra revealing the sins of the people. And there is a reviving that happens.

When the people recognize their sin and repent and renew their covenant with the Lord, that's the heart of the story.

It's not just about rebuilding the temple and rebuilding the walls, it's about renewing and reviving the people. So let's look at this, okay?

Thanks guys for getting that up there. So we start with Ezra. Ezra, right? Because I'm going to just read little parts of this. If you read the book of Ezra and you read the book of Nehemiah, I think you'll enjoy it.

It's a good story. It's just as a story, but then there's the whole depth of it. It's God's behind this whole thing. And by the way, Esther is the same way. Esther actually happens during the time that Ezra is coming into the land.

[28 : 00] She's still back in Persia because she's in a harem, right? And she becomes the queen to one of these kings that does the decrees. Remember who else was back there in Persia during this time?

Some guy named Danny, Danny something, Daniel, Daniel, Daniel? Something else, somebody else called Ezekiel? So God has not abandoned these people.

He is preparing to move again in a way that they'll never, they never would have thought because the king that's coming isn't Josiah, is not David, is not even Zerubbabel.

Zerubbabel, by the way, is in the line of Christ. He's the prince. And Joshua is the high priest whose lineage goes all the way back to Aaron.

So you have the two guys, right? Zerubbabel and Zechariah talks about these two guys as the lampstands, right? And they're the two olive trees, right?

[29 : 04] They're the guys God's going to shake some things with. All right? So these guys are important. And the expectations might be Zerubbabel. Wait a minute, he's in the line of David.

Ooh, he's David and Josiah and now Zerubbabel, maybe he's the one. Now we're going to get the king on the throne.

Is that what they expected? All that rubble. So here we have Cyrus. So look at how Ezra begins. It begins right where 2 Chronicles left off.

In the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation or a decree throughout all his kingdom and also put it into writing.

That's the decree part. Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia, the Lord, the God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah, somewhere across the river.

[30 : 18] Whoever among you of all his people, may his God be with him and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel.

He is the God who's in Jerusalem. So Cyrus is thinking about, you know, there's territorial gods. You know, we got our God in Persia, so the God out there beyond the river, that's Yahweh.

He's the God out there. However, that God is reaching into Persia and saying, hey Cyrus. Yeah, yeah, he's not just a God in Jerusalem because he's the one Cyrus says has given me all the kingdoms of the world.

I also recognize he's not just, but he's the God of all the kingdoms. He's the God of gods. So he invites everyone to go, whoever wants to go, and then he says, by the way, we'll provide the goods for you.

We'll provide whatever you need. Chapter 2, we see that it's the Zerubbabel and Jeshua are the ones leading all the people out. So chapter 2 is a list of all the folks coming. Chapter 3 of Ezra, they get there and the first thing they do is build an altar so they can offer sacrifices to the Lord.

[31 : 36] And then they begin to build the temple. They lay the foundation for the temple. Chapter 4 comes the first obstacle. While they're trying to rebuild this temple, they have people coming to interrupt it.

They're questioning it. So look at 4.4, when the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah and made them afraid to build and bribe the counselors against them to frustrate the purpose.

All the days of Cyrus, king of Persia, until the reign of Darius, king of Persia. So you got this going on. And during this time, they stirred up the king. And the king at that time was a guy by the name of Artaxerxes.

And look at the end of chapter 4 of Ezra, verse 24. He decreed that they stop the work because he found out that this Jerusalem, Jerusalem, he looked back in his archives and said, oh yeah, this has been a very rebellious city.

This has been a city that doesn't want to pay me tribute. This has been a city that trusts in their own God. This has been a rebellious, wicked city to him. So, stop the building.

[32 : 46] We're not supporting that. So, end of 24, then the work of the house of the Lord that is in Jerusalem stopped. And it ceased until the second year of the reign of Darius, king of Persia, which would be 16 years later.

Chapter 5, 1, now the prophets, now this is where Haggai and Zechariah step in. Now the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, the son of Edo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem. And in the name of the God of Israel who was over them.

