

Summary

Over the next several weeks, we will look at principles for building God's house from the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Like Jerusalem in Nehemiah's day, much of the modern church is in a "bad situation"—marked by activity without maturity, shallow discipleship, misplaced priorities, and a loss of Christ as the living center. This message confronts the painful reality that the church has often substituted programs, pragmatism, celebrity culture, and cultural accommodation for intimacy with Jesus, gospel transformation, prayer, and prophetic clarity. Before God can truly build and plant, there must first be a necessary work of uprooting, tearing down, and overthrowing what is misaligned, so that His house can be rebuilt according to His eternal blueprint.

This message also presents God's solution: His vision—as revealed in Scripture—for the end-time church. This vision calls for a church aligned with God's eternal purpose in Christ, transformed by the gospel, passionate for Jesus, living by His indwelling life, and gathered under His headship. This vision involves a praying, worshiping, Spirit-empowered church who obeys the Sermon on the Mount, overcomes the world, the flesh, and the devil, understands prophetic Scripture, stands with God's purposes for Israel, and faithfully fulfills the Great Commission.

Ultimately, this is a forerunner church—prepared, watchful, and ready for the Bridegroom—one that does not merely believe in Christ's return, but lives in a way that hastens it. The call is not for another model of church, but for a Christ-centered, Spirit-filled people who are being formed, aligned, and made ready to fulfill their kingdom assignment in this generation.

Review

As we enter 2026, Nehemiah 2:17–18 is a key passage for us:

Then I said to them, "You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned by fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a reproach." I told them how the hand of my God had been favorable to me and also about the king's words which he had spoken to me. Then they said, "Let us arise and build." So they put their hands to the good work.

One of the primary things I believe the Lord is saying to us in this season is:

Cast the vision of God's blueprint for the end-time church so that everyone can take ownership of the vision and build it together locally at Restoration Life Church.

This series is not about introducing something new, but about clearly articulating in a fresh way what God has already been building among us and calling us to build it in a deeper and greater way together.

1. A Reset

- The Lord is calling us to a reset—not a new vision or mission, but a renewed stirring of what He has already established, much like restarting a computer when it runs slowly and glitches, restoring it to function as it should.
- As in the days of Haggai and Zechariah, God is not giving a new assignment but rekindling hearts to return to our original mission, vision, and purpose with fresh faith and obedience.
- This moment is much like what we see in Haggai 1:14—the Lord stirring the spirits of His people as fresh vision is cast, producing shared ownership, spiritual alignment, and a unified commitment to build His house together.

- This reset is meant to replace drift and weariness with clarity, passion, and renewed energy so we can build again with joy and fire.

2. Go Back to the Foundations

- The Lord is calling us to go back to the foundations—not to start over or build something new, but to realign with what He has already established by stirring us up again by way of reminder.
- Scripture shows that true renewal always builds on an existing foundation, as seen in Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zechariah, who restored clarity and obedience to what God had already begun.
- The unshakable foundation of the church is the Person of Jesus Christ—who He is, His finished work, what He is finishing in His people, and the church He is building. Not doctrines, programs, or Christian topics.
- When Christ is truly central, everything in church life flows from Him, aligns with Him, and leads to inward transformation, resulting in a people conformed to Christ's image rather than driven by endless activity and outward success.
- Returning to our foundations means realigning with the core truths that have shaped this house for years, each one expressing Christ as the center of God's eternal purpose and the goal of all discipleship.

3. A Seminal Season

- 2026 marks the beginning of a seminal season—a seed-forming, foundational window in which He is shaping hearts, culture, and spiritual direction in ways that will determine the future for years to come.
- This is a formative season where God plants the DNA of what He intends for the church to be in the end times deep within us.
- He is emphasizing depth, alignment, and ownership of truth rather than quick visibility or outward results.
- What is stewarded and internalized in this season will quietly set the course for everything that follows, producing lasting and sustainable fruit in the years ahead.

Introduction

Over the next several weeks, we are going to explore the biblical principles for building God's house—strengthening the local church and faithfully fulfilling the kingdom assignment the Lord has entrusted to us—by walking through the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

Together, these prophets and leaders speak into a pivotal season of rebuilding, renewal, and realignment after long delay, discouragement, and opposition.

They show us how God restores His people by reestablishing right foundations, stirring hearts by His word, correcting misplaced priorities, and calling His people back to covenant faithfulness.

As we study their lives and messages, we will see how God builds not merely through plans and structures, but through obedience, repentance, spiritual alignment, and renewed vision.

