



Sunday Evenings at St Mary's, Portchester (Autumn 2020)

## “Returning from Exile”

Drawing inspiration, challenge and comfort from those who have been here before.

### No. 4 “Nehemiah: rebuilding the city walls”

“Walk about Zion, go all around it, count its towers, consider well its ramparts; go through its citadels.” (Psalm 48:12-13)

#### Introduction

- Coming out of exile – a gradual event by stages
- The return of the Jews from exile

Approx date	Persian King	Jewish Leader	Prophet
1 540BC	Cyrus	Sheshbazzar & Zerubbabel	Haggai & Zechariah
2 458BC	Artaxerxes	Ezra	
3 444BC	Artaxerxes	Nehemiah	Malachi

- Jerusalem ceases to be important, as the centre of Jewish religion and culture moves.
- The Jews who remained in Babylon (Ezra, Daniel, Nehemiah, Esther) and the important Jewish colony there for hundreds of years ‘*The Babylonian Talmud*’ (6 - 3 cen. BC)
- Jewish colonies in Egypt including Tahpanhes (Isaiah 19:16-25; Jeremiah 43 – 44) where Jeremiah lived, and Elephantine ‘*The Elephantine Papyri*’ (407 BC)
- The prophecy of Isaiah about the faith of Yahweh in Egypt (Isaiah 19:18-19) The fulfilment in Jeremiah 44:1 (Migdol, Tahpanhes, Memphis, Pathros (& Elephantine).

#### Background to Nehemiah’s mission

- The political history of the Jews throughout this period is bound up with the fortunes of two empires: Babylon, but mainly Mede-Persia.
- In Jerusalem the temple had been restored, the city was being rebuilt, but the walls remained in ruins.
- Morale was low, disappointment and disillusionment (Malachi 1:1-14; Neh 13:15-22)

#### Building the Church

- The idea of the Church as ‘building’ (Matt 16:18; 1 Cor 3:10; 1 Peter 2:5)
- Ephesians 4:11 and the balance of foundational ministries (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers)
- Ezra (spiritual renewal) Nehemiah (political and administrative reorganisation) compliment one another.
- What is broken today and needs mending?
- Nehemiah – a brilliant study in leadership.

#### Nehemiah’s Predicament (1:1- 2:8)

- Messengers came from Jerusalem to Susa in Persia to tell Nehemiah
- The importance of walls in ancient cities (Southampton, York, Londonderry)
- His job as the King’s Cupbearer – trust had been built up over many years.
- Might the king have seen this as treacherous rebellion?
- There were no resources for all this rebuilding.
- Where are the walls broken today in the community and in the Church?