

Harvester Class, Perimeter Church
February 11, 2024
"Nehemiah: Faithfulness amid the Fragments"

[slide 1 – title slide]

Good morning, everyone. It is great to be with you this morning. We are into week 2 of our series in Nehemiah. I thought we could spend a little bit of time both looking at where we are headed and some quick review of where we have been.

[slide 2 – Where are we headed?]

Real quickly, here is the schedule for the next 6 weeks. I mentioned it took Nehemiah 52 days to rebuild the wall. As a mentioned, we will be in Nehemiah 49 days.

[slide 3 – Quick review]

Remember, Nehemiah is leading the third return. There have been two others prior to this one. The question was asked last week about which prophet foretold Cyrus. In Isaiah 44:28-45:1, some 150 years before Cyrus we read:

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.'"

45 Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus,
whose right hand I have grasped,
to subdue nations before him
and to loose the belts of kings,
to open doors before him
that gates may not be closed:

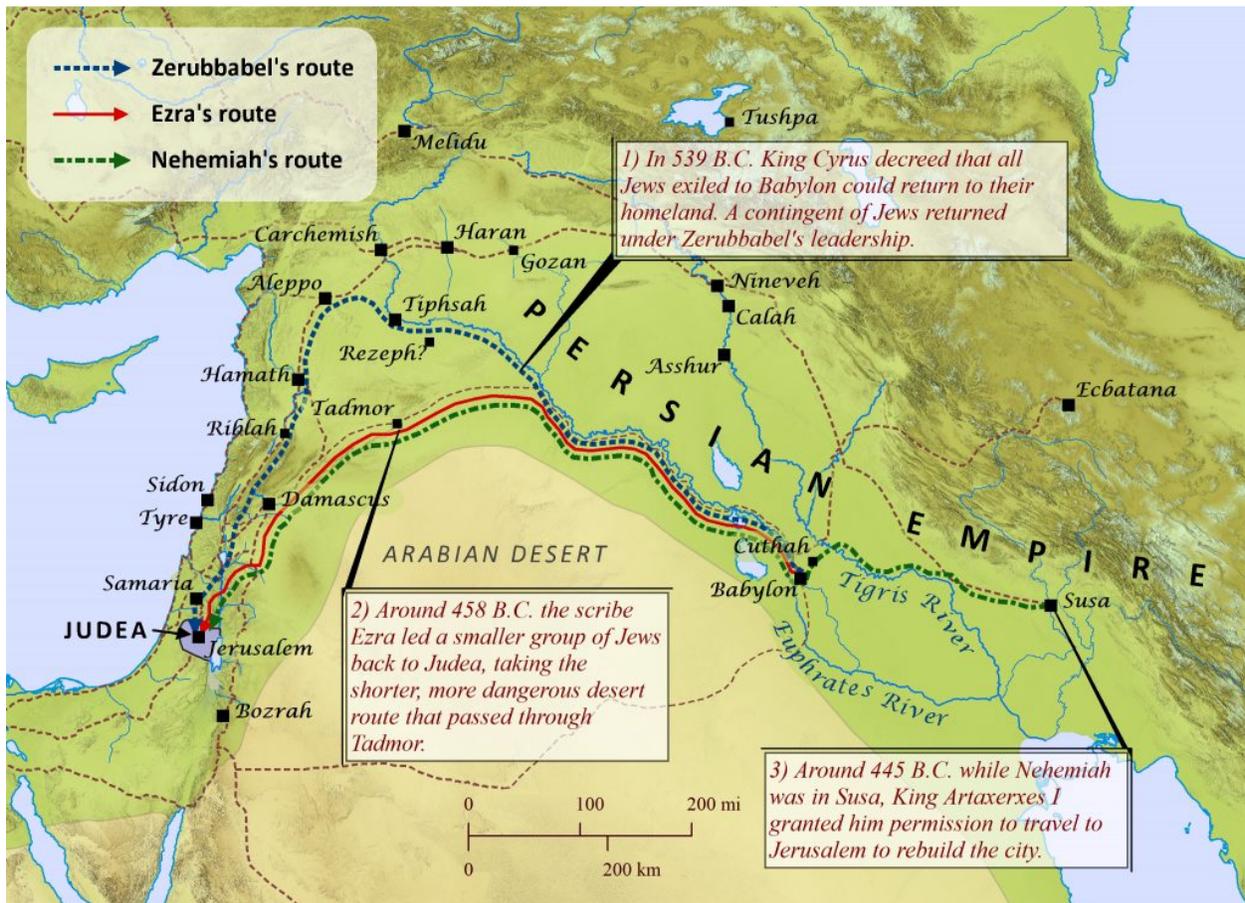
What passage does this, and Esther, Ezra and Nehemiah bring to mind?

Proverbs 21:1

The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord;
he turns it wherever he will.

[slide 4 – Context is our Friend, place]

Now let's talk about place.



I picked this map because it highlights all three returns. It was a journey of about 1,000 miles. This would take you anywhere

from four to seven months. Ezra tells us it took him 4 months (Ezra 7:9)

[slide 5 – Nehemiah 1:1-4]

The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah.

Now it happened in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Susa the citadel, ² 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. ³ 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."

⁴ 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.

[slide 6 – Nehemiah 1:5-7]

⁵ 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,⁶ 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 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. ⁷ We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses.

[slide 7 – Nehemiah 1:8-11]

⁸ Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the

peoples, ⁹ 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.' ¹⁰ They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand. ¹¹ O 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."

Now I was cupbearer to the king.

[slide 8 – Lessons on prayer]

Lessons about Prayer from Nehemiah

1. Personal – look at the language he uses.
2. Persistent – months of praying for this.
3. Penitent – he has solidarity with God's people.
4. Petitionary – as asking a friend.

"Nehemiah's public life was the outflow, and thus the revelation, of his personal life, and his personal life as his narrative shows it to us was steeped in, and shaped by habitual petitionary prayer, in which devotion to God, dependence on God, and desire for the glory of God found equal expression."

- J.I. Packer

[slide 9 – quote on prayer]

"The self-sufficient do not pray; they merely talk to themselves. The self-satisfied will not pray; they have no knowledge of their need. The self-righteous cannot pray; they have no basis on which to approach God."

- Cyril Barber

[slide 10 – Nehemiah 2:1-4]

In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. ² And the king said to me, “Why is your face sad, seeing you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of the heart.” Then I was very much afraid. ³ I said to the king, “Let the king live forever! Why should not my face be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' graves, lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?” ⁴ Then the king said to me, “What are you requesting?” So I prayed to the God of heaven.

[slide 11 – Reflections for the week]

1. What one principle from Nehemiah's prayer do you want to incorporate into your own prayer life in the coming weeks of Lent?
2. What things has God called you to do in service to him?
3. Is there anything that God is currently calling you to pray for AND plan for?