CHAPTER 21
Rebuilding the Walls
EZRA, NEHEMIAH & MALACHI

Introduction
God’s people have a tendency to wander.
• 536 BC – Work on the temple begins and then stops.
• God raised up Haggai and Zechariah to call the people back to God.
God’s people need help keeping the main thing the main thing.
Today we are going to look at three people who were faithful leaders as the Old Testament comes to a close.

I. Ezra the Teacher – Ezra 7 AND Nehemiah 8

The people returned to Jerusalem in three waves.
• The first wave was under Zerubbabel in 538 BC.
• The second wave came with Ezra in 458 BC.
Ezra was a priest.
Ezra was a teacher of God’s Word.

"For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the LORD, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.” Ezra 7:10
The NASB says, “For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to practice it and to teach his statutes and ordinances in Israel.”
Study – Practice – Teach

There were two big concerns among the exiles who had returned. The first was their lack of knowledge of God’s Word and the second was their intermarriage to foreigners (unbelievers).
Ezra read from the book of the Law from morning till noon and the people stood to hear God’s Word. Nehemiah 8:2-3
The people listened and obeyed and “their joy was very great.” Nehemiah 8:17
We need spiritual leaders who will teach us the truth about God and his Word.
II. Nehemiah the Builder – NEHEMIAH 1-4

THE STORY

Nehemiah was a civil leader. He was a cup bearer to the King of Persia, Artaxerxes l. Nehemiah heard that the walls of Jerusalem were still in ruins. Nehemiah’s heart was troubled. He prayed and he acted. Artaxerxes grants him a leave of absence to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls of the city.

THE STORY

Nehemiah returns in 444 BC. This is the third wave of exiles to return – 14 years after Ezra’s return. The work begins. Opposition arises. Nehemiah presses on and encourages the people to continue the work.

THE STORY

“So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of Elul, in fifty-two days. When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God.” Nehemiah 6:15-16

THE STORY

Would the work have been done without Nehemiah’s leadership? This story illustrates how the body of Christ is to work. We need one another. We need you to use your gifts to meet the needs you see in the church and community.

THE STORY

III. Malachi the Prophet – MALACHI 1-4

THE STORY
Malachi is the last of the OT prophets. In 433 BC, Nehemiah returned to Persia in service to the King. Eleven years have passed. During his absence, the people in Jerusalem fall into sin once again.

God raised up Malachi to confront their sin.
• Defiled offerings. 1:6-8
• Priests who failed to teach God’s Word. 2:7-9
• People robbing God by withholding their tithe. 3:8-12

The book of Malachi ends with a promise and a curse.
“See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.” Malachi 4:5-6

Four hundred years of silence will follow. The next person we hear speak will be John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Lord.

Conclusion
We are prone to wander. We need shepherds who will lead us and teach us the Word of God. We need to keep Christ as Lord of our life.