Then Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua, the son of Joe, arose and began to rebuild the house of God that is in Jerusalem. And the prophets of God were with them supporting them. So, they rebuilt. Then they finished it. All right? So, chapter 6, you come to this other king. All right? So, people, they started again without king's permission. Because the prophets said, start building. Don't be afraid. I'm with you. So, Haggai and Zechariah get these guys to start. Go. I don't care. There's a decree. We're not supposed to. Well, we're going to go. Go.

[33 : 50] God is with you. Will you trust him for that? Against the government? But there's a mandate. Will you trust him?

Mandate's not even close to a decree of a king. Do it, said God, through the prophets. So, they start doing it.

And, of course, that's going to stir trouble. So, they go, okay, new king. Let's check this out. Chapter 6. New king by the name of Darius. Guy that Daniel knew, by the way. So, chapter 6.

Then Darius, the king, made a decree. So, they go complain to the king and say, you know, look it up. They're disobeying. The king made a decree and search was made in Babylonia in the house of the archives where the documents were stored.

And in some other place, the capital that is in the province of Media, a scroll was found in which this was written, a record. In the first year of Cyrus the king, Cyrus the king issued a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem.

[34 : 58] Let the house be rebuilt. Built the place where sacrifices were offered. And let its foundations be retained. Its heights, and it gives the blueprints. Its height shall be 60 cubits and its breadth 60 cubits.

With three layers of great stones and one layer of timber. Let the cost be paid from the royal treasury. By the way, we're paying for this. So, God just not only moves the king but moves, okay, yeah, you'll also be paying for her.

You know, like they plundered Egypt. They're plundering Persia now. Verse 5, and also the gold and silver vessels of the house, because they still got all that, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple that is in Jerusalem, brought to Babylon.

Let all that treasury be restored and brought back to the temple that is in Jerusalem, each to its place. You shall put them in the house of God. So then, so he reads that document, and now Darius says to the governor, verse 6, now therefore Tatanai, governor of the province beyond the river, that's where Jerusalem is, and your associates, the governors who are in the province of beyond the river, here's what you do.

Keep away. I like it. Keep away. Let the work on this house of God alone. Let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews rebuild the house of God on its site.

[36 : 20] Moreover, I make a decree regarding regarding what you shall do for these elders of the Jews for the rebuilding of the house of God. It's coming out of your pocket. The cost is to pay, to be paid to these men in full and without delay from the royal revenue, the tribute of the province from beyond the river.

Yeah, that's you guys. You're paying the bill. And since you brought it up, so and whatever is needed. So then he goes on, you need bulls, rams, sheep, whatever.

Let that be given to them. Verse 10, that they, watch this, that they may offer pleasing sacrifices to the God of heaven and pray and pray, by the way, for the life of the king and his sons.

In other words, I want them praying for me too. So you make sure it gets done because it's to my benefit too. And then in verse 12, he ends with a blessing.

He says, may the God who caused his name to dwell there overthrow any king or people who shall be, who shall put out a hand to alter this or to destroy this house of God that is in Jerusalem.

[37 : 36] I, Darius, make a decree. Let it be done and with diligence. Down to verse 14, the elders of the Jews built and prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Edu.

They finished, watch this, they finished the building by decree of the God of Israel and by decree of three other kings. The decree of Cyrus and Darius and Artaxerxes, king of Persia.

God works through foreign kings. God works through world rulers for his own purposes.

He worked through Pharaoh. Pharaoh was stubborn. Yeah, but God kind of played with him, didn't he? Oh, no, I haven't done, I'm not done with you.

I could be done with you in the first play, but I'm going to humiliate you and your gods because they're not gods. Right?

[38 : 39] Doing the same thing now, but in a less spectacular fashion. He actually is working with the kings that they do what he wants. They're different than Pharaoh.

They're backing up the Lord. So, you got the finished work, chapter 6. Chapter 7, Ezra returns. He comes.

He's described in 7.6 as this Ezra. He was a scribe skilled on the law of Moses that the Lord, the God of Israel, has given and the king granted him all that he asked.

So, again, here you have Ezra now coming and he's got permission from the king. He's got granting for whatever he needs. God, again, the foreigners, again, footing the bill and another decree.

So, here's what we see in the first part of Ezra up to Ezra 8. It's this first factor that hope is revived by, first of all, faith in a sovereign God who moves among the nations to restore his people.

