

Rebuild Timeline Unit



Outline of Lessons

WEEK #1—Review and Introduction

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| Sunday | Review of Timeline, “Beginnings” through “Punished” |
| Wednesday | The Foundation Laid (Zerubbabel) |

WEEK #2—The First Return; Story of Esther

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| Sunday | The Temple Completed (Haggai) |
| Wednesday | Danger to the Jews; Story of Esther, Part 1 |

WEEK #3—Esther, Deliverer; Ezra Returns

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| Sunday | Deliverance of the Jews; Story of Esther, Part 2 Esther—Foreshadows Christ |
| Wednesday | Second Return of God’s People: Ezra and the Reformed People |

WEEK #4—The Third Return--Nehemiah

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| Sunday | Nehemiah: The Wall is Rebuilt |
| Wednesday | Nehemiah: The Wall is Completed; the People are Restored |

"REBUILD" Essential Knowledge and Skills



Essential Knowledge. Students will know that...

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| Lesson 1a | 1. SW review all Timeline sections we have studied up till now. |
| Lesson 1b | 1. God raised the Persian King Cyrus up to help the Jews return to their homeland 2. God's people needed to rebuild their homes, lives, temple and relationship with God. 3. God was with His people even though they had sinned. |
| Lesson 2a | 1. God's temple could not be completed because of discouragement and poor priorities. 2. God raised up prophets to stir up the people and encourage them to finish the temple. 3. If we put God first that blessings will follow. 4. Zerubbabel was a part of God's plan to send the Messiah. |
| Lesson 2b | 1. God is always watching over His people. 2. God is protecting His people for His purpose. 3. Loyalty to God, although dangerous at times, is the right choice. 4. God is in control of kings and kingdoms. |
| Lesson 3a | 1. God is always watching over His people. 2. God is protecting His people for His purpose. 3. Loyalty to God, although dangerous at times, is the right choice. 4. God is in control of kings and kingdoms. |
| Lesson 3b | 1. God is ready to restore His people back to Him. 2. Restoring one's relationship with God sometimes means giving things up. 3. God expects His people to be holy and set apart from the beliefs of the world. 4. God is <u>not</u> an inclusive God. Not every belief is acceptable. 5. Godly leaders are important in the direction of our own lives. |
| Lesson 4a | 1. God will keep His covenant with His people 2. God is faithful to His people as seen in His protection while the people built the walls of Jerusalem 3. God's people need strong leaders 4. God's people can pray to God anywhere and anytime about anything and He will hear. |
| Lesson 4b | 1. God will keep His covenant with His people 2. God is faithful to His people as seen in His protection while the people built the walls of Jerusalem 3. God's people need strong leaders 4. God's people can pray to God anywhere and anytime about anything and He will hear. |

SKILL OBJECTIVES IN "REBUILD". Students Can...

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|--|---|
| 1. Tell the significance of Zerubbabel in the lineage of Christ. | <i>Explain the "Signet Ring" analogy from Haggai 2. Tell how Zerubbabel seals the lineage of both Mary and Joseph. Explain that Zerubbabel is like Christ in many ways.</i> |
| 2. Recognize descriptions of these "Rebuild" people: | <i>King Cyrus, Zerubbabel, Ezra, Esther, Nehemiah, Mordecai, Haman, King Ahasueras, King Artaxerxes</i> |
| 3. Define these words: | <i>Renew, Revive, Restore, Signet Ring, Archives, chronicles</i> |



THE REMNANT RETURNS



FIRST RETURN—538 B.C.

- Led by **Zerubbabel**, descendant of David
 - About 50,000 returned
 - Sent by King Cyrus of Persia
 - Goal—to rebuild the Temple



SECOND RETURN—457 B.C.

- Led by **Ezra** the Scribe
- A much smaller group returns
- Sent by King Artaxerxes of Persia
 - Goal—to beautify the Temple
- Goal—to teach God's people the laws



THIRD RETURN—444 B.C.

- Led by **Nehemiah**
- A small group returns
- Sent by King Artaxerxes of Persia
- Goal—to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem

Timeline Events Review

INSTRUCTIONS: Match the event with the correct TIMELINE period. TIMELINE periods may be used more than once.

- A. BEGINNINGS
- B. FATHERS
- C. SLAVERY
- D. VICTORY

- E. STRUGGLES
- F. UNITED
- G. DIVIDED
- H. PUNISHED

- _____ 1. The law given on a mountain
- _____ 2. A coat of many colors
- _____ 3. God's people want a king
- _____ 4. The Flood
- _____ 5. The temple built
- _____ 6. The cycle of sin
- _____ 7. Egypt's famine
- _____ 8. "What is it?" from heaven
- _____ 9. Creation
- _____ 10. The ten plagues
- _____ 11. The fiery furnace
- _____ 12. Peg through the head
- _____ 13. Selling of a birthright
- _____ 14. Tower of Babel
- _____ 15. The golden calf
- _____ 16. The first Passover
- _____ 17. The lion's den
- _____ 18. Pharaoh's slavery of God's people
- _____ 19. Judges rule
- _____ 20. Two kingdoms of God's people

TIMELINE PEOPLE REVIEW

INSTRUCTIONS: Match the name of the person with TIMELINE period he or she appeared in. You might have more than one letter for some blanks.

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|---------------|--------------|
| A. BEGINNINGS | E. STRUGGLES |
| B. FATHERS | F. UNITED |
| C. SLAVERY | G. DIVIDED |
| D. VICTORY | H. PUNISHED |

| TIMELINE PERIOD: | PERSON: |
|-------------------------|----------------|
| | 1. Joshua |
| | 2. David |
| | 3. Moses |
| | 4. Elijah |
| | 5. Deborah |
| | 6. Adam |
| | 7. Aaron |
| | 8. Daniel |
| | 9. Abraham |
| | 10. Cain |
| | 11. Saul |
| | 12. Gideon |
| | 13. Noah |
| | 14. Solomon |
| | 15. Elisha |
| | 16. Samuel |
| | 17. Goliath |
| | 18. Samson |
| | 19. Lot |
| | 20. Sarah |

Which Came First?

Instructions: underline the event or person who comes first in the Bible—

1. Egyptian captivity or Babylonian captivity?
2. Moses meets Zipporah at the well or Abraham's servant meets Rebekah at the well?
3. Solomon or Ahab?
4. Elijah or Samuel?
5. The first judge or the first king?
6. David slays Goliath or Gideon blows his trumpet?
7. Jacob marries Rachel or Jacob marries Leah?
8. Moses in Pharaoh's house or Joseph in Potiphar's house?
9. Daniel and his friends refuse the king's food or Daniel thrown in the lion's den?
10. Samson or Saul?
11. Jezebel or Sarah?
12. The Plagues or the Flood?
13. The crossing of the Jordan or the crossing of the Red Sea?
14. The Tabernacle or the Temple?
15. The destruction of the wall of Jericho or the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah?
16. The fiery furnace or fire consuming the sacrifice on Mt. Carmel?
17. Isaac is born or Moses is born?
18. Israel (northern kingdom) goes into captivity or Judah (southern kingdom) goes into captivity?
19. Ehud kills a king with a knife in the belly or the Ark of the Covenant is stolen?
20. Nebuchadnezzar dreams of a statue or Pharaoh dreams of cows?



REBUILD LESSON 1B—The Foundation for the Temple is Laid

OBJECTIVES:

1. SW know that God raised King Cyrus up to help the Jews return to their homeland
2. SW know that God's people needed to rebuild their homes, lives, temple and relationship with God.
3. SW know that God was with His people even though they had sinned.

