

Christ in Prophecy
Jesus in the Old Testament 22
Return from Exile (Nehemiah)

Key Verses: Nehemiah 6:15-16, 8:10, 9:20

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Opening

Tim Moore: Greetings once again in the Name of Jesus, our Blessed Hope and soon-returning King, and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. Although we have several more, Old Testament books left to explore as we search for “Jesus in the Old Testament” we’ve arrived at one of the latest books chronologically.

Nathan Jones: Nehemiah builds on the account of Ezra when the Jewish people began returning from exile in Babylon to re-establish themselves in the Promised Land.

Cyrus of Persia was the pagan king who allowed the Jews to return to their land, just as God foretold. But even as they did so, they were ridiculed by the people who had moved into the land in their absence. And by the 20th year of King Artaxerxes reign, about 444 BC, the action picks up with Nehemiah, a man uniquely positioned to receive the favor of the king.

Tim Moore: That’s right. Nehemiah was the trusted cupbearer to King Artaxerxes in Susa, a city on the plain of the Tigris River just east of Basra, Iraq, but in modern-day Iran.

Hearing of the distress of the Jews who had returned to the land and the broken-down status of Jerusalem, he was moved to mournful fasting and prayer. His personal repentance for the sins of Judah and Israel echoes the prayers of Daniel. But his heartfelt grief led to great risk.

Nathan Jones: Nehemiah dared to appear downcast before the king, a potential capital offense, even for a trusted cupbearer. And Artaxerxes obviously trusted and loved Nehemiah because the king inquired about Nehemiah’s discouragement. Nehemiah had given the matter much thought because he described the condition of his homeland and asked permission to return and set it right.

Tim Moore: Exactly, but not before he lifted up a hopeful prayer. Nehemiah was a gifted leader who is remembered for rebuilding the wall in Jerusalem. Our guest today is also a gifted leader who encourages followers of Jesus Christ to rebuild our nation’s Christian foundations, a task that grows more urgent by the day.

Part 1: Interview with David Barton of Wallbuilders

Tim Moore: Some of you may already know our guest today. David Barton is the founder and leader of Wallbuilders, an organization dedicated to presenting America’s forgotten history and heroes, with an emphasis on the moral, religious, and constitutional foundation on which America was built. His ministry, and that is indeed what it is, is headquartered just west of Fort Worth. David, I’m glad you are here with us.

David Barton: Tim it is my pleasure, thanks for having me brother.

Nathan Jones: David what motivated you to establish Wallbuilders? And how was Nehemiah, both the book and the man an inspiration to you?

David Barton: Way back in 1987 and 1988 the first book I ever wrote was called, *America to Pray? Or Not To Pray?* And it came from my background, I was not a history guy, I was a math and science guy. I was a principal at the school, I coached basketball. And in the midst of being invited to Washington DC to participate in Concerned Women for America Conference they had, they asked us to set up a meeting with our congressmen and we did so. And I didn't know what in the world to say to a congressman, I had never met one, didn't really care to meet one. I was really content with what I was doing in the country. And so, in praying about what we should do with congressman I just prayed and kind of blew it off like a lot of people do. But in this case the prayer turned out to be something very significant. The Scripture says, "If you commit your ways to the Lord, He'll establish your thoughts."

And so, for the next several weeks I had two thoughts that I woke up with every morning and had every night, I could not get rid of them. And the two thoughts were: When was God taken out of schools? And what has happened to SAT scores since World War II? And SAT scores, I'm a principal I know SAT scores in the 80s because that was when I was teaching school, running school, but I didn't know what they were since World War II. And I didn't know about prayer in school because we weren't praying in school, and I didn't figure anybody had. And so, I saw that statistically in 1963 the SAT scores plummeted and fell for 17 consecutive years after being stable since 1926. And then I saw that the first time prayer was ever taken out of school was in 1962. And I go, oh, my gosh, look at the correlation, we take prayer out of schools and the statistic drop and they plummet. And so, that correlation is very significant.