[39 : 48] A sovereign God who prompts to revive his people, he's prompting through world rulers, outsiders, enemies.

The very people that the people of Israel are enslaved to, he's moving those kings to release them. And not just to release them, but to fund them to rebuild worship in the city where God has chosen his name to dwell.

So, that's the first part. Now, with Ezra 9, we come to the second part because Ezra 9 is a very moving chapter. This is the heart of the story.

So, we got the temple rebuilt, right? Ezra's come back, he starts to preach the word. But now, there's the moral issue that's going on. We come to Ezra 9.

So, listen with me. After these things have been done, the officials approached me and said, this is Ezra talking, the people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands.

[41 : 04] the people of the land with their abominations from the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Terminites, the Cellulites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites.

For they have taken some of their daughters to be wives for themselves and for their sons so that the holy race has mixed itself with the peoples of the land.

And in this faithlessness, the hand of the officials and the chief men has been foremost. Now, if you read that verse out of context, it will sound extremely racist.

Won't it? It will almost sound Aryan. Mixed blood with other nations, other races.

Is that what they're talking about? Is that the issue? Wait a minute. Moses was married to a Gentile. Wait a minute.

[42 : 17] Rahab the harlot is in the lineage of Jesus Christ. So is Ruth. So is Shishib, who will not be named the Hittite woman, the wife of Uriah.

So it can't be simply that they're of another race. I mean, the lawgiver himself was married to a Gentile. Remember? Brother and sister had a little problem because he was married to Zipporah. That can't be it. So let's read on. Let's understand this in context. So he said, they've mixed, right? Verse three, as soon as I heard this, I tore my garment and my robe and pulled hair from my head and beard and sat appalled.

Okay, this must be pretty serious, right? He doesn't even have Nehemiah to help him. He's pulling his own hair out. I mean, that's extreme, isn't it?

And sat appalled. Then all who trembled at the words of the God of Israel. That's an interesting description of people. All who trembled at the words of the God of Israel.

[43 : 31] Are you one of those people? Do you tremble at his words? Or do you just kind of listen with interest? That's interesting.

Because of the faithlessness of the returned exiles gathered around me while I sat appalled until the evening sacrifice. And at the evening sacrifice, I rose from my fasting with my garment and my cloak torn and fell on my knees and spread out my hands to the Lord my God, saying, Oh my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift my face to you, my God.

For our iniquities have risen higher than our heads and our guilt has mounted up to the heavens.

From the days of our fathers to this day we have been in great guilt.

For our iniquities, we, our kings and our priests have been given into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plundering, and to utter shame as it is this day.

But now, for a brief moment, favor has been shown by the Lord our God to leave us a remnant and to give us a secure hold within His holy place that our God may brighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving in our slavery.

[45 : 18] Hear that? For a brief moment, we're revived in our slavery. We're still slaves, but He's reviving a little hope.

Hope revived. For we are slaves, yet our God has not forsaken us in our slavery, but has extended to us His steadfast love before the kings of Persia to grant us some reviving.

There it is again. To grant us some new life, to set up the house of our God to repair its ruins and to give us protection in Judea and Jerusalem.

And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken your commandments, which you commanded by your servants the prophets, saying, the land.

Here's the context now. What's the problem about these marriages? You commanded by your servants, saying, the land that you are entering. Talking about back with Joshua.

[46 : 23] The land that you are entering to take possession of it is a land impure with the impurities of the peoples of the land.

Why is that? Because of who they, because of their background? No, because of what they do. With their abominations, they have filled it from end to end with their uncleanness.

What's he talking about? He's talking about how they worship and who they worship. That's what he's talking about. They worship other gods. That's where Solomon got in trouble.

The abominable gods. The ones that require your children's lives so that you might get a little rain. Therefore, verse 12, do not give your daughters to their sons, neither take their daughters for your sons, and never seek their peace or prosperity.

Talking about the people that are there in the land when they go in. Who are already practicing these abominations. Do not seek their peace or profit. Don't make a covenant with them. That you may be strong and eat the good of the land and leave it for an inheritance to your children forever.

[47 : 45] Back to Ezra, verse 13. And after all that has come upon me, come upon us for our evil deeds and for our great guilt, seeing that you, our God, have punished us less than our iniquities deserved.

