

The Filling Station – At Hankelow

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All bible quotations from NRSV Anglicised

'Fruitfulness in Mission - Unstopping the wells of God'

¹⁸ Isaac dug again the wells of water that had been dug in the days of his father Abraham; for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham; and he gave them the names that his father had given them. ¹⁹ But when Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found there a well of spring water, ²⁰ the herders of Gerar quarrelled with Isaac's herders, saying, 'The water is ours.' So he called the well Esek, [Contention] because they contended with him. ²¹ Then they dug another well, and they quarrelled over that one also; so he called it Sitnah. [Enmity] ²² He moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it; so he called it Rehoboth, [Broad Place] saying, 'Now the LORD has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.' (Genesis 26:18-22). Also, the well at Beer-Sheba (26:33).

- Other people want control over you, and the water of life.
- You can only work where you are welcome.
- Fruitfulness comes from perseverance.

The Return of the Exiles

Jeremiah 31

- **Everyone will be judged for their own sin (31:29-30)**

In those days they shall no longer say: ‘The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.’ But all shall die for their own sins; the teeth of everyone who eats sour grapes shall be set on edge.

- **A new Covenant (31:31-34)**

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, ‘Know the Lord’, for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

- **Jerusalem will be rebuilt (31:38ff)**

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when the city shall be rebuilt for the Lord from the tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate...

Was the Holy Spirit available from 2nd Temple?

- The revival of Nehemiah 8
- You don't need national prophets when God is dealing with everyone individually
- Simeon and Anna in the Temple at the dedication of the baby Jesus
- Jesus words to Nicodemus before Pentecost (John 3:1-15)

Jesus answered, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit... Nicodemus said to him, 'How can these things be?' Jesus answered him, 'Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?'

Revival in Jerusalem

Nehemiah 8:1-12

1 all the people gathered together into the square before the Water Gate. They told the scribe Ezra to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had given to Israel. 2 Accordingly, the priest Ezra brought the law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could hear with understanding. This was on the first day of the seventh month. 3 He read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law. 4 The scribe Ezra stood on a wooden platform that had been made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiyah, and Maaseiah on his right hand; and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hash-baddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left hand. 5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. 6 Then Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, 'Amen, Amen', lifting up their hands. Then they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground. 7 Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, helped the people to understand the law, while the people remained in their places. 8 So they read from the book, from the law of God, with interpretation. They gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.

Revival in Jerusalem

Nehemiah 8:1-12

9 And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, 'This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep.' For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law. 10 Then he said to them, 'Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions of them to those for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy to our Lord; and do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.' 11 So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, 'Be quiet, for this day is holy; do not be grieved.' 12 And all the people went their way to eat and drink and to send portions and to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them.

How can we see the work of the Holy Spirit?

Nehemiah 8:1-12 The Holy Spirit...

- Creates unity amongst very diverse people (8:1)
- Creates a desire to read God's word (8:1-3)
- Gives us endurance (8:3)
- Creates a desire to participate in worship (8:6)
- Helps us to understand (8:8)
- Creates tears of sorrow for sin (8:9)
- Encourages us to help those less fortunate (8:10)
- Produces joy (8:12)

How can we see the Holy Spirit in the OT? (1)

Isaiah 11:1-4a Qualities of Character, rising up as sap.

A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

2 The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

3 His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see,

or decide by what his ears hear;

4 but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;

How can we see the Holy Spirit in the OT? (2)

Filled with skills (Exodus 31:1-6)

1 The Lord spoke to Moses: 2 See, I have called by name Bezalel son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: 3 and I have filled him with divine spirit, with ability, intelligence, and knowledge in every kind of craft, 4 to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, 5 in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, in every kind of craft. 6 Moreover, I have appointed with him Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and I have given skill to all the skillful, so that they may make all that I have commanded you:

The wisdom of Ethan the Ezrahite – Psalm 89 (1 Kings 4:29-31)

29 God gave Solomon very great wisdom, discernment, and breadth of understanding as vast as the sand on the seashore, 30 so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt. 31 He was wiser than anyone else, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite... and his fame spread throughout all the surrounding nations.

What promotes revival? (1)

Prayer (Nehemiah 1:1-11)

1 The words of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah. In the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, while I was in Susa the capital, 2 one of my brothers, Hanani, came with certain men from Judah; and I asked them about the Jews that survived, those who had escaped the captivity, and about Jerusalem. 3 They replied, ‘The survivors there in the province who escaped captivity are in great trouble and shame; the wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been destroyed by fire.’

4 When I heard these words I sat down and wept, and mourned for days, fasting and praying before the God of heaven. 5 I said, ‘O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments; 6 let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for your servants the people of Israel, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Both I and my family have sinned. 7 We have offended you deeply, failing to keep the commandments, the statutes, and the ordinances that you commanded your servant Moses. 8 Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, “If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples; 9 but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are under the farthest skies, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place at which I have chosen to establish my name.” 10 They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great power and your strong hand. 11 O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man!’ [King Artaxerxes]

What promotes Revival? (2)

Nehemiah's Preparation in Prayer:

- Inform yourself of the facts from eyewitnesses (1:2-3)
- Weep and mourn for the state of God's kingdom (1:4)
- Pray [call into being] the promises of God (1:5,8-10)
- Repent, both personal association and corporate (1:6-7)
- Ask God to revere his name [hallowed be thy name] (1:11)
- Put yourself in the hot-seat – what am I going to do? (1:11)

The Journey (1)

What did Nehemiah do in Action?