STORIES TO BE HIGHLIGHTED:

Cyrus, the King of Persia Gives Permission for the Jews to Return to Jerusalem

Zerubbabel and Jeshua Lead the First Group Home

The Foundation of the Temple is Laid

INTRODUCTION:

1. Have students look up these scriptures:
 - Jeremiah 29:10—Prophecy of the 70 years of captivity
 - Isaiah 44:28—Prophecy of **Cyrus**, the Persian king being God's "shepherd"; would allow God's people to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple.
 - Isaiah 45:1—Prophecy about **Cyrus** being God's "anointed."
2. **Setting the Stage:** God's people were in exile for **70 years**. **Nebuchadnezzar** was no longer in power, and after two poor leaders, a new leader comes to Babylon. His name is **Cyrus the Great**. Cyrus was a **Persian**. This was the beginning of the Persian Empire. Do you remember Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the great statue? Remember that God predicted that the **Persians** (the silver part of the statue) would come to power after the **Babylonians**!
3. History tells us that when **Cyrus** overthrew the Babylonians, he entered the city to grateful people. He had the reputation of being **kind and gentle**. We'll see in the lesson if that was true.
4. Our lesson today comes from the book of **Ezra**. **Ezra** was a **scribe** in the service of Cyrus. To be a **scribe** meant that you had received special training and schooling. Not only is Ezra going to write (through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) this and other books in the Bible, he will also be a character in the stories we are going to study in this Timeline period.

LESSON: PART 1—CYRUS HELPS GOD'S PEOPLE RETURN

1. **Read Ezra 1:1 - 4.** (*See worksheet in students booklet for students to fill out as the story is told*)
 - King Cyrus gave all the captive people his **permission** to go home. Can you imagine the joy the people felt?
 - He also gave them his **protection** as he signed a decree in royal ink and "sealed" it with his "**signet ring**." Define "signet ring."
 - **Signet rings** are going to play a part in at least 3 stories in this Timeline Unit. When a Persian king sealed a document with their signet ring, it meant that it could not be revoked by anyone, including the king!
2. **Read Ezra 1:6 - 11.** King Cyrus also **participated** in the Jews' return by decreeing others to send silver and gold, livestock, and freewill offerings with the freed captives.

- **Permission, Protection and Participation!** Even though God had punished His people for their great sins, He forgave them. He still loved them and made plans for them to return. God was working through Cyrus to create the best possible scenario for His people to go back to the Promised Land!
- Even today, when God's people repent with all their hearts, God forgives them and gives them great blessings!
- And now...it's time for God's people to return. What things do they need to rebuild at this point in time?--
 - Return and **rebuild their homes**. Remember, everything in the city had been destroyed by the Babylonians.
 - Return and **rebuild their lives**. They had to find a new way of making a living, a new place to live.
 - Return and **rebuild their temple**. The temple had also been destroyed.
 - Return and **rebuild their city walls**. The city was without protection of any kind.
 - Return and rebuild their **spirits** and their **relationship to God**. (They had sinned against God. Now it is time to start over spiritually)

LESSON: PART 2-ZERUBBABEL LEADS THE FIRST GROUP HOME.

1. **Ezra 2.** Just scan the verses and see how Ezra lists the names of the people who returned--the priests, the Levites and the servants.
2. **Read Ezra 2:64 - 67.** How many people in all returned with Zerubbabel? 42,360, plus 7,337 servants and 200 men and women singers. 736 horses, 245 mules, 435 camels and 6,720 donkeys.
3. **Read 2:68 - 70.** The people who returned gave offerings for money for the rebuilding of the new temple.

- **Not all of God's people in exile returned to rebuild Jerusalem. Think of several reasons why some of God's people would choose not to return:**
 - They were comfortable in their new surroundings.
 - They may have been too old or too weak to return.
 - Returning meant starting from scratch. There were no homes, no places of worship, and no businesses. Everything was in ruins!
 - Some people that did not return with Zerubbabel came later in one of two other returning groups. And we will study about them later.
 - God was still watching over His people that did not return. We will learn this in later stories, also.

So...we have another EXODUS like the one in the SLAVERY timeline period. Let's compare the two exodes:

| SLAVERY TIMELINE PERIOD | REBUILD TIMELINE PERIOD |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 600,000 left Egypt • In SLAVERY God's people leave Egypt with an army after them! • No one chooses to stay in Egypt. • In SLAVERY God's people are led by Moses and the future high priest, Aaron • In SLAVERY their destination was Canaan, the land of promise | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 42,000 leave Babylon on the first return • In REBUILD God's people leave Babylon voluntarily and with the king's blessing! • Some choose to stay in Babylon. • Now in REBUILD, God's people will be led by the grandson of the last King of Judah, Zerubabbel, and the priest, Joshua (Ezra 2:2) • Now God's people will go back home to Judah to fulfill a promise |

LESSON: PART 3—GRIM REALITIES

1. When God's people got back to the land of their history, they were faced with some grim realities:
 - *The once beautiful city lay in ruins.*
 - *Barren fields left unattended, wild animals reaming.*
 2. **Read Ezra 3:1 - 7.** They were determined to work hard and do what God wanted them to do. They began to build altars...good! They began to offer burnt offerings...good! They even celebrated the feast days again...good! And they began to build the LORD's house...very good! But they also had some **enemies** as neighbors. And that is going to cause them much trouble.
 3. **Read Ezra 3:8 - 11.** All those from 20 years and older were to work on the house of the LORD. The foundation was laid and the people gave a great shout, praising and giving thanks to the LORD.
 4. **Read Ezra 3:12 - 13.** The older people were disappointed in the newly laid foundation. They could see that it was not going to be nearly as grand as the old temple.
- On Wednesday night we will see what happens after the foundation is laid. Will the temple be completed in good time?*
- What about the enemies who live all around them? Will they just let this temple of God's be built? We will see as we continue to read in Ezra.*





REBUILD LESSON 2A—The First Return—the Temple Completed

OBJECTIVES—ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE:

1. God's temple could not be completed because of discouragement and poor priorities.
2. God raised up prophets to stir up the people and encourage them to finish the temple.
3. If we put God first, then blessings will follow.
4. Zerubbabel was a part of God's plan to send the Messiah.

OBJECTIVES—ESSENTIAL SKILLS:

1. Tell the significance of Zerubbabel in the lineage of Christ.

STORIES TO BE HIGHLIGHTED:

Outsiders Frustrate God's People in the Rebuilding of the Temple

Haggai and Zechariah Stir up God's People

Zerubbabel—the "Signet Ring"

INTRODUCTION:

1. Read Ezra 3:1 - 3—*"And when the seventh month had come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered together as one man to Jerusalem. 2 Then Jeshua the son of Jozadak and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and his brethren, arose and built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the Law of Moses the man of God. 3 Though fear had come upon them because of the people of those countries, they set the altar on its bases; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD, both the morning and evening burnt offerings."*
 - The remnant is back in Jerusalem!
 - They have laid the foundation of the temple.
 - They are observing feasts and offering sacrifices to the LORD.
 - Worship has been restored.
2. But this news spread to many of the surrounding people. Remember, in the absence of the Jewish people from their homeland, people from other nations had come there and settled in. They might not be too happy about the Jews returning!
 - Read Ezra 4:1 - 3. The people of the surrounding areas had heard about the return of God's people and offered to help in the building of the temple!
 - This request is denied by Zerubbabel and Jeshua. Why? What harm would there be in letting outsiders help?
 1. *They came from pagan cultures—idol worshippers*
 2. *Help from ungodly people would damage their relationship with God again*
 3. *Their heritage of being a people “set apart” would be lost*
 4. *Line of promise (Messiah) would be threatened*

LESSON: PART 1—OPPOSITION TO THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

1. **Read Ezra 4:4 - 5.** The people of the land tried to discourage the people of Judah and they troubled them in building. They hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus King of Persia.
2. **Read Ezra 4:24—***"Thus the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem ceased, and it was discontinued until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia."*

 So, for 16 years, the work that was being done one the temple stopped! But God's people are living in homes. Hmm. They apparently have been building, but not for God. What does this tell you about their priorities?