Well, that sounds Christian, doesn't it? He has punished us less than we deserve and have given us such a remnant as this.

Shall we break your commandment again and intermarry with people who practice these abominations? Would you not be angry with us until you consumed us so that there should be no remnant nor any escape?

see, Ezra's saying it is, oh, we're about to be extinct. This issue is so key. What's the big deal? Intermarriage. Oh, it's not intermarriage. It's the threat of that intermarriage like Solomon that will lead you astray to other gods.

[48 : 58] It's not the intermarriage is such a great sin, but it, that kind of intermarriage, but that kind of intermarriage will lead to the greatest sin. It will lead to apostasy.

It will lead to disaster. It will lead to desolation. So protect yourself.

Well, what about Moses? He married, he wasn't marrying somebody that worshipped a different god. It's not about the race. It's about the practice.

Christianity today, Paul advises, who do you marry? Don't marry unequally yoked. What does he mean by that? Has nothing to do with race? It has to do with worship.

They will take you away from the Lord. It has a different outcome in the New Testament than in the Old Testament because the Old Testament gets a little, here's where it goes.

[50 : 07] Verse 10, just a couple of verses from chapter 10, I mean. while Ezra prayed and made confession, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, a very great assembly of men, women, and children gathered to him out of Israel for the people wept bitterly.

They were impacted. They overheard this prayer. They were moved. And Shekariah, the son of Jehiel, the sons, okay, this guy addressed Ezra.

He said, we have broken faith with our God and have married foreign women from the peoples of the land. But even now, there is hope. Even now, there is hope for Israel in spite of this.

Therefore, let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and their children according to the counsel of my God and those who tremble at the commandment of our God and let us be done, let it be done according to the law.

And so they ask Ezra to stand up and lead them through the process. Wow. That had to be hard. That had to be really, really hard.

[51 : 30] Now, we know from the context as well that this hadn't been going on very long. They're just back in the land. They had just remarried and only a few of them had already had children by those marriages. So in other words, it hadn't been going very long.

It's catching it early on. Still, it had to be hard. But it was an issue of will I follow God wholly?

So what does Paul say in the New Testament? If you're already married to an unbeliever, what do you do? What does Paul say? Remain. Don't leave. Don't make them leave.

No, you remain. Remain in whatever situation you are in. So it's a little different response, Neal. It's different. It's different.

Because the believer has a Holy Spirit. Right? He has an extra power. And you be the influencer, not them.

[52 : 32] See, the New Testament sees it as a redeeming thing. God has brought you into this. Let God work you up through it. Right? Interesting.

So, we have this repentance. Turn to Nehemiah. How we doing? We got a couple hours yet, right? Let me do Nehemiah. Hmm.

Chapter one. Here's Nehemiah. I want you to hear the heart of Nehemiah. This is an amazing man. He's an amazing man. They all are, but he's like a different, he's like, he's like a Josiah.

He's like, I don't know if I'd like him as a friend, because he, you know, well, I don't have any hair to pull out anymore, but he's a serious dude.

So, Nehemiah 1, the words of Nehemiah, the son of Hakaliah. Now, it happened in the month of Cheslev, in the 12th year, I was in Susa, the capital, back in Persia, that Hanani, one of my brothers, came, and certain men from Judah.

[53 : 38] And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped. Who had survived the exile. And concerning Jerusalem. And they said to me, the remnant there is in, in the province who have survived the exile is in great trouble and shame.

The wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire. You got to recognize this is 70 years after the temple had been rebuilt. It's not, this is, this has been a while.

Nothing else has happened since the rebuilding of the temple. As soon as I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days. I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

And I said, O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments. Let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel and your servants.

Confessing the sins of the people of Israel which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, the rules that you commanded your servant Moses.

[54 : 57] Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses saying, if you are not, if you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples. But if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, even from there I will gather them and I will bring them to the place that I have chosen to make my name dwell there.

They are your servants and your people whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand. Oh Lord. Now notice his prayer. It's been focused on who God is and then from there it goes to confession.

Now he's getting to the point. It's a biblical prayer. It's an acts model. Adoration, confession, thanksgiving for his remembering his word and now I'm going to ask the questions.

