

# The Bible Jesus Used

A Gospel-Centered Glance at  
the Old Testament

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# Initial Restoration Under Persia

	Prophets	Key Events in Judah	Key Events in Babylon & Persia
–			<b>Daniel</b> as court official in Babylon & Persia
550		<b>538</b> –1 <sup>st</sup> return of exiles (Jeshua & Zerubbabel)	<b>539</b> –Babylon fell to Persia; <b>538</b> –Cyrus decreed exiles to return
–	<b>Haggai/Zechariah</b>	<b>516</b> –New temple completed	
–			<b>486–463</b> – <b>Esther</b> story
500			
–			
–			
–		<b>458</b> –2 <sup>nd</sup> return of exiles ( <b>Ezra</b> )	
450		<b>444</b> –3 <sup>rd</sup> return of exiles ( <b>Nehemiah</b> )	
–	<b>Malachi</b>		
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# Ezra-Nehemiah at a Glance

<b>A – Rebuilding a Broken Temple in Hope:</b> Catching up on History	Ezra 1–6
<b>B – Reviving a Faithless People in Hope:</b> Ezra’s Memoirs	Ezra 7–10
<b>A’– Rebuilding a Broken City in Hope:</b> Nehemiah’s Memoirs, Part 1	Neh 1–7
<b>B’– Reviving a Faithless People in Hope:</b> Nehemiah’s Memoirs, Part 2	Neh 8–13

Theme: The need to rebuild the broken temple and city points to the need to revive the faithless people, all in the hope of full kingdom restoration. God may have taken the people out of Babylon, but he still needed to take Babylon out of the people.

# The Message

- ❖ **The present generation has NOT been separated from God's kingdom purposes begun in the past.**
- ❖ **Recalling Jeremiah's "70 year" exile prophecy and the promise that one named Cyrus would initiate stage 1 of restoration.**
- ❖ **Ezra 1:1. In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of Yahweh by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, Yahweh stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing.**

- ❖ **Jer. 29:10**. For thus says Yahweh: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. Cf. 25:12–13.
- ❖ **Isa. 44:24, 28; 45:13**. Thus says Yahweh, your Redeemer, . . . <sup>28</sup> who says of Cyrus, “He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose’; saying of Jerusalem, ‘She shall be built,” and of the temple, “Your foundation shall be laid.” . . .  
<sup>13</sup> I have stirred him up in righteousness, and I will make all his ways level; he shall build my city and set my exiles free, not for price or reward,” says Yahweh of hosts.

- ❖ **Numerous genealogies and lists of people to connect the present with the past (Ezra 2:2–70; 8:1–14; Neh 7:6–73; 11:3–19; 12:1–26)**
- ❖ **Stress on Yahweh’s promise to restore after exile.**
  - ❖ **Neh. 1:8–9**. Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, “If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, <sup>9</sup> but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.”

- ❖ **Worshipping God and living in accordance with his word provide the foundation and context for kingdom hope.**
- ❖ **Ezra and Nehemiah drew firm boundaries—spiritual, social, and physical—around the community, guarding from pagan influence.**
- ❖ **Lev 20:26. You shall be holy to me, for I Yahweh am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.**

❖ **Their inter-faith marriages were putting the community in jeopardy of extinction:**

❖ **Ezra 9:2**. The holy race has mixed itself with the peoples of the lands.

❖ **Ezra 9:13–15**. And after all that has 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 and have given us such a remnant as this, <sup>14</sup> shall we break your commandments again and intermarry with the peoples who practice these abominations? Would you not be angry with us until you consumed us, so that there should be no remnant, nor any to escape? >



<sup>15</sup> O LORD, the God of Israel, you are just, for we are left a remnant that has escaped, as it is today. Behold, we are before you in our guilt, for none can stand before you because of this.”

- ❖ **Neh 13:26**. Did not Solomon king of Israel sin on account of such women? Among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was beloved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless, foreign women made even him to sin.

- ❖ **Therefore, serious steps needed to be take to shape spiritual, social, and physical boundaries.**
- ❖ **Ezra 10:10–11**. And Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, “You have broken faith and married foreign women, and so increased the guilt of Israel. <sup>11</sup> Now then make confession to the LORD, the God of your fathers and do his will. Separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from the foreign wives.
- ❖ **Neh. 1:3**. The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire. Cf. 2:3.

- ❖ **Neh. 7:3**. Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot. And while they are still standing guard, let them shut and bar the doors. Appoint guards from among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, some at their guard posts and some in front of their own homes.
- ❖ **Neh. 9:2**. And the Israelites separated themselves from all foreigners and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers.

❖ **Neh 13:23–27**. In those days also I saw the Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab....<sup>25</sup> And I confronted them and cursed them.... And I made them take an oath in the name of God, saying, “You shall not give your daughters to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons or for yourselves.<sup>26</sup> Did not Solomon king of Israel sin on account of such women? Among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was beloved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless, foreign women made even him to sin.<sup>27</sup> Shall we then listen to you and do all this great evil and act treacherously against our God by marrying foreign women?”

# Paul on Divorce

- ❖ In accordance with Jesus' exceptions (Matt 5:32; 19:9), Paul allowed divorce in instances where the non-believing spouse "separated" from the believing spouse.