- Took initiative to be the leader – ‘this bus needs a driver’
- Set a timeframe for being away (2:6)
- Letters of safe passage for the journey (2:7)
- Authorisation for the wood to make the gates (2:8)
- Recce visits to confirm the scale of work required (2:11-16)
- Establish and motivate the team (2:18)

I told them that the hand of my God had been gracious upon me, and also the words that the king had spoken to me. Then they said, ‘Let us start building!’ So they committed themselves to the common good.

- Set yourself to work – Do it (3FF)

The Journey (2)

Expect and Counter Opposition

- Slander from the local officials of the king (2:19)

‘What is this that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?’

- Ridicule from the local officials (4:1-3)

A fox could break it down

- Threats of violence from the local officials (4:7-9)

all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it. So we prayed to our God, and set a guard as a protection against them day and night.

- The response (4:18-21)

Each of the builders had his sword strapped at his side while he built. The man who sounded the trumpet was beside me. And I said to the nobles, the officials, and the rest of the people, ‘The work is great and widely spread out, and we are separated far from one another on the wall. Rally to us wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet. Our God will fight for us.’ So we laboured at the work, and half of them held the spears from break of dawn until the stars came out.

The Journey (3)

Support your Appointed Team and reach your Goal

- Divisions, financial abuse, and poverty within (5:1-13)
- Generosity of Nehemiah (5:14-19)

Moreover, from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, twelve years, neither I nor my brothers ate the food allowance of the governor...Moreover, there were at my table one hundred and fifty people, Jews and officials, besides those who came to us from the nations around us.

- 5 Threats of assassination and 1 of slander (6:1-9)
- Hired a false prophet to prophecy against Nehemiah (6:10-14)

Then I perceived and saw that God had not sent him at all, but he had pronounced the prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. He was hired for this purpose, to intimidate me and make me sin

- The Wall is Finished (7:1-2) Now when the wall had been built and I had set up the doors, and the gatekeepers, the singers, and the Levites had been appointed, I gave my brother Hanani charge over Jerusalem, for he was a faithful man and feared God more than many.

Walls are needed in Revival

Construct a wall, through prayer, around the work of God

- Unless the Lord guards the city, the guards keep watch in vain (Psalm 127:1b)
- You shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise (Isaiah 60:18b)
- Does Job fear God for nothing? Have you not put a fence around him on every side (Job 1:9-10)
- Like a city breached, without walls, is one who lacks self-control (Proverbs 25:28) – a lot of damage happens when we lack self-control
- Jerusalem shall be inhabited like villages without walls. For I will be a wall of fire all round it, says the Lord, and I will be the glory within it. (Zechariah 2:4-5)

God helps you through 4 Hands

- The Hand of Man – Generous giving from others
- The Hand of God – Miracles
- Your Hand – Hard Work, you do it – get on with it yourself
- The Hand of Your Enemies – Sometimes you can be surprised

Revival gone wrong

By the time of Nehemiah 13 everything had fallen apart

- The wealthy had moved into the Temple rooms as private apartments
- The tithes were not brought in, so the Levites and singers had gone home
- Foreigners were being brought into the priesthood
- Children of mixed marriages didn't even speak the language of Judah
- People worked on the sabbath, rather than worshipped
- A huge market with foreign traders was taking place on the sabbath
- Nehemiah needed to throw out those living in the Temple rooms, cleanse the priesthood and the people, bring in the tithes, renew worship and the festivals, lock out the traders on the sabbath

God put the blame on the priesthood – Malachi 1&2

- No honour for God, no fear of the Lord (1:6,7,13)

A son honours his father, and servants their master. If then I am a father, where is the honour due to me? And if I am a master, where is the respect due to me? says the Lord of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. You say, 'How have we despised your name?' ⁷ By offering polluted food on my altar. You bring what has been taken by violence or is lame or sick...

- You vow to do one thing, them do something else (1:14)
- You do not take it to your heart to glorify my name (2:2)
- You teach the covenant incorrectly to others (2:4-9)

⁷ For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. ⁸ But you have turned aside from the way; you have caused many to stumble by your instruction; you have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the LORD of hosts, ⁹ and so I make you despised and abased before all the people, inasmuch as you have not kept my ways but have shown partiality in your instruction.

- O that someone among you would shut the Temple doors! (1:10)

Changing times

- A key moment when the Greeks want to see Jesus (John 12:20-26). The timing had come for Jesus' ministry to expand – but first he had to die.
- Jesus' atoning death
- The Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20)
'I will be with you until the end of the age' is a promise to fulfil the obligation of the Servant King.
- The body/bride of Christ is to carry Jesus; to bring salvation and God's justice to the ends of the earth, as prophesied in Isaiah

The Symbol of the Dove

- God's covenant with Abram (Genesis 15:7-21)

He said to him, 'Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon.' He brought him all these and cut them in two, laying each half over against the other; but he did not cut the birds in two.

When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking fire-pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces.

- Noah sends out the dove (Genesis 8:6-10)

and again [Noah] sent out the dove from the ark; and the dove came back to him in the evening, and there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf. [Time to get nesting!]

- The covenant of Abram is a love story – Jesus is the Turtle dove, and we are the young pigeon who needs a mate

Holy Spirit,
where people need energy,
 come like fire;
where people need peace,
 come like a dove;
where people are lonely,
 gather them together.
Reveal Jesus to them
 in fire, in calm, and in community.
Push aside all barriers to belief. Amen.