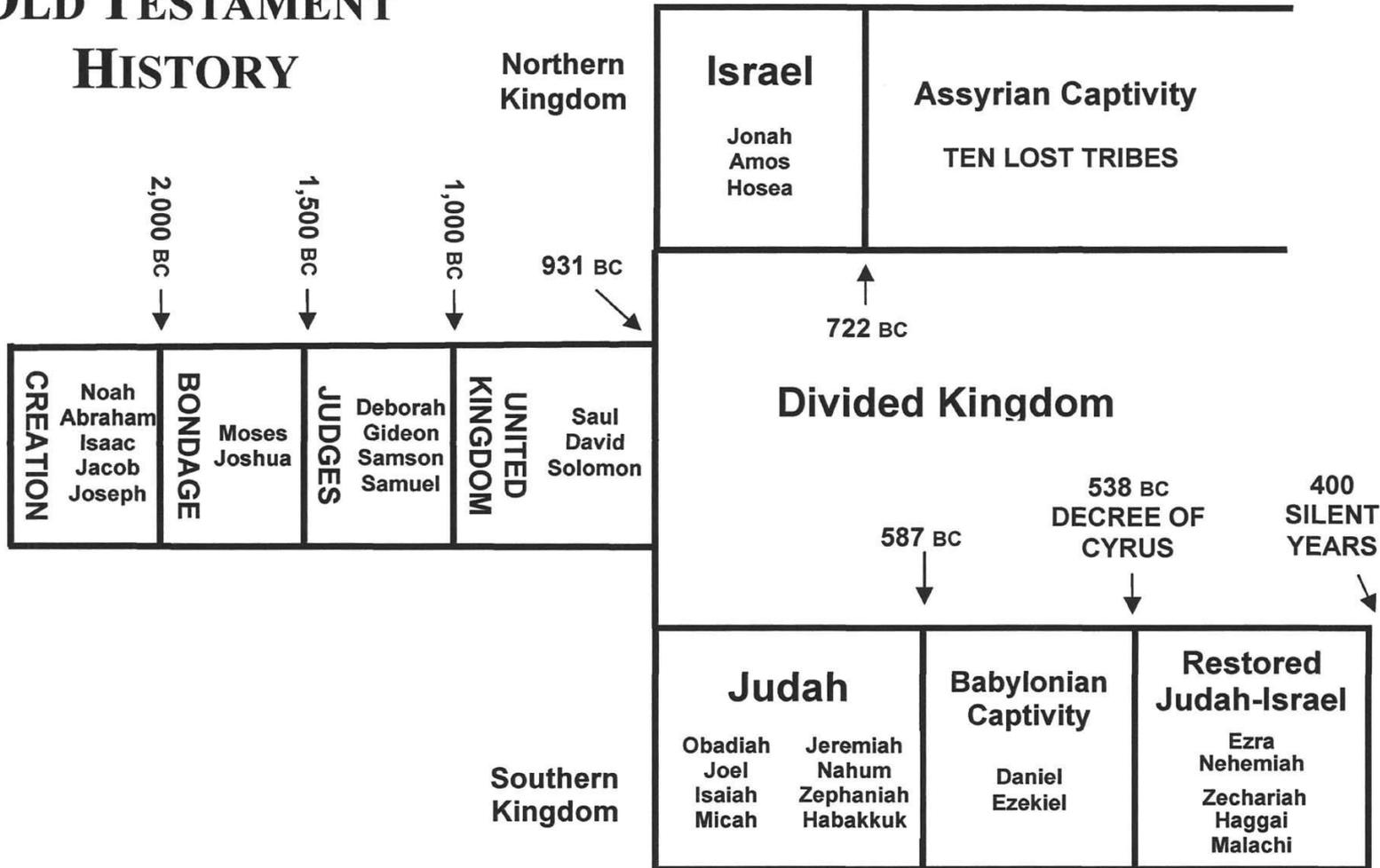


**NEHEMIAH  
THE MAN WHO SAID “THE JOY  
OF THE LORD IS YOUR  
STRENGTH”**

Nehemiah 8

1

# OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY



# TIMELINE

550	500	450	400
HAGGAI ZECHARIAH		MALACHI	
Zerubbabel 536—First Return 536—Rebuilding the Temple 516—Temple completed		Ezra 458—Second Return Rebuilding the people	
538—Decree of Cyrus to return		Nehemiah 445—Third Return Rebuilding the walls and the city of Jerusalem	
Queen Esther		<i>The jews are without a prophet, or a prophet, living under the dominion of foreign rulers, and AWAITING THE MESSIAH, THE GREATEST PROPHET OF ISRAEL</i>	
Amel-Marduk (Evil-Merodach) 562-560	Cyrus 539-530	Darius I 522-486	Xerxes 486-464
			Artaxerxes 464-423
		Socrates 470-399	Plato 428-348
			Aristotle 384-322

# NEHEMIAH'S PRIORITIES

- The people of God were on Nehemiah's heart.
- The God of heaven was Nehemiah's focus.
- Brief Outline
  - Chapters 1-7 focus on the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem and when the walls were finished, on the administration and repopulation of Jerusalem.
  - Chapters 8-10 focus on the spiritual needs of the people.
  - Chapters 11-13 return the focus to counting people and repopulating Jerusalem.
- Rebuilding the city involves rebuilt walls, reconstituted administration and restoring the population's relationship with God.