As a math and science guy there are two kinds of correlations, one is when you have a slow trend where stats change over time, but the other when something goes way and goes down you've had an impact, some point of impact. So, I showed this to the congressman, and I said, "What do you think? Is it possible that taking prayer out of schools would have affected academic knowledge?" He goes, "Man," he said, "we've debated prayer in schools a lot, I've never seen anything like this." He said, "Somebody ought to research this." And it's like God said, did you hear that? That's you.

So, for the next several weeks we contacted and asked for 47 different pieces of statistical information from cabinet level departments. Crime. Violence. Divorces. Parental involvement. Just everything you can think of. And it turned out that all 47 pieces of statistical evidence turned downward violently in 1962, 63, and it's like wow, you can't get 47 pieces to do it the same way. So, as we looked at that, and we looked at how the family was falling apart, how the country was falling apart, how education was falling apart, how individual lives were falling apart.

My dad said to me, "We ought to be like Nehemiah and call people to rebuild the walls because look how far this has fallen." So, that is where it came from. And so, Wallbuilders is a term out of Nehemiah 2:17 where Nehemiah says, "Look at the reproach we are in, let's rebuild the walls." And so, over the next six months I read the book of Nehemiah from cover to cover once a day, and it gave a lot of guidance to this country boy on how to handle a lot of things that we now face on a regular thing. Nehemiah had his hostile media. And Nehemiah had his opponents.

Nehemiah had his enemies. Nehemiah had his allies. He had strategy on how to rebuild. The Bible is very, very good on how to restore something that has been torn down.

Tim Moore: Well, David Nehemiah describes the report he receives from Judah concerning the state of the survivors and their capital. He was pierced to the heart. How does that experience relate to the state of our nation and society?

David Barton: Yeah, in being pierced to the heart, it is interesting, I had not been pierced to the heart because I didn't know the state of the nation. You know I think it was like Nehemiah when he was cupbearer he was happy with what he was doing, he was really high in command there beside the king. And then he heard the report from his home country and he was pierced to the heart. And in my case I had been happily ignorant of all these things and did not know. And then I found that as we started sharing this many Americans were happily ignorant. I think it's kind of like the frog boiling in water, the water gets warmer around you but you don't notice that, and then someone points out you know the water used to be like this. Oh, my gosh it's changed that much. I didn't realize. And so, in my case I was happily content.

Listen I grew up in a little town of 220 people. I rode my horse back and forth to work. The four things we never wanted to hear about was law, government, politics, and history. And yet, here when I get into it that affects everyone of us. So, it really was a wakeup call. And kind of like Nehemiah is when you get the report, you go, man I didn't realize it was that bad. I've been surrounded by my own life and didn't know this was going on in the country.

Nathan Jones: As we mentioned in our introduction we found Nehemiah's initial response offers much insight to his own heart. What did he do?

David Barton: Yeah, Nehemiah, when he told the people what needs to be done, they all said, "This is an impossible task. Don't you see how bad it is? These walls used to be 70-feet high and now they are all rubble. The stones that are massive and big, they are all piled up. There is no way we can do this." And I think it is very interesting that what Nehemiah did was he encouraged the people, and he encouraged them in a way that I think is very good for culture at any point and time. He didn't encourage them to rebuild the whole wall, he encouraged them to rebuild their part of the walls.

And so, what happens is we often get captivated today with national news, and we say, I can't change the President, I can't change Congress, I can't fix the Supreme Court. Great, don't do that. You just fix your own part, right around. And it was striking to me that you had the men of Tekoa who put 1,500 meters of wall together, and you had the priest who didn't do anything except their own house. Well, good for them, at least they got their house up, and their house is on the wall and that is a part of the wall. So, when everybody did what they were able to do, that they could do themselves in 52 days this thing gets finished. And that's what I think is always astounding is when you look at the whole big task, it is too big. When you take a piece of the task you can do it.

And I always struck with the fact that these people weren't qualified to work for what they were doing. There is no indication that there was a stone mason in any of those who returned. These were the dregs of society; these are the poor people who had been left behind. These were not the flower of Israel like Daniel had been, that they took off. These were the people who had no skills, no trades.