LESSON: PART 2—PROPHETS SENT FROM GOD

1. In that year, the prophet **Haggai** with his companion prophet **Zechariah** gives a powerful sermon about their wrong priorities!
 - **Read Haggai 1:1 - 8.** Haggai tells them that the reason they have no blessings is because they have put their own work ahead of God's work.
 - **Vs. 8—“Go...Bring...Build.”** Haggai is referring to the work on the LORD's temple. The people have not put the LORD first on their priority list.
 - When God is not first, things do not go well!
 - Haggai doesn't say “please, when you are ready, at your convenience,” or “let's take a vote.” He preaches to just do it! **Go...Bring...Build!**
2. God's people feared their enemies, but apparently did not fear the One they needed to fear--**The LORD**. But after Haggai's preaching, things began to change. **Vs. 12** tells us that Zerubbabel and Jeshua feared the LORD and **obeyed His words**.
 - **Read Haggai 2:4 - 5.** God knows about their fears and gives them encouragement through Haggai. **“Be strong...and work; for I am with you.”**
 - **Read Haggai 2:6 - 9.** God says He will fill this temple with glory and the glory of the latter temple will be greater than the former.
3. This must have been great preaching! **Read Ezra 5:1 - 2:**

“Then the prophet Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophets, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them. 2 So Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak rose up and began to build the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them, helping them.”
4. God's people begin to build the temple again! But Satan wasn't through with them yet!

LESSON: PART 3—MORE DISCOURAGEMENT, BUT NEW HOPE AND BLESSING

1. But back to the enemies...new enemies. **Tattenai** and **Shehtar-Bozna** and their companions. They ask Zerubbabel, who gave them permission to build again?
 - But God is with His people and nothing the enemies can do will make the people stop building.
2. **Letter #1.** Tattenai decides to send a tattle-tale letter to **King Darius**. **Read Ezra 5:8 - 17.** God's people had said that they had Cyrus' permission to build this temple. Now God's enemies want proof. Good King Darius, check this out for us!
 - King Darius issues a decree and a search is made in the archives in Babylon. And a scroll is found. The original decree of **King Cyrus** is found concerning the rebuilding of the Temple.
3. **Letter #2—Read Ezra 6:3 - 5.** King Darius issued a **decree** declaring that the Temple is to be rebuilt!
 - **Verse 6 - 7.** Furthermore, Tattenai, stay far away from there!

- Verse 8 - 12. Give them the things they need for the building project! And if people do not comply with this command, let them be hanged.
4. Tattenai obeys and the house of the LORD is built and completed in the 6th year of King Darius!
 5. Three months after the completion of the temple, God speaks to Haggai (**read Haggai 2:19**) and says that He will bless His people now. **They have put Him first.** He also gives a special message to **Zerubbabel**. What do we know about his man?
 - He led the return of the first group of exiles.
 - He was a governor of Judah, an official position given him by King Cyrus, the Great.
 - Compare Zerubbabel to Christ:

| | |
|--|--|
|  ZERUBBABEL | CHRIST |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Zerubbabel led the people out of exile in Babylon. ➢ Zerubbabel was a “son of David” through both his mother and father. ➢ Zerubbabel was a direct descendant of the kings of Judah. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Christ leads His followers out of the exile of sin into a saved relationship. ➢ Christ was a direct descendant of David through both His mother and His father. ➢ He is sometimes called “The Son of David.” |

Zerubbabel and Christ were both of royal blood; tribe of Judah; direct descendants of the kinas.



But there is more significance to Zerubbabel! Read Haggai 2:23—“In that day...I will take you, Zerubbabel...and will make you like a signet ring; for I have chosen you.”

- **Read Matthew 1:12.** This is Jesus’ lineage traced back through Joseph’s line. Zerubbabel is mentioned in this list. He was an ancestor of Jesus’ earthly father, Joseph. In this way, Jesus is a direct descendant of the kings of Judah, going all the way back to David.
- **Read Luke 3:23 - 38.** Jesus’ lineage is traced back through His mother **Mary**, who also was from the tribe of Judah. Do you see Zerubbabel’s name? (vs. 27)
- Joseph’s lineage and Mary’s lineage **cross** and **combine** in the person of Zerubbabel. This “**seals**” the two lines of Christ in the person of Zerubbabel. This is a **foreshadowing** of the coming **Messiah**. God uses this event to stir up His people and to remind them that the **Messiah** is really coming.
- Have the students look at the handout (Student Booklet Unit 9-Page 7—“Signet Ring”) in their booklets regarding Zerubbabel.

- › (NOTE TO TEACHER: Use the Unit 9-Page 7 as an overhead, handout or worksheet)



CONCLUSIONS:

Well, the temple is completed! Let's see what God's people have rebuilt:

- › The people have rebuilt their homes.
- › They have rebuilt the temple.
- › What about their relationship to God? Has this been rebuilt?
- › And what about the walls of Jerusalem?

There is still some **rebuilding** to do. **What can we take from this lesson?**

- *Put God first! How exactly do we do this? What things do we put before God?*
- *Will we be blessed if we don't put God first in our lives? NO!*
- *Will God bless us if we put Him first in our lives? Yes!!*



REBUILD LESSON 2B—Esther Part 1—Danger to the Jews

OBJECTIVES:

1. God is always watching over His people.
2. God protects His people for His purpose.
3. Loyalty to God, although dangerous at times, is the right choice.
4. God is in control of kings and kingdoms.

INTRODUCTION:

1. The story of Esther takes place in the country of **Persia**, in the capital city of **Susa**, or Shushan.
2. The king of Persia at this time is **Ahasueras** (Xerxes) who was the son of **Darius** the first, who allowed the Jewish people to finish the building of the Temple. **Ahasueras** was a boisterous man of emotional extremes, whose actions often didn't make sense. We will see this as we study the book.
3. The book of Esther is very interesting. There are approximately **10 feasts** mentioned in only 10 chapters! Also, there is **something missing** in the book that is not missing in any other book in the Bible! (**NOTE TO TEACHER: God's name is never mentioned in this book! However, His providence is very evident in the entire story**) If you know what it is you can write it down on a piece of paper and give it to me before class on Wednesday for an extra treat!