# THE REPORT OF CONDITIONS IN JERUSALEM

- Nehemiah 1:2–4; <sup>2</sup> that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup> And they said to me, “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.” <sup>4</sup> As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

# NEHEMIAH 8 – A GREAT EXAMPLE OF REVIVAL

- A Renewed Appetite for God's Word
- A Respectful Attitude toward God
- A Radical Application of Biblical Truth
- Appropriate Sorrow over Sin
- An Attitude of Obedience and Joy

# THE PEOPLE'S DESIRE FOR REBIBLE!

- Nehemiah 8:1–3; And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the LORD had commanded Israel. <sup>2</sup> So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. <sup>3</sup> And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law.
  - “All the people gathered as one man...” (v1).
  - “They told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses...” (v1).
  - “All the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law.” (v3).

# THE PEOPLE'S RESPECT FOR GOD

- Nehemiah 8:4–6; And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand, and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left hand. <sup>5</sup> And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood. <sup>6</sup> And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, “Amen, Amen,” lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

# THE DECLARING OF THE WORD

- The Persons who declared the word to the people
  - Nehemiah 8:2; “So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, ...”
  - Nehemiah 8:9; And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, “This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep.” For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law.
- Ezra:
  - Lead the reading
  - Was a priest and scribe
  - He prepared himself for this responsibility (See next slide).
- Levites
  - Accepted the responsibility to teach.

# EZRA'S PREPARATION TO TEACH THE WORD

- Ezra 7:10; 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.
  - He made sure his heart was right.
  - He studied the Law of the Lord.
  - To do it.
  - And to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.

# THE MONTH OF THE DECLARING OF THE WORD

- The reading of the Word to the people by Ezra began on the first day of the seventh month (v. 2) (corresponds to our October), but it did not end on that first day.
- Nehemiah 8:13; On the second day the heads of fathers' houses of all the people, with the priests and the Levites, came together to Ezra the scribe in order to study the words of the Law.
- During the week long Feast of Tabernacles (starts in the middle of the month) he read the word to the people.
  - Nehemiah 8:18; And day by day, from the first day to the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. They kept the feast seven days, and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly, according to the rule.

# THE DECLARING OF THE WORD WITH UNDERSTANDING

- Nehemiah 8:7–8; “Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, 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, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.”
- Ezra had some good Bible teachers among his fellow priests and Levites who helped him with this work of proclaiming the Word of God.
- They rendered the invaluable service of teaching the people.

# THE DELIGHT FROM THE DECLARING OF THE WORD

- Nehemiah 8:9–12
- <sup>9</sup> And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, “This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep.” For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law. <sup>10</sup> Then he said to them, “Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, **for the joy of the LORD is your strength.**” <sup>11</sup> So 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.

# SORROW BEFORE DELIGHT

- Nehemiah 8:9; “... For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law.”
- The Word that was read to them brought about conviction of sin.
  - As a nation, they had followed idols and were punished with captivity for it.
  - As a nation, they could see that the city and temple had lost much of its glory.
  - As individuals, they heard the commands to live a holy life every minute of every day and no doubt some wondered how hard would that be and could they live up to God’s holy word.
- The sorrow of the people revealed true repentance.
  - 2 Corinthians 7:10; “For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.”

# THE COMMAND NOT TO BE SORROWFUL

- Nehemiah 8:9; And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, “This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep.” For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law.
- Nehemiah 8:11; So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, “Be quiet, for this day is holy; do not be grieved.”
- The command not to mourn or weep was not to condemn “godly grief.”
- The people were mourning during a God-given feast day (Feast of Trumpets) which was to be a time of rejoicing.
- There is a time to be mourn and a time to rejoice.

# THE STRENGTH FROM DELIGHT

- Nehemiah 8:10; Then he said to them, “Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”
- The joy of the Lord is very different from the joy of the world.
- Paul tied together the word of the Lord and the joy of the Holy Spirit.
  - 1 Thessalonians 1:6; And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit,
- The Hebrew word translated “strength” means “protection.”
- The secret of joy is to believe what God says in His Word and act upon it.

# THE SHARING IN DELIGHT

- Nehemiah 8:10; Then he said to them, “Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”
- Nehemiah 8:12; 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.
- Nehemiah and others who exhorted the people to rejoice and not mourn emphasized the character of this joy by instructing the people to use this joy from the Word to inspire giving gifts to the needy.

# THE DUTY IN DELIGHT

- Nehemiah 8:14; “And they found it written in the Law that the LORD had commanded by Moses that the people of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month.”
  - This duty was a commemorative act in that it observed the time when the Israelites lived in the wilderness and had to dwell in tents when Moses was leading them from Egypt to Israel.
- Nehemiah 8:17; And all the assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and lived in the booths, for from the days of Jeshua the son of Nun to that day the people of Israel had not done so. And there was very great rejoicing.
  - There should always be “very great rejoicing” when we find and obey the duties of God.

# DEVOTION IN DELIGHT

- Nehemiah 8:18; “And day by day, from the first day to the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. They kept the feast seven days, and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly, according to the rule.”
- Their celebrating of the Feast of Tabernacles did not take them away from their devotion to the Word.