

## What God is Doing



## Act I: The Foundation of the Gospel

(Genesis 1-John 21)

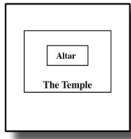
### Scene Three: A Nation (A Remnant) Returns

Step 1: Return: Temple Rebuilt (Ezra)

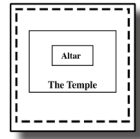
Step 2: Return: City Wall Rebuilt (Nehemiah)

Step 3: The Diaspora (Esther)

Step 4: Jesus Christ (M, M, L, & J)



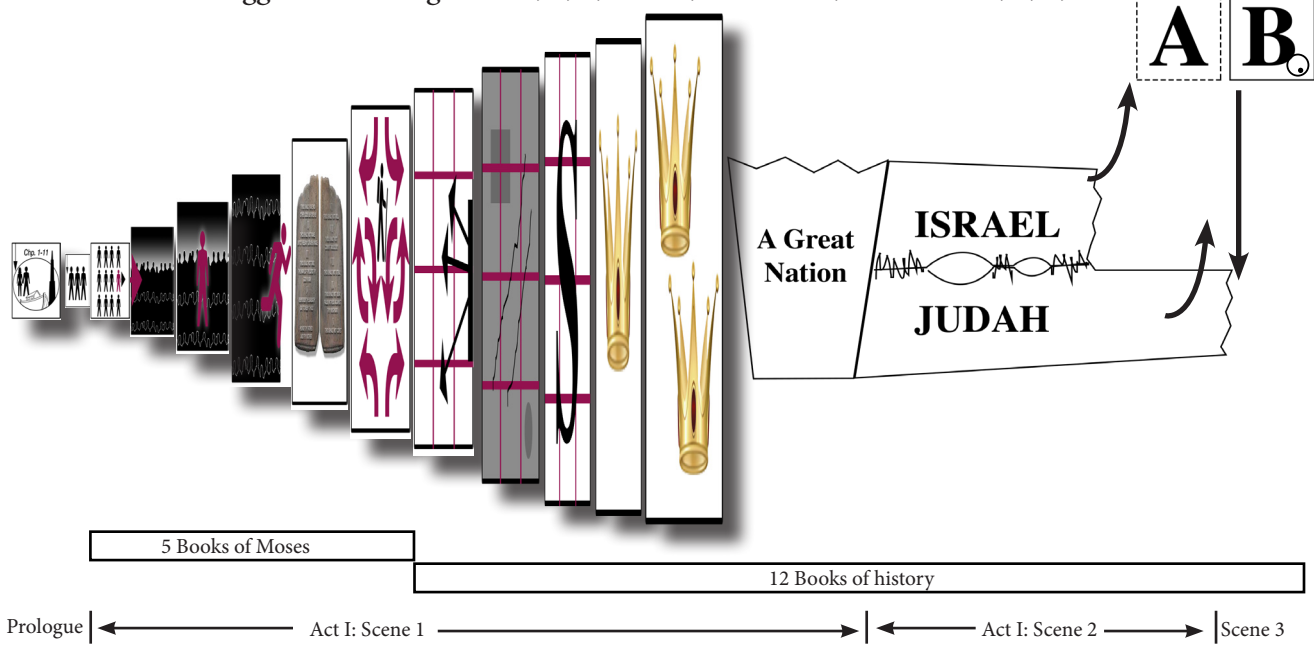
Act I: Scene Three



### Step 1: Return: Temple Rebuilt (Ezra)

### Step 2: Return: City Wall Rebuilt (Nehemiah)

Suggested Reading: Ezra 1, 6, 7, 10:1-8; Psalm 126; Nehemiah 1, 2, 6, 13



1. Out of thirty nine kings (between Judah and Israel) only four were good ones (and four others OK). The people “despised” the LORD!
2. Bright spots during this period?
3. Once Judah was in captivity, the “Great Nation” was reduced to this:

The glory of God had departed from the temple and from the land; the temple was a heap of ruins, a testimony that God’s people had forsaken him; Jerusalem is like allowed field; the promised land is emptied; there is no nation, let alone a great one, and God’s people live in exile in Babylon.

“By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept...” Psalm 137

4. A benefit of the captivity:

The “moral(s) of the story”: What God says...

God said:

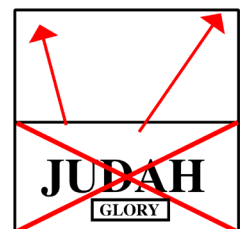
To Solomon he said, “I will tear the kingdom.” (1 Kings 11)



To Jeroboam He said, “I will strike and uproot Israel from this land.” (I Kings 14)



To Judah He said, “I will wipe Jerusalem like a dish.” (2 Kings 21)



God did:

The Israelites went home; only Judah and Benjamin remained loyal. (1 Kings 12)

The king of Assyria invaded and departed the Israelites to Assyria (2 Kings 17)

Babylon set fire to the temple and burned the city. (2 Kings 25)

5. In this mess, it is a comfort to hear what else He said through Jeremiah: “I will bring you back to this place; I have plans for you, to give you hope and a future. I will bring you back from captivity, back to the place for which I carried you into exile.”

6. It is not surprising, in light of Jeremiah 29 and Isaiah 44:28 and 45:1, to read in Ezra 1 that, “to fulfill the word spoke by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyprus... to make a proclamation: “The LORD, the God of heaven, has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah.”