1 Cor. 7:10–13, 15. To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband <sup>11</sup> (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife. <sup>12</sup> To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. <sup>13</sup> If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him.... <sup>15</sup> But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace.

# Paul on Divorce

- ❖ In accordance with Jesus' exceptions (Matt 5:32; 19:9), Paul allowed divorce in instances where the non-believing spouse "separated" from the believing spouse.
- ❖ **We can align Ezra and Nehemiah's practice with Paul's statement if we see Paul's meaning of a non-believer's "separation" from a believing spouse to include not only physical desertion but also controlling influence that forces the believer to sin or that restricts the believer from living out her faith.**

- ❖ **Ezra and Nehemiah interpreted and applied Scripture to regulate the community's life.**
- ❖ **Disloyalty in relationship with God is measured by his covenantal Word.**
  - ❖ Ezra 9:10. And now, of our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken your commandments.
  - ❖ Ezra 9:13–14. And after all that has 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 and have given us such a remnant as this, <sup>14</sup> shall we break your commandments again and intermarry with the peoples who practice these abominations? Would you not be angry with us until you consumed us, so that there should be no remnant, nor any to escape?
  - ❖ Neh. 1:7. We have acted very corruptly against you have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses.



- ❖ **God's Word must be read and applied and must lead to regular renewal in one's personal and corporate relationship with God.**
- ❖ **Ezra 7:8–10**. And Ezra came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. <sup>9</sup> For on the first day of the first month he began to go up from Babylonia, and on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, for the good hand of his God was on him. <sup>10</sup> For Ezra had set his heart **to study** the Law of the LORD, and **to do** it and **to teach** his statutes and rules in Israel.

❖ Neh. 8:2–3, 7–9, 11–12. So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard. . . . <sup>3</sup> And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. . . . <sup>7</sup> Also [other religious leaders] helped the people to understand the Law, while the people remained in their places. <sup>8</sup> They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, as they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading. . . . <sup>9</sup> All the people wept as they heard the words of the Law. . . . <sup>11</sup> The Levites calmed all the people, saying, “Be quiet, for this day is holy; do not be grieved.” <sup>12</sup> And all the people went their way to eat and drink and to send portions and to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them.

- ❖ **Neh. 10:28–29**. The rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple servants, and all who have separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the Law of God, their wives, their sons, their daughters, all who have knowledge and understanding, <sup>29</sup> join with their brothers, their nobles, and enter into a curse and an oath to walk in God's Law that was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of Yahweh our Lord and his rules and his statutes.
- ❖ **Neh. 13:1–3**. On that day they read from the Book of Moses in the hearing of the people. And in it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God, <sup>2</sup> for they did not meet the people of Israel with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them—yet our God turned the curse into a blessing. <sup>3</sup> As soon as the people heard the law, they separated from Israel all those of foreign descent.

❖ **God is actively working on behalf of his people in accordance with his kingdom purposes, but full restoration has not yet come.**

❖ **Yahweh is a God who showers favor on his people.**

❖ **Ezra 5:5**. But eye of their God was on the elders of the Jews, and they did not stop them.

❖ **Ezra 7:6**. The granted him all that he asked, for the hand of Yahweh his God was on him.

❖ **Ezra 8:18**. And by the good hand of our God on us, they brought us a man of discretion.

- ❖ **Neh. 2:8**. And the king granted me what I asked, for the good hand of my God was upon me.
- ❖ **Neh. 2:18, 20**. And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good. . . . <sup>20</sup> “The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build, but you have no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem.”
- ❖ **Neh. 4:14**. Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes.

- ❖ **Neh. 6:15–16**. So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty-two days. <sup>16</sup> And when all our enemies heard of it, all the nations around us were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem, for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.
  
- ❖ **Neh. 9:6**. You are Yahweh, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you.

- ❖ **The enjoyment of such favor is conditioned on a life that is dependent on God's Word and that humbly seeks God's ways:**
  - ❖ **Ezra 7:9–10**. On the first day of the first month he came to Jerusalem, for the good hand of his God was on him. For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of Yahweh, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.
  - ❖ **Ezra 8:22**. The hand of our God is for good on all who seek him, and the power of his wrath is against all who forsake him.

- ❖ **Neh. 1:5–6**. O Yahweh 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 now I pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Cf. 9:14.
- ❖ **Neh. 1:8–9**. 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, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.



- ❖ **God's mercy and grace are the fuel that enables the quest for God.**
- ❖ **Neh. 9:17, 31.** But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and did not forsake them....<sup>31</sup> In your great mercies you did not make an end of them or forsake them, for you are a gracious and merciful God.
- ❖ **Deut. 4:30–31.** When you are in tribulation, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, you will return to Yahweh your God and obey his voice.<sup>31</sup> For Yahweh your God is a merciful God. He will not leave you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers that he swore to them.

- ❖ **God's people must wait dependently in patience until full restoration is realized.**
- ❖ **Right after the dedication of the wall in 12:27–30, 43, chapter 13 highlights how far Israel truly was from full restoration.**
  - ❖ Foreigners are still present
  - ❖ A priest is housing in the temple
  - ❖ The community is not providing for the priests.
  - ❖ The community is profaning the Sabbath.
  - ❖ Inter-faith marriage continues.
  - ❖ The priesthood is desecrated.
- ❖ **Neh. 13:31. Remember me, O my God, for good.**