Now I'm going to pray my prayer. Isn't that a beautiful prayer? 11, Oh Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name and give success to your servant today and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.

What man? Well, I was cupbearer to the king. I'm going to take a big risk. I'm going to take a huge, this could take my, this could threaten my life but I got to take a risk.

[56 : 29] I got to step out in faith so give me success Lord. So, in the chapter 2 in the month of Nisan in the 20th year of King Artaxerxes there he is again when wine has been before him I took up the wine and gave it to the king.

Now, I had not been sad in his presence. Might be translated I've never been sad in his presence because that's death.

You should be happy in front of the king. Don't you affect his mood. Don't you be a downer on his day. And the king said to me why is your face sad?

Seeing you are not sick this is nothing but sadness of heart. Then I was very much afraid. Oh boy. I said to the king let the king live forever.

Why should not my face be sad when the city the place of my father's graves lies in ruins and its gates have been destroyed by fire? Okay.

[57 : 37] What's he going to say? And the king said to me what are you requesting? Oh. Notice the words next. So I prayed to the God of heaven. Okay Lord this is what I was talking about.

Give me the words. Oh boy. He's going to help me say the right thing. And I said to the king if it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in your sight here's what I'm requesting that you send me to Judah to the city of my father's grave so that I may rebuild it.

And the king said to me with the queen sitting beside him that might be Esther how long will you be gone and when will you return?

Wow. So it pleased the king to send me when I had given him the time so he's already thought this out and I said to the king by the way I not only need time I need resources so it pleases the king let letters be given to me to the governors and provinces beyond the river that they may let me pass through when I come to Judah so I need authority and then eight and I need resources and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the forest that he may give me timber to make the beams for the gates and the fortress of the temple for the wall of the city and for the house that I may occupy in other words I need a whole lot of wood and the king granted me what I asked for the good hand of my God was with me there we go again he took the risk he stepped out in faith and he's still praying in the process what do you need okay so chapter 3 of Nehemiah they build the wall and everybody everybody is on the wall this is not just a wall around the temple this is a wall around Jerusalem this is David's wall it has all these gates in it and he talks in chapter 3 you go through here this guy worked on this section this guy worked on this section next to them this guy worked and they did the gates too and then these guys and then these guys when they were done they came over here and did this one

I mean he's got everybody with the exception of verse 5 next to them the Tekoaites repaired but their nobles would not stoop to serve the Lord so everyone but the nobles of Tekoa don't be a noble of Tekoa chapter 4 we got opposition he's got bullies coming chapter 4 Sanballat and jeers at him and then Tobiah joins in and mocks them taunts them verse 4 Nehemiah prays hear oh my God for we are despised turn back their taunt on their own heads and give them up to the plunders in the land where they are captives alright so then so verse 6 we built the wall and all the wall was joined together to half its height for the people had a mind to work so they're halfway done halfway done but when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that we were repairing the walls of Jerusalem was going forward and that the breaches were beginning to be closed they were very angry and they plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it so what do we do we pray to our God and set a guard so we didn't just pray but we also set a guard it gets to the point where Nehemiah will tell all the workers kick a sword in one hand and do your work with the other well it'll be slower yeah but keep there's a threat a sword in one hand and do your work in the other

[61 : 22] I don't know how you lift those big stones with one hand but so verse 10 here's the other obstacle okay there's the threat of outside okay there's that obstacle but here's the inner threat verse 10 in Judah it was said here's the Murphy's Law of the Jewish thing the strength of those who bear the burdens is failing there is too much rubble can't be done by ourselves we were not able to build the wall if something's gonna go wrong it's gonna go wrong and then go down to verse 14 what is Nehemiah's response to this I looked and rose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people do not be afraid of them remember who remember the Lord don't look at yourselves don't look at all the rubble take your eyes off the rubble and put them back on the Lord who is great and awesome and by the way fight for your brothers and your sons and your daughters your wives and your homes fight remember the Lord so that's our second point right fight we trust we have faith in the God who is sovereign who moves for us but we also combat the obstacles with faith to realize those promises we'll get the wall done remember the Lord and get to work get to work so reform and then finally in the end of Nehemiah you have the revival that comes