And so, you are looking really at folks, and as you look at who rebuilt the walls there was man and his daughters out there. Tell me what they know about laying stones. You had an apothecary out there. You had jewelers. You had perfume makers. You had a soldier out there. I mean as the Bible goes through and talks about who rebuilt the walls it was everybody, every common person and they all did what they could. And when they all did what they could, what they did was rebuild the entire set of walls. It's a fascinating story.

Tim Moore: Nathan I think we just heard our application segment for today. Well, David even with the king's blessing Nehemiah's task was daunting. He faced numerous challenges and withering ridicule but he did not waver in his task. What do you think inspired him to be so focused?

David Barton: You know it is interesting I think he understood his opposition. He knew he was commissioned by God, but the interesting thing about his opposition most of it came from within, not from without. As you look at Sanballat, Geshem and Tobiah interestingly they were related to the priests. They were living in the Temple. So, what you've got is people who are literally in the Temple, related to the leaders, the spiritual leaders being your opponents.

And it's interesting in all of the years I've spent both in politics and in church, a lot of years in both, I've learned that in those settings I really need to wear a bullet proof vest, figurately but I always wear them to the back because it the friendly fire that kills you. You get more opponents from those around you than those who are outside. And so, it wasn't like foreign enemies, and foreign nations came and attacked them, and said, you are rebuilding, it was those that were living in the Temple. It was those that were living around him and that had been there for extensive parts of time, were related to the priest, they became the opponents.

And that's the things I've learned in politics in a church is oftentimes it is easy to get discouraged because the people that should be with you are the ones that are opposing you. They are the ones that are writing letters back to the king saying, "Hey, stop this work. This is a bad work." And it's really people that should be with you, that oppose. And that's one of the hardest things for people to overcome is the discouragement that comes when people you thought were on your side end up not being on your side. And that again is one of the great lessons I've learned from Nehemiah.

Nathan Jones: Nehemiah was no wilting lily was he Tim?

Tim Moore: No, he certainly wasn't.

Nathan Jones: When the going got tough and when the threats against rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem became extreme he charged his men to be bold and rise to even that challenge.

David Barton: Yeah, he did. And it talks about the fact that they rebuilt the walls with a trowel in one hand and a sword in the other. They were well aware of the opposition they had. And it interesting I've always taken a model from Nehemiah on how he handled opposition. Quite frankly, as I look at Nehemiah he had a lot of bad media, they had what they called open letters that they sent back to the king, and back to the nation and those would be news articles, open letters about you and how bad you are and here is your motivation and you're really whatever the media calls you. And he just ignored it and kept going.

And when Sanballat said, "Come down. I want you to debate me. I want you to come down. Let's talk about this." Nehemiah said, "Look, I've got too much work to do. I'm on the walls. I'm

not coming down.” They wanted to meet in the plains of Ono and have this discussion, this debate. And I’ve always, for me, I’ve recognized the Bible approach where Elijah loves debates, Elijah loves getting out with the opposition and talking to them. He’s outnumbered 450-1 on top of the mountain, let’s have a debate there and see what god is God, your god or my God. And whoever answers by fire. Meaning Elijah loved getting toe-to-toe and going nose-to-nose, but Nehemiah did not do that. Nehemiah stayed out of the media. He didn’t do the interviews. He didn’t do the debates. He said, I’ve got stuff to do. I’m working here. And he kept the people focused on what they were doing.

So, the fact that it got so bad. And again, these are people that were living in the Temple that are attacking him, it got so bad that he had to have a sword in one hand and a trowel in the other. And I thought it was really interesting too because he said whatever part of the wall gets attacked we are all going to rally there. So, he had guys with trumpets. He said, whoever gets attacked you blow the trumpet and we’ll come. I’ve always taken that as different parts of the wall, you’ve got like parental choice, or you got pro-life, or you’ve got traditional marriage protection, or gender, whatever, and wherever the trumpet sounds lets’ all gather there and fight that fight and then we’ll come back and rebuild the rest of it. Because as you look at the walls of America there are so many areas that have been torn down that have to be rebuilt. And it’s like, I maybe building my part, but I need to come help you when the trumpet sounds. And so, that is the other thing I saw with Nehemiah was the great cooperation that existed and the focus they kept on just rebuilding. We are not getting into the side periphery debates. We are not going to let our enemy drive our rhetoric, our language, or our time, we are staying focused. And that’s something else that I think Nehemiah presents very well.