LESSON: PART 1—AN UNBELIEVABLE FEAST

1. **Read Esther 1:1 - 4.** King Ahasueras is in his palace (at Susa) holding banquet for all his nobles and officials. History tells us that this is the feast he had shortly before his military campaign against Alexander the Great.
2. This military banquet goes on for **180 days!** That is almost 6 months!! It is probably the winter season because we know that kings go off to war during the spring. (2 Samuel 11:1)
3. King Ahasueras' wealth and possessions were unbelievable! **Read 1:6 - 9:**
 - Hangings of white and blue linen (draperies) in the garden fastened with cords of white linen and purple material to silver rings on marble pillars.
 - Couches of gold and silver.
 - Floors with mosaic designs made of marble, mother of pearl and other expensive stones.
 - Wine served in goblets of gold, every goblet different from the other.
 - Royal wine in abundance
 - Stewards that wait on the guests hand and foot.
4. At the same time the king is entertaining the men, **Queen Vashti**, his wife, is entertaining the women.
5. **Read 1:10 - 12.** The king, who is high spirits from drinking wine, sends his 7 eunuchs to go and bring his queen over to show off her beauty. Queen Vashti refuses to come and the king “burned with anger.”

 *I wonder why Queen Vashti refused to come? (Let the kids explore this idea) Could it be that she had more dignity for herself, and self-respect than the king? The king wanted to show her off to all the other men, who were also drunk with wine. Perhaps she thought that this was insulting and beneath her as queen of Persia. I think Vashti is kind of a heroine in this story! She knew she was not a cheap possession—she was not a piece of trash. She knew it was wrong and she refused to cooperate.*

6. **Read 1:15.** The king consulted with his wise men about what to do about the queen's refusal. The king wanted to know what should be done "*according to the law.*"

 *I'm sorry for Vashti that this happened because she was trying to show modesty and the Persian women were noted for that. It is a good thing for a woman to be modest. We are going to find out that she risked the possibility of divorce or even death for such a refusal. However, I am glad that the king was interested in the law. Later on in the story, his interest in the laws of the land will be beneficial to God's people!*

7. The king's advisors tell him to put Vashti away as queen for the example it would give other women to be disobedient to their husbands. So King Ahasueras issues a "royal decree" that Vashti is not to enter the presence of the king and that *someone else will be chosen to take her place*. This decree was sent to all his provinces in their own language to be read that every man should be ruler over his own household.

LESSON: PART 2—ESTHER IS CHOSEN

1. **Chapter 2.** At this point in time, a search is made for beautiful young girls to be brought before the king. They will be prepared and perfumed until the king decides to look at them. They were given beauty preparations for 12 months!
2. **Read 2:5 - 7.** A Jew named Mordecai was one of the captives who lived in Susa. He was raising his cousin, **Esther** because she was an orphan. The Bible says she was lovely and beautiful. The name Esther means "**Star of the East**."
3. **Read 2:8 - 9.** Esther was picked by the officials to be among the young women. Is God working in this story? Yes. Is God mindful of His people wherever they may be? Yes! Esther was given favor in the eyes of the custodian of the women. She was given extra beauty preparations above her allowance and she was given the best place in the house of the women.
4. **Read 2:10 - 11.** Esther had a **secret**. She had not told anyone of her nationality or her family background because Mordecai had forbidden her to do so. God was with Esther while she was being prepared for the king. Mordecai loved Esther and carefully watched to see what was taking place in the palace.
5. **Read 2:15 - 18.** Esther was finally brought before King Ahasueras. The king loved Esther more than all the other women, so he put the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. Then the king made a great feast, the **Feast of Esther**, for all his officials and servants. It was a holiday and there was much gift-giving.

LESSON: PART 3—MORDECAI REVEALS AN ASSASSINATION PLOT

1. **Read 2:21 - 23.** Mordecai sat in the king's gate so that he could keep an eye on Esther. While he did this, he overheard a *plot to assassinate King Ahasueras*. He told Esther about

it and she informed the king. The perpetrators were hanged and Mordecai's name and what he had done was written in the *book of the chronicles* in the presence of the king. This seems like an extremely minor incident in the story, but believe me, it will be an important detail later on!

- *Did you notice that Mordecai seems to be in the right place at the right time? Here he is, trying to see after the welfare of Esther, and while he was doing this good thing, he was in just the right place to do a good deed for the king! We will see later how God used this good deed to help his people. Do you think it is important for a Christian to be in the right places at the right time?*

LESSON: PART 4—HAMAN'S WICKED PLOT

1. Read 3:1 - 2. Haman is promoted and given a seat above all the princes who were with him. Because he was such an important individual, all the king's servants bowed and paid homage to him, according to the king's command. But Mordecai refused to bow to Haman.
2. Read 3:5 - 6. Haman was filled with wrath toward Mordecai, but he was so wicked that instead of punishing Mordecai, he decided to *destroy all the Jews in the whole kingdom!*
3. 3:7. A day is decided upon when this destruction will take place. It will happen 11 months later.
4. 3:8 - 11. Haman convinces the king that this is a good idea. He talks him into writing a decree and sealing it with his signet ring. Remember the significance of the **signet ring**? No decree so sealed was to be reversed!

- *Can you believe that a king could be talked into such a wicked plan? This tells me that king Ahasueras was not paying much attention to the details of running his kingdom.*

Remember, he was the most powerful king in the world at this time. He didn't have to listen to anybody—he had wise men in abundance working for him! He had the ways and means to search out important matters.

- *But here he is—letting someone else do his thinking for him! He could have asked a few questions: Who are these “certain people” that you are referring to, Haman? How do you know that they are not keeping the king's laws?*

- *But no. He was rather a lazy person I think. He was happy to let someone else do all his governing for him. And this turned out to be a disaster that he had to deal with much later.*

- *Do we let other people do our thinking for us? Are we too lazy to think about the consequences of our actions? Are our opinions not worth listening to or even having? We need to listen to our conscience and do our own thinking. This takes energy and sometimes it takes courage.*

5. Read 3:12 - 15. The decree was written and copied by the scribes in every language and sent out throughout all the king's provinces. It said that on a certain day (the 13th day of the 12th month), all the Jews, young and old, little children and women were to be annihilated and that their possessions were to be plundered. The city of Shushan was perplexed. Even people who were not Jews were disturbed by this decree.

- *This was an evil, sinister and awful plan! It all had to do with Haman's pride. His promotion to the top position had caused him to think more of himself than he should. Just as Daniel refused to pay honor to another king's decree when it interfered with his daily relationship to God, so does Mordecai refuse to bow to anyone other than his God.*
- *Is it just coincidence that Esther is chosen to be queen? Is it just good luck that Mordecai overheard the plot against the king? God was obviously watching over this situation.*
- *Next, we'll see Haman's plan backfire. We'll see Esther's courage. And we'll see God working His plan and planning His work to bring about the salvation of His people!*
- *Can you tell, yet, what is missing from this book of the Bible?*



REBUILD LESSON 3A—Esther Saves the Jews from Destruction

OBJECTIVES:

1. God is always watching over His people.
2. God is protecting His people for His purpose.
3. Loyalty to God, although dangerous at times, is the right choice.
4. God is in control of kings and kingdoms.

ESSENTIAL SKILLS:

Students will recognize descriptions of these REBUILD characters: Esther, King Ahasueras, Haman, and Mordecai

REVIEW:

- Ahasueras' feast; Vashti's refusal to come to the banquet
- Esther's selection as queen (Esther is a Jewess)
- Haman as second position to the king
- The plot to assassinate the king uncovered by Mordecai and recorded
- Mordecai's refusal to bow and pay homage to Haman
- The men cast "Pur" or lots to select day of carrying out plot to destroy the Jews
- Persian decree made by Haman with the king's signet ring.