### An Overview of Scene Three

*Ezra, Nehemiah, & Esther:  
“The Twins” & “The Orphan”*

	Step 1		Step 2	Step 3
	Ezra	Nehemiah		Esther
Outline	CH 1-6 CH 7-10	CH 1-6 CH 7-13		CH 1-10
Content	CH 1-6 = X CH 7-10 = Y	CH 1-6 = X CH 7-13 = Y		CH 1-10 = Z
Location	Jerusalem	Jerusalem		Persia/Susa
Central Character	“The hand of the LORD was upon us”	“The hand of the LORD was upon us”		Esther, Mordecai & “the Jews”

### Step 1: Return: Temple Rebuilt (Ezra) Step 2: Return: Wall Rebuilt (Nehemiah)

“We will come rejoicing”

- 1 When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,  
we were like those who dreamed.
- 2 Our mouths were filled with laughter,  
our tongues with songs of joy.  
Then it was said among the nations,  
“The Lord has done great things for them.”
- 3 The Lord has done great things for us,  
and we are filled with joy.
- 4 Restore our fortunes, Lord,  
like streams in the Negev.
- 5 Those who sow with tears  
will reap with songs of joy.
- 6 Those who go out weeping,  
carrying seed to sow,  
will return with songs of joy,  
carrying sheaves with them.

To understand Ezra and Nehemiah, we need to revisit the importance of a particular “place”

“You shall seek the LORD at the place which the LORD your God will choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there...; bring your sacrifices and offering there; there, the place the Lord shall choose; go there to offer on the alter the blood of your sacrifices, to the place the Lord chooses.” *Deuteronomy 12*

“The glory of the Lord filled His temple. Solomon: ‘I have indeed built a magnificent temple for you, place for you to dwell forever,’ Will God really dwell on earth...? may your eyes be open toward... this place of which you said, ‘My name shall be there,’ so you will hear the prayer your servant prays toward this place... In disputes between neighbors, they come before your alter in this temple... When defeated because they sinned — spread out your hands toward this temple... Foreigners pray toward this temple, for this house bears your name... War? Pray toward this city and this temple... Sin? pray toward the land given to you fathers, and the city and temple chosen by the Lord, built for His name. *1 Kings 12*

How can we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land?” Psalm 137

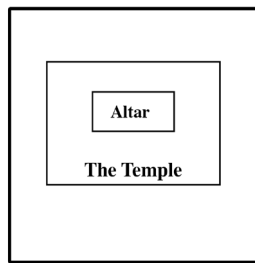
“You Jews claim that, ‘the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.’” **“Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.”** John 4

**Ezra and Nehemiah: Twin Outline**

Step 1

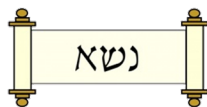
Step 2

1) Ezra 1-6  
Rebuild the Temple



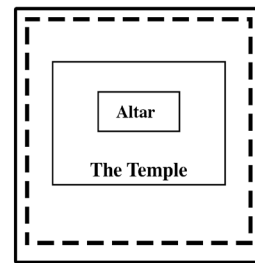
50,000 return; All Israel (12 tribes)  
The temple and altar were rebuilt  
They rejoiced; they wept

2) Ezra 7-10  
Re-Build the Law



A letter from the King;  
Reminiscence, Intermarriage,  
Confession and Repentance

1) Nehemiah 1-6  
Rebuild the City Wall



Nehemiah arrives; The wall begun: Not  
ornamental; to establish, protect & preserve  
Jerusalem. Despite opposition, the wall is  
completed with the help of God.

2) Nehemiah 7-13  
Re-Build the Law



Reading the Law; Confession of sin &  
dedicating the wall; Tobiah’s room, Levites’  
portion, the Sabbath & intermarriage

## Ezra's Prayer (Ezra 9) for the "Remnant"

Hearing that the people of Israel (including the priests and the Levites) had intermarried with foreign women grieved Ezra deeply. "...I tore my tunic and cloak, pulled hair from my head and beard and sat down appalled."

"O my God, I am too ashamed and disgraced to lift up my face to you... From the days of our forefathers until now, our guilt has been great. But for now, for a brief moment, the LORD our God has been gracious in leaving us a *remnant* and going us a firm place in his sanctuary... He has shown us kindness in the sight of the kings of Persia; He has granted us new life to rebuild the house of our God and repair its ruins...

But now, O our God, what can we say...? For we have disregarded the commands you gave through your servants the prophets when you said: 'The land you are entering to possess is a land polluted by the corruption of its peoples. By their detestable practices they have filled it with their impurity from one end to the other. Therefore, do not give your daughters in marriage to their sons or take their daughters for your sons. What has happened to us is a result of our evil deeds and our great guilt, and yet, our God, you have punished us less than our sins have deserved and given us a *remnant*...

Shall we again break your commands and intermarry with the peoples who commit such detestable practices? Would you not be angry enough with us to destroy us, leaving no *remnant*...? O LORD, God of Israel, you are righteous! We are left this day as a *remnant*..not one of us can stand in our presence."

Questions: If the 50,000 who returned are the "*remnant*," where are the vast majority of the Jews?

Was Israel really a nation at this time?

### Review Questions and Vocabulary: Act I, Scene Three, Steps 1&2 The Return

1. Summarize: What did the Jews lose when they went into captivity?
2. Summarize, in this context, "What He says He will do!"
3. **Why do we refer to the books of Ezra and Nehemiah as "twins"? Explain.**

### Act I, Scene Three, Steps One & Two (Ezra and Nehemiah) Vocabulary/Concept

- |              |                    |                   |
|--------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Remnant   | 5. Songs of Joy    | 9. The Wall       |
| 2. Idolatry  | 6. The place       | 10. Tobiah's room |
| 3. Cyrus     | 7. The Temple      | 11. Intermarraige |
| 4. Psalm 126 | 8. Rejoiced & Wept | 12. Diaspora      |