Tim Moore: And please do not misunderstand us we are not advocating a confrontational attitude or violence. But we are saying that Christians have a right to defend themselves and a responsibility to protect that which is sacred and holy; from our families to our faith, and even the institutions that have enabled us to live and worship freely before God.

David Barton: Yeah, and Tim if I can add to that. That is such a good point, this is one of the things our Founding Fathers had to deal with. And you notice here that Nehemiah was not engaging in any offensive action against any opposition, it was only defensive. And one of the things that we know even from back in the Battle of Lexington, the first battle for the American War for Independence was Pastor Jonas Clark had taught his people, he said, “You cannot start anything. Now, if you get attacked you have a right of self-defense but you can’t start anything.”

And this is such a good attitude, and a good thing to know is even though you have a trowel in your hand or you have a weapon or whatever it is, and we are still talking figurative here, not literal, but even if we were talking literal you don’t have the right to go on the offense, you have the right to defend yourself when attacked. And that is what Nehemiah said, hey, if we get attacked let’s rally there and defend, but you do not have the right to start something. And that is a big biblical teaching that really needs to be highlighted today not only in a literal level, but a figurative level as well.

Nathan Jones: We read that Nehemiah was beset by specific individuals who antagonized him at every turn. They tried to undermine his work and induce him to sin. How did Nehemiah respond?

David Barton: That’s right. Yeah and it is amazing to me how he stayed focus on the work and did not get distracted, and I think that is one of the oppositions, tactics many times is to get

us distracted. And as you look at all of the things that came at Nehemiah over that period of time he just kept coming back to the work. Here is what I've got to do. Here's what I'm going to do and I'm not going to get distracted with your open letters. I'm not going to get distracted with your threats of attack. I'm not going to get distracted with the fact that you wrote the king. And there's just a lot of good stuff there on focus that I think would be helpful for all of us.

Nathan Jones: David the title of this series is Jesus in the Old Testament. Where do you see the Messiah in Nehemiah, whether a pre-incarnate Christophany or a type, or maybe a foreshadow?

David Barton: You know it is very interesting that we often look at Nehemiah and we look at the book and it is called Nehemiah, and we think of Nehemiah. And yet, out of the 13 chapters 6 of them deal with the priests, not with Nehemiah who is the political leader. It is interesting you have first Zerubbabel and then you have Ezra. So, the rebuilding of the Temple, the restoration of the spiritual stuff was key to that. And it interesting to me that even at the end you have Nehemiah and Ezra walking around the walls together, the rebuild walls and rededicating them to God. And so, with all of the work that Nehemiah was doing, the spiritual component, the spiritual basis is what is key, and by the way I think quiet literally.

We work with hundreds, and hundreds of legislators, congressmen etcetera. We have a legislative network of about 1,000 legislators actively doing--we monitor 159,000 pieces of legislation this year, state level, everything you can think of. And we always tell these guys, look you got into office you need an intercessor with you. You need an Ezra. You need a Zerubbabel. You need a priest. You are the Nehemiah guy, you're the one who wants to go out and take on the culture, and rebuild the stuff, that's great, but you need that guy that nobody ever pays attention to who is in the Temple and he is praying, and he is fasting, and he's doing all this stuff. And you've got to get intercessors and activists connected.

So, one way that I see Jesus in this is the spiritual foundation that has to be part of any activist. And we've got a lot of activist and a lot of people called to do things, whether it is life, or marriage, or choice, or whatever it is, you've got to keep that spiritual part centered. So, I think there's that.

But I also think you can look at Nehemiah and say, hey, this is a figure of Christ, the rebuilding the restoration, the bringing the culture back, and he kept pointing people to God. So, I see a lot of both figurative and maybe more symbolic aspects of Christ in him because you do see Christ in every aspect of every book of the Bible and He is the great builder of that which has been torn down, in our lives individually and in our culture as well. But I also think there is the aspect that, hey, as individuals whatever we are, whatever we are called to do don't forget the spiritual side over here that goes with it; the priests, the Ezras and the Zerubbabels you've got to have that at the base of what you do.