These principles are just as vital for us today as we seek to build a church that is fully aligned with God's ultimate intention, experiences His presence, and overcomes in these end times.

This in mind, let's look now at key principles for building God's house.

1. Casting Vision Requires Stating the Problem Clearly.

- Before vision is cast, the problem must be clearly defined; otherwise, you risk solving an issue no one cares about—or worse, one that doesn't exist.
- This is why Nehemiah declared to the people, "You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned by fire" (Neh. 2:17).
- Just as Nehemiah first confronted the reality of Jerusalem's condition—desolate walls and burned gates—much of the modern-day church is in a state of decline.
- When the Lord commissioned Jeremiah as a prophet, He told him, "See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant" (Jer. 1:10).
- Before the Lord's work "to build and to plant" can take place, there is often a preceding work that must occur—a work "to pluck up," "to break down," "to destroy," and "to overthrow."
- What follows is a description of "the bad situation" much of the church is in—and why it must be plucked up, broken down, destroyed, and overthrown before the Lord's work to build and plant according to His blueprint can begin.

The Problem in Much of the Church

Many churches are driven by programs, pragmatism, trends, cultural relevance, and cultural pressure—resulting in activity without maturity and shallow roots without deep grounding in the living truth. Rather than being anchored in God's eternal purpose revealed in Christ, they are weighed down by tradition, lifeless doctrine, emotionalism, or an endless pursuit of the next supernatural experience.

An intimate and passionate relationship with Christ has been exchanged for the promise of the next big revival. Celebrity pastors are idolized, miracles are worshiped, and success and prosperity are chased, while Jesus—rather than being the living center from which everything flows—has been reduced to an add-on, enlisted to help build personal empires rather than God's kingdom.

As a result, the gospel itself has been stripped of much of its power, producing believers who are forgiven but not transformed—immature rather than shaped into the image of Christ. What is often preached is a shallow gospel, functioning like a factory that produces converts rather than disciples who are being shaped, matured, and conformed to Christ's likeness. People are saved to serve rather than introduced to the depths of an intimate, life-transforming relationship with Jesus.

Consequently, many churches emphasize attendance, numbers, influence, behavior modification, and programs instead of genuine formation into Christ's image. Intimacy with Jesus has been replaced by religious activity. Many believers know about Christ but do not know Him deeply, intimately, and personally. Passion for Jesus has been dulled by routine; worship has become performance-oriented and entertainment-driven; and prayer is marginalized or treated as optional rather than central.

Without a lived dependence on Christ's indwelling life, believers rely on bands and brands, charismatic personalities, and emotional experiences to sustain spiritual momentum. Much of the church has become a stale religious organization rather than a life-giving, organic expression of Christ. The weekly gathering has slowly morphed into a predictable routine—three songs, a self-help message, and a few announcements—disconnected from Christ as the living Head of His body and the very life that

energizes His people. As a result, churchgoers have become consumers and spectators rather than disciples who are being transformed.

Leadership has followed the same trajectory. Pastors are increasingly treated as celebrities, and churches are run like businesses driven by pragmatism rather than Christlikeness. Many shepherds have adopted a CEO mindset, no longer asking what faithfulness requires but what success demands. Congregations are managed like markets, and the pulpit has become a platform for motivational talks and self-help principles rather than a place of sacred, prophetic proclamation of God's Word in the power of the life-giving Spirit.

Success is now measured by attendance, baptisms, programs, and influence rather than faithfulness to Scripture and the formation of God's people into Christ's image. The church has its smoke machines and skinny jeans, soymilk lattes and Instagram reels, influencers and cultural commentators—yet lacks authentic prophets who have stood in the Lord's council, carried the burden of the Lord, and proclaimed His heart to His people. We have “seven-mountain apostles” attempting to conquer culture while neglecting to build the church from Christ, aligned with Christ, by Christ, and back to Christ.

Even worship has been affected. Gifted musicians lead songs while inwardly aspiring to become the next label in the Christian worship industry. The name of Jesus is used to build personal brands, and songs increasingly center on us—how God affirms us, elevates us, and celebrates us—while the beauty, glory, and supremacy of Jesus Christ are sidelined.

What we are witnessing is not outright paganism, but a far more dangerous drift—the reshaping of Jesus into an image that fits our preferences, comforts, and cultural sensibilities. Rather than abandoning Jesus outright, much of the church has reimagined Him—softening His demands, muting His holiness, and redefining His mission to make Him appealing and manageable. In the name of relevance, revelation has been exchanged for relatability, truth for tolerance, and the fear of the Lord for familiarity.