LESSON: PART 1—ESTHER'S CRISIS

1. **Read chapter 4:1 - 3.** When Mordecai and the Jews hear about Haman's evil decree, there is great mourning! They wore sackcloth, and were weeping and wailing.
2. **4:4 - 9.** Esther doesn't seem to be aware of the decree. It is told to Esther that Mordecai is wearing sackcloth and ashes and she sends to find out what is the matter. Mordecai sends back a message to her to go to the king to plead their case.
3. **4:10 - 12.** Esther sends back another message to Mordecai that she has not been called in to the king's presence for 30 days. It was against the law for anyone to go **uninvited** to the king's presence and to do so would mean **death** unless the king held out his **golden scepter** to the person.
4. **4:13 - 14.** Mordecai sends back his famous reply: **"Yet, who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"** It is obvious that Mordecai understands that God has put Esther in this position Himself to bring about the salvation of His people.

■ **Have you noticed how God is watching over the events in this story? One of His own people has been put into a position at the palace to have some influence in order to save His people. Now what do you think Esther will do? How will she handle this crisis?**

5. **4:15 - 17.** Esther does not lose her cool. She asks that prayers and fasting be made for her by the Jews for 3 days and nights and she will do the same thing. **"If I perish, I perish."**

■ **Is it important when we have a big problem in our lives that we first go to God in prayer? I don't think that Esther and her people knew exactly what to pray for—we don't always know. But they put their lives in His hands to ask for deliverance somehow.**

 Remember, we don't have to give God a plan—He knows what we need even before He asks us. God will find a way to help us even when we don't know what we should ask for!

LESSON: PART 2—ESTHER'S PLAN

1. **Read 5:1 - 3.** After 3 days, Esther had a plan. She went to the king's court and he looked upon her with favor! He held out his golden scepter to her and she came forward and touched the top of the scepter. He asked her what her request was and offered her up to half the kingdom! She must have looked like a knockout!
2. **5:4 - 5.** Esther bided her time about her petition and instead invited the king and Haman to a banquet in their honor that very day.
3. **5:6 - 8.** At this banquet, the king again asked Esther what was her petition. She invited the king and Haman to **another** banquet on the next day!
4. **5:9 - 12.** Haman goes home after the first banquet so puffed up with pride about all his good fortune—his great riches, his many children, the ways in which the king had promoted him, being invited twice to a banquet given by the beautiful Queen Esther!
5. **5:13 - 14.** However, Haman tells his wife and his friends that it doesn't mean anything to him because of that Jew, **Mordecai** sitting at the king's gate not bowing to him. His wife suggests that Haman build a fifty foot **gallows** so that Mordecai can be hanged on it the very next day, if it pleases the king. Well, that was just the ticket. It pleased Haman very much to have that gallows built!

LESSON: PART 3—MORDECAI'S TRIUMPH OVER HAMAN

1. **Read 6:1 - 3.** King Ahasueras has insomnia that night and gets up and reads the book of the records of his **chronicles** (the history of his acts as king). He comes across the event where **Mordecai** exposed the **assassination plot** to kill the king. The king asks his eunuch what has been done for Mordecai. “Nothing has been done for him.”

 Now do you see why the little side story of Mordecai uncovering the assassination plot is so important??? Do you see God working His plan?
2. **6:4 - 6.** The king asks who is in the court at this moment. It seems that **Haman** is there. He is brought in and the king asks him what should be done for the man who the king delights to honor? Of course, Haman thought the king was talking about himself! Haman's pride was unbelievable! So he tells the king what should be done—the man should wear a *royal robe*, ride on a *horse* the king has ridden, and a noble prince should *parade* him on horse back through the city square with proclamations made as he walks along.
3. **6:10—Surprise, Surprise!** The man the king wishes to honor is none other than **Mordecai**, the Jew.
4. **6:11 - 14.** Haman is selected to parade Mordecai around the city, and he is extremely humiliated and embarrassed. He returns to his house with his head covered and his wife thinks Haman will surely fall before Mordecai. Just then, messengers come to take Haman to Esther's second feast.

LESSON: PART 4—RESULTS OF ESTHER'S COURAGE

1. **Read 7:1 - 4.** At the second banquet, which lasted 2 days, **Queen Esther** told of the **evil plot** against her people. **Ahasueras** doesn't quite make the connection about Esther being a Jew.
2. **7:5 - 7.** **Esther** told the king that the **adversary and enemy** was the wicked **Haman!** The king was so angry that he stormed off into the palace garden. Haman pleaded with Esther for his life.
3. **7:8 - 10.** In Haman's pleading, he fell across **Esther's couch** (with her on it!) just as the king walked back in. The king thought that Haman was trying to assault his queen! One of the Eunuchs told the king that Haman had built a gallows for Mordecai. The king said to "hang him on it!" It was done and then the king's wrath subsided.
4. **8:1 - 3.** **Esther** was given Haman's house; **Mordecai** was honored and given the **signet ring** which Haman wore! Esther asked the king to undo this evil plot.
5. **8:7 - 11.** The king gave Esther and Mordecai the authority to write a **new decree**. These were the terms of the **new decree**:
 - *Jews in every city could gather together*
 - *Jews could protect themselves from harm on the day that the annihilation was to take place.*
 - *Jews could destroy, kill and destroy all forces that would harm them.*
6. **Read 9:6.** In the 12th month, the 13th day (the day that had been chosen by Haman when he cast the dice called "the Pur"), both decrees went into effect. On the first day, 500 men in Shushan and **Haman's 10 sons** were killed. On the next day, 300 men in Shushan and 75,000 in other provinces were killed by the Jews.
7. **Mordecai** became a very important and powerful man in the Persian kingdom. It says that his fame spread throughout all the provinces. He became second only to King Ahasueras.

■ HOW WAS GOD TAKING CARE OF HIS PEOPLE AND WATCHING OVER THEM?

- *He raised up Esther to be a queen so that she could influence the king for the good of God's people*
- *Mordecai was honored for his loyalty and in the end, even Haman's deep hatred could not prevail over him.*
- *God protected His people from the evils of Haman--saved by the seal of a royal signet ring.*





HOW IS ESTHER LIKE CHRIST?

- She was born an ordinary girl and raised up to a high position—just like Christ
- Esther found favor in the eyes of all around her—Jesus found favor with both God and man
- Esther became an advocate for her people—she stepped in for them, risking her own life to do so. Christ became our advocate by stepping in for us and giving His life as a ransom for us.
- There was a decree against the Jews that ensured their death---there is a decree against mankind because of his sin that ensures death. Esther brought about an annulment of that first decree through the writing of another decree. Christ took man's place in dying for us under the terms of the "old decree." We now live under a new "decree" or "covenant" that ensures our safety.
- God protected His people in Esther's time by ensuring their safety through the giving of the signet ring to Esther and Mordecai. God has protected us, His people, from the evils of Satan, by sealing our safety through Christ's blood.



HOW IS HAMAN LIKE SATAN?

- Haman, like Satan had excessive pride and wanted to be worshipped.
- Haman was a deceiver and an adversary—see 3:8. Through bribery and lies he convinced the king to eliminate the Jewish people. Satan is a deceiver of men and an enemy who plans our destruction.
- Just like Satan, out of envy and a vengeful spirit, Haman planned extermination for God's people.
- The destruction that Haman planned (the death of Mordecai and his people) turned instead to his own destruction and a blessing for God's people. The crucifixion of Christ was Satan's plan, but when God raised Jesus from the dead, it became a crushing blow for Satan and a blessing for God's people.