through once again

Nehemiah chapter 8 is reading the word and by the way I don't know do you think I go long in Nehemiah 8 it says verse 3 he read from the book of the law facing the square before the water gate from early morning until midday in the presence of the men and the women and those who understand and the ears of all the people were attentive they did that every day morning to afternoon how you doing he was just reading no he wasn't just reading he also gave the sense he also taught so he was a scribe not just a reader he was a student of the word and he trusted in the word to revive the people to renew the people to restore the people so here we go okay so where does all this go here we are we're done we've gone from promises to hope to return to the land what's next this is the end of the history in what we call the Old Testament of Israel 400 years later is the next act a brand new act because the one who has been promised all along will come the seed who is the seed of the woman who will conquer the serpent the seed of Abraham the seed of Judah who will who will be a ruler to whom all people will give obedience and who's in whose hand is the scepter that shall never depart so he's not only the conqueror of the serpent he is the king of all from Judah also he will be the seed of David who will right sit on a throne that will be established forever he's the seed of Abraham who blesses all the families of the earth in not an earthly kingdom but an eternal kingdom he is a king like David who will come but his kingdom will not be of this realm he is the king of heaven so at the cross he conquers the serpent at his resurrection and ascent he becomes the king of kings and lord of lords of a heavenly eternal kingdom never to end and what about the land remember the promise of the land great nation he will bring a new kingdom an eternal kingdom promise of the seed that will bless all he's that as well the Gentiles come in what about the land we're still going to rebuild the temple and the land aren't we aren't we going back because God promised to do the land wait a minute what did he say to Joshua I've already fulfilled that promise doesn't mean he won't do it again what about the land well what did what did Abraham know about the land when he got there nope this ain't it nope nope not a piece of this property it's got famines it's got enemies it's got problems this ain't what God was talking about Hebrew says now he was looking for the real one the one built by God he's looking for the eternal one so what does Jesus tell us about in Revelation that this heaven and earth is destroyed and he builds a whole new heaven and earth and that's where we go back to paradise it's described at the end of the book of Revelation it's a garden right it's a garden and God is present and we are present in it it doesn't give us a detailed description it just gives us a picture it's quite beautiful right all the stones and colors and and it's got Jew and Gentile in fact it's got people from every language and nation from all over the world so God does

Jesus does give us an everlasting land which is in a new heaven and a new earth the Old Testament shows us the story of man's total ruin in sin right they get redeemed they rebel they get into the land they rebel they get reprieved they rebel they come back to the land and just they're shambles and they're still rebelling what's the point of the Old Testament man's total ruin in sin can't do we need someone better than Abraham we need somebody better than Joseph we need somebody better than Joshua we need somebody better than David well Josiah seemed better we need somebody better than Josiah or Zerubbabel even

Nehemiah he's a little he gets a little rude sometimes we need somebody that won't fail we need somebody that won't fail who will keep all the word of the Lord and then be willing to take all of our ruin all of our sin all of our mess up upon himself and pay for that sin and at the same time he gives us all his righteousness so it's a really good deal it's an incredible deal but that means I must trust that means I must turn I must turn from all my gods I must give up on all my idols that I put hope in for my security and my value and my fixing all my quick fixes

[70 : 03] I gotta give up on those I must and put it all on him by the way he's no longer here right he carried that cross he bore that cross but we don't have a picture a symbol of a cross with a savior on it he's off the cross he is in heaven on his throne we don't have a throne up well we don't have a you can build it no I don't get nuts with our pictures okay okay Jesus is the seed of the woman he is the seed of Abraham he's the son of Judah he's the seed of David and Joshua and Zerubbabel he was born Jesus he was given the name Jesus because he shall save his people from their sins and in Christ Jesus we are all sons of God by faith in

Christ alone let us pray father we thank you for this journey we thank you lord that as we look carefully at the unfolding drama of your promises and your working through people and being forbearing with sinners your anger is so slow it took 800 years and so help us to see the true God of

the Old Testament scriptures who is the same God we worship who is the father of the Lord Jesus who is Jesus himself who sends as we worship today who sends the promised Holy Spirit to dwell in us so help us to hear the message of Haggai father that your spirit remains in us fear not this we pray in

Christ's name amen amen! amen! amen to me to me to to me!
me to Thank you.