

Return from Exile

Ezra, Nehemiah and the Call to Excellence

Part 7 – Joy. Nehemiah Chapters 7-8. November 13, 2016

Do not be grieved for the joy of the Lord is your strength – Nehemiah @ 8:10

The Story

Nehemiah 7-8

458 B.C.	Ezra returns to reinstitute the Law
445 B.C.	1 st month – Nehemiah's request of Artaxerxes
445 B.C.	6 th month – Wall rebuilt in 52 days!!
445 B.C.	7 th month – Ezra reads and explains Law Feast of Booths celebrated

The story of the Israelites return from exile takes a rather poignant turn in these chapters and moves to a new phase of their post-exilic practices and witness. Once the wall was completed (see above timeline), Nehemiah quickly moves to ensure there is sound leadership over the city and that the law is reinstituted into the fabric of Jewish life. The author of the book includes the same genealogy and information found in Ezra 2 regarding the first wave of exiles that returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Jeshua.

To this end the Jews, men AND women (very significant as usually just men attended these kinds of gatherings) gathered at the Water Gate to hear Ezra and his fellow priests both read clearly from the first 5 books of the Old Testament and then to help the people understand their meaning. Note that the gathering is not in the Temple, but in a rather public and common gathering place in the city. Perhaps this signifies how critical it was for ALL the Israelites to return to God's law. Also note that many of the people grieve over their sin and the failures of Israel to obey the Mosaic law. Nehemiah encourages them not to grieve at this time but to remember that 'the joy of the Lord is your strength.' He tells them to celebrate and enjoy rich food and drink. A time for public expression of repentance will come later.

Note as well the immediate reinstitution of the Feast of Booths. This high festival in Jewish life was meant to remind them of their Exodus from Egypt and Jehovah's deliverance, protection and guidance into their Promised Land. It wasn't necessarily the first time it was ever practiced since Joshua, but most likely the first time it was practiced with complete integrity to Moses' instructions on it and with complete participation from all the Israelites.

Here are a couple practical applications from this passage. Can you think of others?

Joy Comes from **FORGIVENESS**

Isaiah 40:1-2; 43:18-19 and 25; Joel 2:25-26

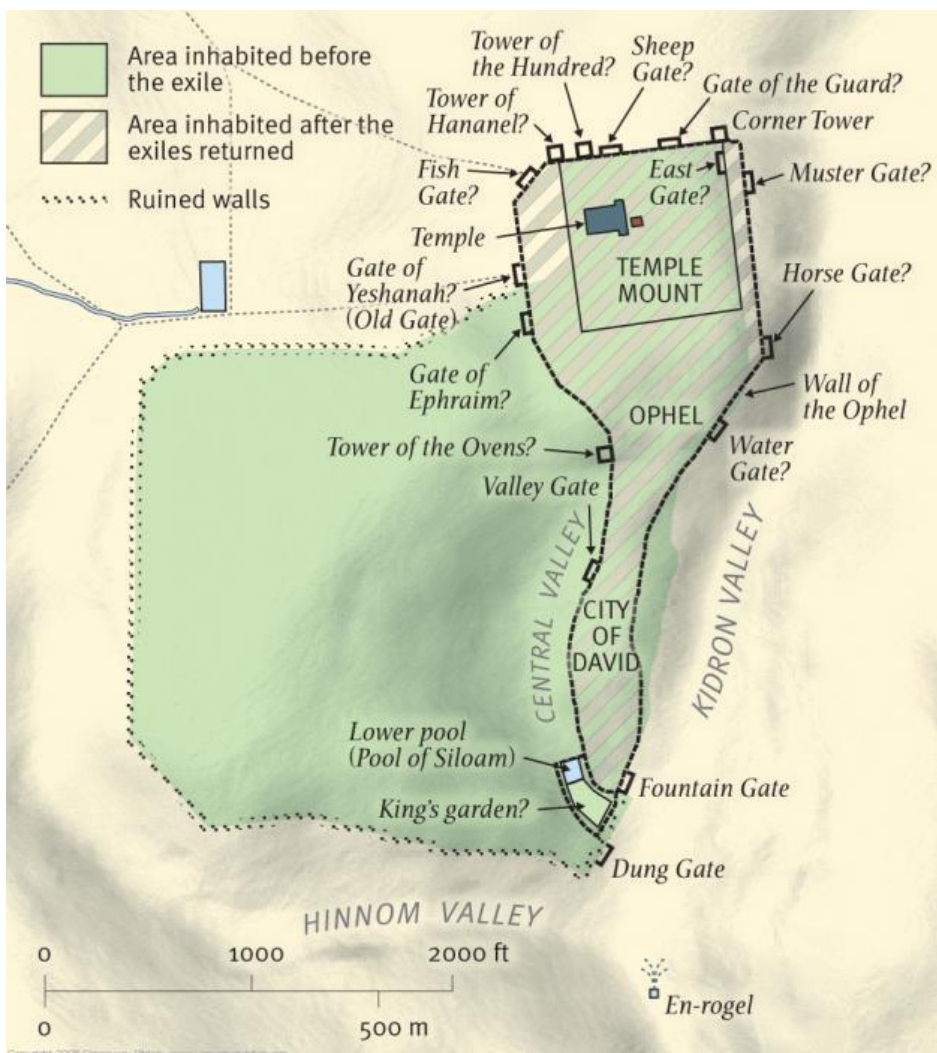
Joy Comes from **PROGRESS**

Philippians 1:22-26

Next Week ... Part 8 – Repentance



Ezra ... Priest and passionate student of the Law!!!



Jerusalem @ time of Nehemiah