□ FINAL NOTES:

- Jews today celebrate the **Feast of Purim** on the 14th day of the 12th month, the day that the Jews had rest from their enemies. "Purim" comes from the word "Pur" which were the lots or dice that were thrown by Haman to determine what day and month the Jews would be killed.
- **God's Name** never appears in the book of Esther! It is the only book in the Bible without His name. Probably due to Persian censorship. Although God's name is not found anywhere in the book of Esther, **His providence** and **His guiding hand** are everywhere in the book!



REBUILD-20 QUESTIONS



1. Who was the Persian king who gave his permission for the Jews to return to Jerusalem? **Cyrus**
2. Name the man who led the first group of Jews back to their homeland. **Zerubbabel**
3. Who was Zerubbabel's grandfather? **Jehoichin, last king of Judah**
4. Why is Zerubbabel called "a signet ring" by God in the book of Haggai? **Because he is listed in both Jesus' mother and Jesus' earthly father's lineage—he "seals" the two lines together.**
5. What did it mean when a king sealed a document with his signet ring? **That he gave his authority to it and that it could not be revoked**
6. About how many people returned with Zerubbabel with the first group to Jerusalem? **About 42,000 (actually about 50,000 when the Levites are figured in)**
7. What part of the Temple was built first? **The foundation**
8. Why did work on the temple stop? **Because the people of the land that were not Jews sent letters to the Persian kings about the threat of the Jews and the people became discouraged.**
9. What was the name of the Persian king who held a feast for 180 days? **King Ahasueras.**
10. What was the name of the queen who refused to show off her beauty to the king and all his guests? **Queen Vashti**
11. What was the name of the Jewish girl who became the queen to King Ahasueras? **Esther**

12. Mordecai, Esther's cousin did a good deed for the king that was written down in the book of the chronicles of the king. What was it? **He overheard a plot to assassinate the king and it was uncovered and two men were executed.**

13. Why did Haman want to destroy the Jews? **Because Mordecai would not bow down to him**

14. How did Haman determine what day the Jews would be destroyed? **They cast lots named "pur."**

15. When Esther was warned of the evil decree, what did she ask Mordecai and the Jews in Shushan to do? **Pray and fast for 3 days and 3 nights.**

16. Why was Esther afraid to go to the king's presence? Because he had not called for her in 30 days and to go uninvited to the king meant death

17. If you went to the king's presence uninvited, how did you know if he would see you or not? **He would hold out his golden scepter.**

18. How many banquets did Esther hold for the king and Haman? **Two**

19. What was King Ahasueras' first response when he found out what Haman had done? **He left Esther's banquet and went to the king's garden because he was so angry**

20. What new decree did the king agree to help Esther and her people? **That the Jews could arm and defend themselves and kill their enemies on the same day as the other decree was to take place.**





REBUILD LESSON 3B—The Second Return—Ezra

OBJECTIVES:

1. God is ready to restore His people back to Him.
2. Restoring your relationship with God sometimes means giving things up.
3. God expects His people to be holy and set apart from the beliefs of the world.
4. God is not an inclusive God. Not every belief is acceptable.
5. Godly leaders are important in the direction of their own lives.

ESSENTIAL SKILLS:

Recognize descriptions of these “Rebuild” people: King Cyrus, Zerubbabel, Ezra, Esther, Nehemiah, Mordecai, Haman, King Ahasueras, and King Artaxerxes

INTRODUCTION:

1. **FIRST RETURN:** led by Zerubbabel and Jeshua. Prophets Haggai and Zechariah helped to stir them up.
2. **FIRST RETURN:** God’s people rebuilt the Temple. Work stopped for 14 years because of opposition from enemies of God’s people. After Haggai’s preaching, the Temple was completed.
3. **REVIEW—ESTHER—QUEEN AND DELIVERER:** How is Esther like Christ?
 - She became her people’s advocate—Christ is our advocate before the father. Advocate = one who argues the case of another person
 - She saved her people from destruction, and was willing to die for it—Christ saved us from the destruction of sin by His sacrifice of death.
 - She was born an ordinary girl—Christ was born an ordinary boy. Both were elevated to high positions by God—Esther to the queen of Persia—Christ to the right hand of the throne of God.
 - Esther and Mordecai’s new decree nullified the old one. Christ has given us a new decree—a new covenant to live by as Christians.

LESSON: PART 1—THE SECOND RETURN

1. This lesson takes place during the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, son of Esther’s Xerxes (Ahasueras) who was murdered by the captain of the palace guard.
2. Read Ezra 7:1 - 6. We now meet Ezra, a Levite and a skilled scribe in the Law of Moses. His name means “help.” And he will be. He is also a direct descendant of Aaron.
3. Read Ezra 7:7 - 10--King Artaxerxes is kind and grants him his request to lead another group back to Jerusalem. Vs. 9 tells us that it took 5 months to travel to Jerusalem!

Did you notice in Verse 10 that it says “Ezra prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it,”? Remember the song that we sing, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness”? Is Ezra doing this? Yes! Ezra is a good example for us today!

4. **Read 7:11 - 26**—Artaxerxes' letter that was given to Ezra the priest and scribe concerning the journey home:
 - *Those who volunteer to go with Ezra can go.*
 - *Ezra was to find out how the people of Judah and Jerusalem were doing, and to see if they were following the Law of God.*
 - *Gold and silver was given by the king as a freewill offering to God for the beautification of the Temple.—650 talents of silver, 100 talents of gold, silver articles weighing 100 talents, 20 gold basins, two vessels of finely polished bronze (see 8:25-26)*
 - *Some of the gold was to be used to buy bulls, rams and lambs for sacrifices on the altar*
 - *Whatever Ezra needed for the Temple, Ezra was to pay for it from the king's treasury.*
 - *Taxes were not to be levied against priests, Levites or other servants of the house of the LORD.*
 - *Ezra was to appoint judges for the people that knew the laws of God and they were to teach the people.*
5. **Read 7:28.** Ezra thanks God for putting it into the heart of Artaxerxes to beautify the Temple. Ezra gathers the people together for the journey.

LESSON: PART 2—THE JOURNEY BEGINS

1. **Read Ezra 8:15ff.** As their journey begins, Ezra and those returning gather at the river and camp there for 3 days. He notices that among these people are no Levites. Why would this be important?
2. He sends for them and they are brought to him.
3. **Read Ezra 8:21 - 23.** Ezra proclaims fasting and prayer for protection along the long and foreign journey. Possibly there were robbers and murderers along the way; maybe they might be ambushed because of all their valuable cargo. Ezra was **ashamed** to ask King Artaxerxes for protection because they had told the king that God protects those who seek him. **So they fasted and prayed, and God answered their prayers.**
4. *Here again we have God's people fasting and praying before starting out on a new path. We need to remember to begin our "new paths" with prayer to God!*
5. **Ezra 8:31-32.** They arrive safely and protected by God. They stay in Jerusalem 3 days before they began to weight the gold and silver and offer burnt sacrifices.