Tim Moore: David you've mentioned one of the other men who was inspired to return to Jerusalem was Zerubbabel who received a mighty promise from the Lord through the prophet Haggai. What promise does God offer to those who put their trust in Him, follows as He leads, and overcome all the challenges even that we experience.

You know part of the overcoming means you are going to have a lot of battles. You don't overcome, you don't win if you don't fight. So, sometimes I think overcomers, people like the concept of overcoming without thinking about what an overcomer means, it means you have

struggles, you have a lot of tough stuff, you've got a lot of stuff that is not good. And yet I've learned life lessons over periods of time, and Nehemiah would be an example of one of them.

But you know when you look--I'll just share a life lesson really quick, one of the life lessons, and I think there are four life lessons that guide me, but one is that nothing catches God by surprise. We often think that it does, and it may surprise us, and God is not surprised. He knew it was coming long before.

And then when something happens it is more important to God how we respond to what happens than whether what happened was right or wrong. Quite frankly what happened to Job wasn't fair. He did nothing to deserve that, but that wasn't the point. The point was God said, hey, you watch how God Job responds. He's going to do the right thing regardless of what happens to him. What happened to Joseph wasn't fair. What happened to Daniel wasn't fair. It's not about whether it is fair. And so, overcoming means you are going to have to face some adversity. It means you are going to have to face some things that aren't fair. Things that are going to be easy to get bitter about. But God has so much confidence in you, He's saying to Satan, you watch he's going to do the right thing. He's going to respond the right way. It is going to be great.

And that's part of the overcomer thing is you are going to have things to overcome and it's not a smooth ride. And you are going to have a lot of stuff that is not fair. And what happened to Nehemiah wasn't fair. He was sent back by the king. So, why would they turn on him? Why would they try to attack him? He's commissioned by the king to do this. That's part of life is all the unfair stuff that happens.

So, part of being an overcomer is you're going to have a lot of trash and a lot of garbage to wade through, and you shouldn't look at that and say, woe is me. You should look at that and say, oh, boy another challenge. I get to whip this thing. And I think that is the confidence that God has in us. It's like Job and Satan, He says, watch, Satan, Job is going to do the right thing. You just watch he will. And that's part of the overcomer aspect.

Nathan Jones: David with the inspired leadership of Nehemiah and others people eventually confessed their sins, we read, and they repented. Look at chapter 9, especially verses 34-38. What encouragement does that offer us today?

David Barton: You know it is interesting because they repented of their sin, not only of their sin, but the sin of their forefathers, because they're not the ones that had that wall torn down. Most of them were born after that. It has been 70 years since the wall has been destroyed. They are not the ones that committed the sin that God said, okay, I'm going to have to spank you as a nation. I'm going to have tear this down.

So, it is interesting that they said, you know what, even the sins of our fathers have an effect on us and we need to repent of those sins. So, being sin conscious because it would have been very easy for them to be self-righteous and say we are not the reason this went down. We're not the ones who caused this. It was our fathers who had the idolatry. That's not it. You have to identify and say, you know we have a sinful nature and we need that nature acknowledged and by the way even the generation before us we have to identify with what they've done and say, you know what we are even the product of some of what they've done so that the concept of identifying and acknowledging sin is one of the first things. You can't forsake sin and you can't turn against it if you don't first identify that it exists and that it is there.

So even if it is somebody else's sin, like my forefather's sin, like those from 100 years ago, you've got to acknowledge that sin and say, you know what but I'm not going to let that sin come back into the culture or into me. It's not going to be part of what I do. And I'm going to live above that sin level. And so, I think it is important that those people who confess their sin weren't just confessing their own sin, they were confessing the sins of those who have come before of generations before.

And this is part of what we as Americans have to do too. We've got plenty of good things in our past, we've got plenty of sinful things in our past and we can't just ride around on the fact that America is a really blessed nation, which it is, we've got to look at some other things and say, you know what our sins of our forefathers, but we are going to learn from that. As the Bible says we are going to forsake our sin, including those of our forefathers and we are going to move forward and make this a bright shining example.