Like Israel at Sinai, we have not rejected God outright; we have simply fashioned a version of Him we can control, celebrate, and enjoy without being confronted, transformed, or consumed by His holy fire.

In pursuit of cultural approval, many churches have aligned themselves with the spirit of the age—embracing the LGBTQ agenda rather than submitting to the unchanging authority of God's Word. In the name of love, tolerance, and inclusion, biblical truth has been softened, redefined, or rejected altogether, and repentance has been replaced with affirmation. What is celebrated as compassion is often compromise—exchanging faithfulness to Christ for acceptance by a culture hostile to His lordship.

We have exchanged the slow, hidden work of spiritual formation—the inward work of the cross—for corporate metrics and measurable outcomes. Many churches now resemble Wall Street and Silicon Valley more than the apostolic church birthed in the upper room, where prayer, waiting on the Lord, and dependence on the Spirit released power that turned the world upside down.

Prayer, worship, and Christlike conformity have been displaced by influencers chasing likes, shares, and views. Ministry success is measured by reach and relevance rather than obedience, holiness, and spiritual depth.

Many believers are increasingly becoming disciples of the internet rather than disciples of Jesus—formed and shaped in the echo chambers of algorithms that reinforce hot-button ideologies rather than the authority of Scripture.

Whether right-wing political outrage or left-wing wokism, believers are being shaped daily by curated feeds that disciple their emotions, fears, and loyalties more than the Word of God renews their minds.

Social media platforms have become the primary discipling environment, training people what to be angry about, who to fear, and how to interpret reality—often with little regard for biblical truth or spiritual discernment. Conspiracy theories have formed minds more than the mystery of Christ.

As a result, influencers now shape believers more than pastors, prophets, or shepherds who labor faithfully in prayer and the Word.

Many Christians can quote podcasts, tweets, and viral clips with precision, yet struggle to rightly divide Scripture or recognize when cultural ideology has replaced the mind of Christ.

Efficiency is prized over transformation, control over Christ's leadership, and predictability over the unpredictable movement of the Spirit. Christian leadership books now quote business gurus more often than Jesus Himself.

The result has been burnout, moral failure, disillusionment, deconstructing, and a shallow spirituality sustained by experiences and emotions but lacking the substance that belongs to Christ. Spiritual gifts are either neglected or distorted. Rather than operating in the spirit of prophecy—the testimony of Jesus—modern prophecy has been reduced to social-media commentary, political predictions, cultural analysis masquerading as the word of the Lord, and the spiritual shift coming in the new year.

Much of the church is ill-prepared for the hour in which we live—much less for eternity. Where are the voices calling the church to make themselves ready for the Bridegroom? Where are the fivefold ministers laboring for Christ to be formed in His people? Where is the call to live a Sermon on the Mount lifestyle—to walk the narrow path of the kingdom?

Instead of an overcoming church, we have a church that has lost its first love—entangled in false doctrine and false prophecy, lukewarm, apathetic, and indistinguishable from the world. We are living at the end of the age, yet many insist that prophetic Scripture has already been fulfilled. Israel's central role in God's end-time purposes—clearly proclaimed by the prophets—has become controversial, reviving old patterns of division and antisemitism that have long stained church history.

The result is a church that is comfortable rather than watchful, informed but unprepared, sincere but lacking discernment and endurance. The problem is not a lack of churches, services, or Christian content—but a lack of Christ-centered formation, eternal alignment, and readiness.

What is needed is not another program-driven or personality-centered church, but a church built on the foundation of Jesus Christ Himself—one that lives from His life, is shaped by His eternal purpose, and is prepared to fulfill its kingdom assignment in this generation.

2. Casting Vision Requires Stating the Solution Clearly.

- After stating the problem Israel faced, Nehemiah then cast the vision for the solution, saying, "Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a reproach" (Neh. 2:17).
- The solution to a church in compromise is a return—a recovery of God's ultimate intention, where Christ is at the center, the gospel transforms people from the inside out, and God's people are formed inwardly into Christ's image, prepared for His return.
- We are not trying to add something new; we are contending to rebuild what is biblical, apostolic, and eternal. We are contending for the faith once and for all handed down by the apostles, seeking to build a church based on the blueprint they established.
- What follows is a description of God's solution as described in Scripture. This is what must be built and planted after the man-made church has been uprooted, broken down, and destroyed.