LESSON: PART 3—PROBLEMS IN JERUSALEM

1. Ezra 9:1 - 2. A BIG PROBLEM!! The people of Israel have taken for themselves and their sons, daughters of the land: *Canaanites, Hittites, Jebusites, Moabites and Amorites!* Are they holy and set apart? NO!!
2. *What was wrong with marrying foreign wives? They were pagan, idol worshipers; they were not God's people!*
3. *God had always told His people not to marry foreigners—this was one of the reasons that they fell into idolatry before they went into exile!*
4. Ezra's reaction? Read Ezra 9:3 - 4. He tore his garment, and robe; plucked out some of the hair of his head and beard and sat down **astonished**!
5. Ezra 9:5 - 15. Ezra prays to God and was so ashamed for his people. He prayed a great prayer of **repentance** and asks for God's mercy.
6. *How many of you remember the verse in Luke 13:3 that says “unless you repent, you will likewise perish.”? Jesus was telling the people that unless we turn away from our sins and make them right before God, we will perish!*
7. *Ezra knew that God would never bless the people unless they repented of this great sin of intermarrying with the peoples of the land.*

LESSON: PART 4—EZRA'S SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM

1. Ezra 10:1 - 5. What do you think Ezra should have done about this problem? One Israelite suggested (verse 2) that the foreign wives and their children should be **put away** from them. Unmarry them!
2. 10:7 - 8. A proclamation is sent out throughout Jerusalem and Judah for all to gather at Jerusalem. If they didn't come within 3 days their property would be confiscated and they would be removed from the assembly of their people.
3. 10:9 - 12. The people gather at the open square of the house of God trembling because it is pouring down rain. Ezra preaches to the people to **separate themselves** from the peoples of the land and from the **pagan wives**. And they agree. But the process of doing this was going to be long and painstaking. Each of these men had to be questioned. The names of all these men who had disobeyed God and written down for us in the rest of the chapter!



LESSONS LEARNED FROM EZRA'S STORY:

- *It was a simple and clear law to obey. Do not interact or intermarry with ungodly people! But they had disobeyed.*
- *It took a no-nonsense man of God, Ezra, to bring God's people back to holiness.*
- *Today God's people continue to need the fiery, direct preaching to bring us back to His will and His word. Sermons that are wishy-washy won't do anyone any good!*
- *Do we sin against God's law today? Yes! (Give some examples)*
- *Will God be understanding and sympathetic to us about these trespasses? NO!*
- *We must strive to be holy and keep ourselves from the world. The only way to be able to do that is to know God's word and how He expects us to act and then to follow His commands!*



REBUILD LESSON 4A—Nehemiah and the Walls of Jerusalem

OBJECTIVES:

1. God will keep His covenant with His people
2. God was faithful to His people by giving His protection while the people built the walls of Jerusalem
3. God's people need strong leaders
4. God's people can pray to God anywhere and anytime about anything and He will hear.

ESSENTIAL SKILLS:

1. Recognize descriptions of these “Rebuild” people: King Cyrus, Zerubbabel, Ezra, Esther, Nehemiah, Mordecai, Haman, King Ahasueras, King Artaxerxes
2. Define these REBUILD words: *revive, renew, restore*

INTRODUCTION:

1. Our story today happens in two places—Shushan, the capital city of Persia, and Jerusalem, the capital city of Judah.
2. Nehemiah was one of God’s people who were still living in Persia. Nehemiah was a *cup bearer* to King Artaxerxes. Who can remember what else happened with this same king? (He helped Ezra by sending him with people, gold and silver to beautify the temple, to help resettle the land, and to teach the people the laws of Moses)
3. What is a “cup bearer?” An important job in a king’s palace! Nehemiah was to taste the food of the king to see if there was any poison in it. He also brought the king his drinks and tasted them. It was a trusted position and very close to the king.
4. Nehemiah and Ezra lived at the same time and knew each other. Ezra is a character in the book of Nehemiah.
 - Ezra was concerned with the *spiritual revival* of God’s people
 - Nehemiah was concerned with *physical, political and moral restoration*.

LESSON: PART 1—NEHEMIAH HEARS ABOUT THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM

1. Read Nehemiah 1:1 - 4. It is brought to Nehemiah’s attention that Judah is suffering because the walls of the city are broken down and the gates are burned.
2. Read 1:5 - 11. Nehemiah prays to God. This is what every Christian should do at a time when brethren are in trouble...pray.
 - ▀ This is the first of 13 prayers in the short book of Nehemiah! We will find out that Nehemiah prayed often to God, and he prayed about everything! Some of his prayers are just short sentences spoken in a time of distress.
 - ▀ Isn’t it wonderful to know that anytime, anywhere, we can turn to God in prayer and He will hear us?
3. Read Nehemiah 2:1 - 2. King Artaxerxes notices that Nehemiah was sad and asked about it. The king and Nehemiah had a close relationship.

4. **Read 2:3 - 5.** Nehemiah asked the king if he could have permission (letters of approval) to return to Jerusalem, bringing supplies to rebuild the walls and gates. The king gave his permission and Nehemiah left on his journey.
 - ▀ *Why were the walls and gates of the city so important during this time? The walls of a city kept invaders out at least temporarily. City walls protected a city in a time of siege and war.*
 - ▀ *The walls had gates. Only certain gates were used to go in and out of a city. These gates were closely monitored so that men with wicked intentions were kept out.*
 - ▀ *If invaders did come, it was easier to defend the city from the high walls.*
 - ▀ *Why were Jerusalem's walls broken down at this point? (because they were destroyed when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city of Jerusalem)*
 - ▀ *I want you to also notice that Nehemiah was giving up a high position in the king's court to be with his own people in Jerusalem. He came on a specific mission—rebuild the walls—and we will find out later that he gets it done through hard work and lots of prayer!*

LESSON: PART 2—ENEMIES, INSPECTIONS AND ENCOURAGEMENTS

1. **Read 2:10.** Into our story now come our two bad guys: Sanballat and Tobiah. Sanballat was a Horonite, and Tobiah was an Ammonite official. **NOT** God's people. They were very disturbed when they heard that Nehemiah had arrived to seek the well-being of the children of Israel. *They did not want Jerusalem to be fortified!* Nehemiah had not told anyone yet what he had been sent to do.
2. **Read 2:12 - 16.** Nehemiah sneaks out in the night to survey the wall and finds it in terrible shape. He knows that this work will be tough but he is willing to “roll up his sleeves” and work. Was he a natural wall maker? No...but he saw a job and went about seeing how to get it done.
3. **Read 2:17 - 18.** Nehemiah stirred up the people of Jerusalem by letting them know that God was with them. They responded with **“Let us rise up and build.”** The people seemed motivated to get the job done!
4. **Read 2:19 - 20.** Sanballat and Tobiah began the first of their opposition: **“What is this thing you are doing?”** They were trying to discourage the people
5. **Nehemiah** brushed them aside and said they had no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem. In other words, “get lost!”



LESSON: PART 3—THE WORK BEGINS

1. **Chapter 3** lists the names of the men and their families who worked on the walls and gates. Each group was given a **gate** (each gate had a name—“sheep gate” for example) and part of the wall to work on. This way, the work was being done very quickly and all at once. Also, each group took pride and devotion in the rebuilding of their part of the wall.
2. **Chapter 4**—more opposition! **Sanballat** and **Tobiah** used mockery to make fun of the work that was being done and discouraged the people.
 - Sanballat—“*Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish—stones that are burned?*”
 - Tobiah—“*Even if a fox jumps up on it, it will break it down.*”
 - Nehemiah prays for strength again. He was a leader who prayed to “his leader” often!

▀ *What is “ridicule”? How can ridicule discourage a Christian? Has that ever happened to you? Are you ever made fun of because of going to church or reading your Bible? Or because you won’t participate in certain activities?*

▀ *Satan uses ridicule and discouragement to move Christians away from God!*

3. **Read 4:6.** The wall was built up to half its height **“for the people had a mind to work.”**



Things we have learned from Nehemiah’s story so far:

- ▀ *Nehemiah saw a job that needed to be done. He had no expertise in building walls, yet he began to see that it got done anyway! He knew that God would be with him and the people.*
- ▀ *Nehemiah gained strength and power from constant prayer. When we are a praying people, God will help us!*
- ▀ *When Christians today make up their minds to work, God can cause great things to happen!*



REBUILD LESSON 4B—The Wall is Completed; the People are Restored

OBJECTIVES:

1. God will keep His covenant with His people
2. God was faithful to His people by giving His protection while the people built the walls of Jerusalem
3. God's people need strong leaders
4. God's people can pray to God anywhere and anytime about anything and He will hear.

