

Establishing The Kingdom

Sunday, September 8, 2024

9:20 AM

What does it mean to Establish The Kingdom of God? At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus that He would build His church and the gates of Hell would not prevail against it.

Matthew 16:13-19

13 When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

14 They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

15 “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

16 Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

17 Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you that you are Peter,[\[a\]](#) and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades**[\[b\]](#)** will not overcome it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be**[\[c\]](#)** bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be**[\[d\]](#)** loosed in heaven.”

Many have noted that Caesarea Philippi was known for the Worship of Pan, the Greek God who was part Goat and part Man and was known among other things as the God of the Wild, Shepherds and flocks and along with many other false Gods, was associated with various deviant sexual behaviors, *a fertility god who ensured the successful breeding of his shepherds' flocks.*

In many ways he represented ALL "Pan" false gods of this world. The mixture of the holy and the profane. The mixture of religious beliefs, giving in to the carnal nature and allowing it to rule. For me he also represents the world we live in today. Morally, sexually, and spiritually.

And yet it is here that Jesus says He will build His church (Establish the Kingdom). Not so it can be another part of the mixture, but that it may stand in contrast to the culture of the world offering the way that is true and right and good.

Nehemiah lived in similar circumstances... A culture that both didn't know God or had fallen away from God.

A little bit of background here...

The data seem to me to indicate the possibility of three overlapping but distinct 70-year prophecies:

1. *70 years of Babylonian domination over Judah and the surrounding nations (609-539; [Jer. 25:11-12](#)).*
2. *70 years of Jewish captivity in Babylon (605-536; [Jer. 29:10](#); [2 Chron. 36:20-21](#); [Dan. 9:1-2](#)).*
3. *70 years of indignation on Jerusalem and Judah (586-516), marked by the destruction and rebuilding of the temple ([Zech. 1:12ff](#); [7:5](#)).*

It looks to me like God may well be precisely accurate three times over.

Who was Artaxerxes in the Bible?

Artaxerxes, also known as Artaxerxes I Longimanus, was the King of Persia from **465 BC to 424 BC**. He commissioned both **Ezra and Nehemiah** to return to Jerusalem and is spoken of in the biblical books of Ezra and Nehemiah. His father was King Xerxes (also called Ahasuerus) from the account of [Esther](#), but his mother was Amestris, a wife from one of Xerxes' many political marriages. Due to his tolerance of differing people groups and diverse religions, Artaxerxes ruled over a relatively peaceful time of the Persian Empire and is remembered as a fairly good king.

The Israelites had been conquered by the Babylonians and carried into captivity there around the year 605 BC. However, the Babylonians were then conquered by the Persians under [Cyrus the Great](#) in 539 BC (about 70 years after their domination over Judah and the surrounding nations had begun in 609 BC with the final defeat of the Assyrians).

Jeremiah 25:11-12 (ESV)

11 This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and ^tthese nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 12 Then after ^useventy years are completed, ^vI will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, ^vthe land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares the Lord, ^vmaking the land an everlasting waste.

Cyrus soon allowed the Israelites who so desired to return to Jerusalem and begin rebuilding. (536 BC 70 years after the initial deportation of the Israelites to Babylon in 605 BC) Under the leadership of [Zerubbabel](#), over 42,000 Jews returned to Jerusalem and began the restoration project.

Jeremiah 29:10 (ESV)

10 “For thus says the Lord: ^tWhen seventy years are completed for Babylon, ^uI will visit you, ^vand I will fulfill to you my promise ^vand bring you back to this place.

Daniel 9:1-2 (ESV)

9 ^bIn the first year of ^cDarius the son of Ahasuerus, by descent a ^dMede, who was made king over the realm of the ^eChaldeans— 2 in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to ^fthe word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.

After a brief pause due to political opposition, the temple in Jerusalem was completed in 516 BC under the Persian King Darius. (70 years after the destruction of the Temple in 586 BC)

It was about fifty years after the completion of the temple that Ezra was commissioned by King Artaxerxes, during his seventh year of reign around 456 BC, to return to the temple in Jerusalem. Artaxerxes commissioned Ezra to reinstate sacrificial worship and other biblical teaching and practices ([Ezra 7:12–26](#)). Ezra led the religious community of priests, Levites, temple workers, and scribes on a four-month journey from Babylon to Jerusalem ([Ezra 7:8–9](#)). Once there, Ezra led the Israelites in repentance and restored biblical teaching and practices to the temple in Jerusalem ([Ezra 9:5—10:17](#)).

Twelve or thirteen years after Ezra returned to Jerusalem (during Artaxerxes' twentieth year of reign), Nehemiah received word in Babylon that the outer walls of Jerusalem that would have protected the city and the temple were still in ruins. King Artaxerxes noticed Nehemiah's devastation in reaction to this news and gave him permission to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the protective walls

([Nehemiah 2:1–8](#)). Artaxerxes effectively appointed Nehemiah as a governor in the land of Judah for twelve years ([Nehemiah 5:14](#)). Nehemiah successfully oversaw the rebuilding of the walls in only fifty-two days ([Nehemiah 6:15](#)). He then governed in Judah before returning to Artaxerxes in the king's thirty-second year of reigning ([Nehemiah 13:6](#)). Due to Nehemiah's loyalty and faithful rule in Judah, Artaxerxes allowed him to return to Jerusalem and continue as governor ([Nehemiah 13:6–7](#)).

Nehemiah 1

1 The words of Nehemiah son of Hakaliah:

In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, 2 Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem.

3 They said to me, “Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire.”

4 When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. 5 Then I said:

“Lord, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, 6 let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father’s family, have committed against you. 7 We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.

8 “Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, 9 but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.’

10 “They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. 11 Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man.”

I was cupbearer to the king.

REIGNITING THE FIRE...

1 Samuel 3:1-4

3 The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli. In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions.

2 One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. 3 The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the Lord, where the ark of God was. 4 Then the Lord called Samuel.

Samuel answered, "Here I am."

Of Passionate Concern

Of Prayer and Fasting

*Prayer connects us with God... Fasting disconnects us from the things of this world.

*It reminds us to rely upon God for our strength rather than our own earthly strength

Of Confession and Repentance

Of Obedience

Of Taking Action

*One man/one woman can make a difference from right where God has placed you.