Tim Moore: Well, David you are such an inspiration to so many, including me, so thank you for sitting down with us today via Zoom. And just tell us how can our viewers connect with the tremendous work you are doing at Wallbuilders?

David Barton: Tim, they can go to Wallbuilders.com, and there they will find a plethora of information about America, about rebuilding America, about where we are. Opportunities. Examples. Unknown history. Which is part of the fun stuff too that you find that as Nehemiah was rebuilding the walls one of the things it said they did was they rebuilt the wall, they rebuilt what they call the Hall of the Hero's, they recovered their own history. They went back and said, hey, look at the great heroes we had. Let's remember our heroes. And so, that is part of what we do at Wallbuilders is help recover the hall of heroes and we have some great ones that have gotten away from us that we need to recover.

Tim Moore: Well, David may the Lord's blessing be on you and your staff. And in the closing words of Nehemiah, "Remember David, O my God, for good."

David Barton: Thank you, brother, I receive that. God bless you.

Part 2: Signs of the Times Segment- Self Imposed Exile

Tim Moore: Something David said today pricked my own heart. We've long pointed to Hebrews 10:23-25 for its prophetic significance. The writer indicates strongly that we will discern the season of the Lord's return, because he writes that we should encourage each other "and all the more as you see the day drawing near."

But I think there is a warning inherent in this passage that amounts to a sign being manifested today. Just like Jude's admonition to "contend earnestly for the faith" and Paul's prophecy of rising heresy and apostasy, the writer of Hebrews indicates that if we allow the confession of our hope to waver, we will be tempted to forsake our own assembling together.

We've documented the disastrous and unconstitutional prohibitions against gathering to worship imposed by authoritarian governors over the past two years, but too many Christians are engaged in self-imposed exile from their fellow believers. Complaining of strife within the Church or a shifting list of grievances, they are isolating themselves from the Body of Christ, something Paul and the other Apostles would have found abhorrent.

Apply the wisdom of Ecclesiastes 4:12 and stay united with fellow believers. Even if you are strong enough to stand on your own, your presence may be just the encouragement a brother or sister in Christ needs.

Closing

Nathan Jones: It is so important to stay connected with other believers, isn't it Tim?

Tim Moore: Sure is.

Nathan Jones: I mean too many Christians have this lone wolf mentality, thinking they can go it alone, or buying into the false claim that it's just me and Jesus.

Tim Moore: Exactly. You know our Lord did not give us that option. He said that He would build His Church, referred to in the New Testament by the Greek word "ekklesia" a called-out assembly. We are commanded to become part of the body of Christ—not drift off as some kind of self-sufficient organism.

Nathan Jones: David Barton also makes the powerful point that every person must do what they can—but that together we can accomplish much. By ourselves we tend to lose focus and despair just like Elijah.

Tim Moore: Nehemiah also demonstrates that God's plan for the Jewish people cannot be thwarted. He preserved and protected them while they were in exile. His Holy Spirit stirred the heart of a pagan king—allowing them to return to Israel to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. He provided gifted leaders like Nehemiah, but the Lord gets all the credit for keeping His ancient promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Nathan Jones: As He does still today. Now folks, if you want to understand God's timeless plan to bless the Jewish people, you'll want to get a copy of David Reagan's book, *The Jewish People: Rejected or Beloved?* For a gift of \$20 or more, we'll be glad to send you a copy. One of the themes that runs throughout the Old Testament is God's unchanging promise to bless the Jewish people, and to use them as a conduit of blessing to the rest of the world. The greatest manifestation of that blessing is our Jewish Messiah, Jesus Christ!

Tim Moore: We trust that you're still following along and reading each book as we come to it and picking out your own key verse or verses. Ours for this week are Nehemiah 6:15-16; 8:10; and 9:20. Visit our website to access our Key Verse Commentary to understand the significance of these verses.

Nathan Jones: Well, your reading assignment for next week is the short book of Esther. Look for Jesus in the book, and life of Esther. Until then, I'm Nathan Jones

Tim Moore: And I'm Tim Moore, saying, look up, be watchful, for the Lord, whose joy is our strength and who helps us accomplish all He calls us to do, is drawing near.

End of Program