ESSENTIAL SKILLS:

1. Recognize descriptions of these "Rebuild" people: King Cyrus, Zerubbabel, Ezra, Esther, Nehemiah, Mordecai, Haman, King Ahasueras, and King Artaxerxes
2. Define these REBUILD words: **revive, renew, restore**

INTRODUCTION:

1. Review the Nehemiah story up to this point:

- Nehemiah (a Jew living in Shushan) was a cupbearer to King Artaxerxes of Persia
- Nehemiah asked the king for permission to go back to Jerusalem and oversee the rebuilding of the city walls
- The people were willing, but there was opposition from Sanballat and Tobiah (not God's people)
- However, the people built the walls up to half its height in very little time!
- Nehemiah was a man of prayer.

LESSON: PART 1—THREAT OF ATTACK

1. **Read 4:7 - 9; 13 - 18.** The enemies get worried and angry about the progress of the wall and begin to plan attack on Jerusalem and confusion.
2. Nehemiah sets up watches on the wall day and night.
3. **Verse 9**—Prayer!!
4. **Verse 13**—men were positioned at the lower parts of the wall and at the openings and they had swords, their spears, and their bows.
5. **Verse 14**—“*Do not be afraid of them. Remember the LORD, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives and your houses.*”
6. **Verse 16**—some worked on the walls—others held spears to guard.
7. **Verse 17**—some built with one hand and held a weapon with the other!
8. **Read 4:19 - 20.** Nehemiah told the people that if an attack came, they were to sound the trumpet so that the rest of the soldiers and workers could rush to their aid.

■ “**Our God will fight for us there.**”—God was ready and able to fight their battle for them!

■ **God's people were learning that God was there to help them in every way! Nothing would be able to keep this wall from being built, if the Lord was on their side!**

LESSON: PART 2–COMPLETION OF THE WALL

1. **Chapter 6.** Sanballat and Tobiah saw that the wall was almost completed. They first sought to do Nehemiah harm—they tried to meet with him and ambush him. Nehemiah said no.
2. Then they sent a letter to Nehemiah telling lies and accusing him of saying that he wanted to make himself king in Judah and that they were going to report it to Persia. Nehemiah prays to God again and ignores them.
3. Another attempt is made on Nehemiah’s life—they tried to get him to hide at the temple because people were trying to kill him. It was their plan to get him there, and then kill him! He would not go! He knew God was on his side. By doing what was right, God saved him from these attacks. ***When we do right, God saves us from trouble!***
4. **Read 6:15 – 16.** The wall is completed in **52 days!!** The enemies of God’s people were very **disheartened** (demoralized, sad, depressed) because they knew it was the work of God. **Chapter 7** tells us that Nehemiah arranged for the city gates to be guarded and made rules concerning when the gates could be opened, because the people inside the city were few and many homes had still not been rebuilt. The walls protected the people while the city was still being rebuilt.

LESSON: PART 3–RESTORATION OF THE LAWS

1. **Chapter 8.** **The Reading of the Law.** Nehemiah was not only concerned with rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, he was also concerned with the **restoration** of the peoples’ relationship with God. To do this, they needed to know God’s word.
 - 2. All the people gathered together in front of the **Water Gate** in the open square to hear **Ezra** the scribe read **the Book of the Law of Moses**. Ezra stood on a platform to read to the people. They stood, listening from sun-up until midday!
 - The people began to weep when they heard the laws because they knew that many laws had been broken.
 - Nehemiah and Ezra told the people that they were not allowed to weep because this day was holy to the LORD. ***“Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.” We have a song in our song book that uses this verse!***
3. **Chapter 13.** Nehemiah set out to make sure that the **Laws of Moses** were being obeyed. Here are some ways that Nehemiah set about to restore the people to obedience:
 - **Verse 15 – 22.** Some people were working and doing unlawful things on the **Sabbath**. Remember, the Sabbath was a day of rest that God had commanded His people to observe. Nehemiah made sure that the **observance of the Sabbath was restored**. He also made sure that the city gates were shut at night before the Sabbath and not reopened until after the Sabbath, so that no merchants could come and go. Look at verse 22—there is another of Nehemiah’s short prayers!
 - **Nehemiah** made the people separate themselves from the **foreigners** around them. Those who had sinned confessed their sins and repented.
 - **Sacrifices and offerings of firstfruits** were restored. **Temple worship** was restored.
 - **13: 1 – 9.** The high priest named **Eliashib**, who was a friend of **Tobiah**, gave him a store room in the temple to stay in. According to the Laws of Moses, no **Ammonites** were ever to come into the temple at all! When **Nehemiah** found out about it, he threw all the household goods of **Tobiah** out of the room! He ordered that the rooms were to be cleansed from top to bottom and the items of the LORD that had been stored there previously were put back.
 - **13:10. Tithes** (freewill offerings) had not been brought to the temple for the support of the **Levites**. Nehemiah made sure that those tithes were resumed so that the Levites would not have to go out and work to support themselves.
 - **Read 13:23.** Nehemiah found out that men of Israel had married foreign women. Even the son of **Eliashib**, the High Priest, was married to **Sanballat’s** daughter! It says that Nehemiah contended

with them, cursed them, struck some of them and pulled out their hair! (ask the students if they remember Ezra's reaction to the same problem) Nehemiah was a **tough leader** for God's people! He made them swear that they would not do this anymore. These men had to put away their foreign wives.

- ▶ Look at the **very last verse** of Nehemiah. What do you notice? Here is Nehemiah's last prayer to God in the book! What a way to end the story!



THINGS WE CAN LEARN FROM THE STORY OF NEHEMIAH:

- *Nehemiah was strong and committed to the work of the wall because he knew that God was with him. He prayed continually and worked hard. The people were encouraged to work hard also because of Nehemiah's leadership. Christians today can pray like Nehemiah did and God will hear and answer.*
- *When God's people try to do right, there are always enemies around who will try to make sure it doesn't happen! Ridicule and discouragement are tools of the Devil to keep Christians from serving the Lord.*
- *Christians must understand that obedience to God's laws is extremely important even today. God's people prosper when His laws are obeyed!*
- *When Christians work hard together (like the people in Nehemiah's time), great things can be accomplished for the Church.*
- *God's people were able to return to God because of their repentance. God always forgives us when we repent.*
- *"Our God will fight for us" is something that we can believe in even today!*



HOW IS NEHEMIAH LIKE JESUS CHRIST?

1. Nehemiah portrayed Christ in His ministry of **restoration**.
2. Nehemiah illustrated Jesus in that he gave up a high position on order to identify with the plight of his people.
3. He came to Israel with a specific mission and fulfilled it; and his life was characterized by prayerful dependence upon God.

*In this book, everything is restored except the kingship. The **temple** is rebuilt, b is reconstructed, the **covenant** renewed and the **people** are reformed. The **messianic** line is intact (through Zerubbabel) but the king is yet to come. God, in His good time (about 450 years later), will bring this about in our next timeline period, **CHRIST**.*