God's Vision for the End-Time Church

A different type of church is needed in this hour. More specifically:

- *A church aligned with God's eternal purpose.*

We want to build a different type of church—one driven by God's ultimate intention rather than human agendas or cultural trends. We envision a church aligned with what God has been pursuing from the beginning: Jesus Christ at the center of all things, a corporate family being conformed to Christ's image, a bride being made ready for His return, and a living temple, house, and body filled with His Spirit. This kind of church does not merely exist for activity or success, but for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose in Christ in this generation.

- *A church transformed by the gospel.*

We want to build a different type of church—one that is genuinely transformed by the power of the gospel. We envision a church changed from the inside out: justified and forgiven from the penalty of sin, progressively freed from the power of sin, and anchored in the hope of final deliverance from sin's very presence. We are committed to proclaiming the true gospel of Jesus Christ—a gospel that does not merely forgive, but regenerates, sanctifies, and continually conforms God's people into the image and likeness of Christ by the Spirit.

- *A church passionate for Jesus and intimate with Him.*

We want to build a different type of church—one that keeps the first commandment in first place and knows Christ not merely in doctrine, but in living, experiential reality. We envision a people whose hearts are genuinely aflame with love for the Son of God—a devotion so deep and consuming that it displaces rival affections and conquers a thousand lesser loves. We want to be a community that abides in Christ, lives from His life, enjoys fellowship with Him, communes with Him by the Spirit, and is continually transformed as we behold His glory.

- *A church that lives by Christ's indwelling life.*

We want to build a different type of church—one that lives not by human effort or religious striving, but by the indwelling life of Christ through the Spirit. We envision a people who live in conscious dependence on Christ within, naturally bearing the fruit of the Spirit and walking in the victory He accomplished at the cross. This is a church that no longer lives *for* God in self-effort, but lives *from* God—drawing from the mind of Christ as He dwells in our hearts, empowering us to walk in obedience, freedom, and fullness of life.

- *A church that prioritizes the weekly gathering under Christ's headship as sacred and central—submitting together to His authority so that His life is expressed in and through His body.*

We want to build a different type of church—one where Christ is not merely acknowledged, but truly functions as the living Head and life of His body. We envision an organic expression of Christ's indwelling life through a many-membered, diverse people who are being joined and fitted together by Him—not a religious organization going through familiar motions week after week. This is not a gathering of consumers seeking inspiration or entertainment, but a body of living stones being formed together, inwardly transformed, and actively expressing Christ's life through the gifts and grace He supplies to each member.

- *A church that passionately pursues God's presence.*

We want to build a different type of church—one that is presence-driven, not merely purpose-driven. We envision a people so hungry and desperate for the manifest presence of God that nothing else will satisfy, knowing that without His presence, all activity is empty and meaningless. We are committed to becoming the worshipers the Father seeks—those who worship Him in spirit and in

truth—prioritizing ministry *to* the Lord above ministry *for* the Lord. Our desire is not simply to host services, but to become a dwelling place of God in the Spirit, where His presence rests, leads, and transforms us from the inside out.

- *A church devoted to prayer for the church, nation, nations, and Israel.*

We want to build a different type of church—one that truly becomes a house of prayer for the nations, just as Jesus commanded. We envision a praying people who partner with God through sustained intercession to see His will accomplished and His kingdom established on earth as it is in heaven. We believe history belongs to the intercessor, and we are committed to praying for God's purposes to be fulfilled in this local church, the global church, America, the nations, and Israel. Nothing of lasting kingdom value is built apart from prayer, and we are called not to be spectators of end-time events, but active participants—watching, praying, and contending with God until His purposes are fully realized.

- *A church equipped to testify of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

We want to build a different type of church—one that is fully equipped to bear faithful witness to Jesus Christ through the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. We envision a people who know how to hear God's voice, who have experienced the initial baptism and ongoing filling of the Holy Spirit, and who are trained to operate in spiritual gifts with maturity, humility, and divine order. We desire to see the healing, delivering, and life-giving power of Christ expressed through His body—not for entertainment or self-exaltation, but for the glory of Jesus and the advancement of His kingdom. All of this is so that every believer may be an effective, Spirit-empowered witness of Jesus Christ in their everyday lives and spheres of influence.

- *A church obedient to the Sermon on the Mount.*

We want to build a different type of church—one obeys the Sermon on the Mount. We envision a community of true disciples who practice the kingdom life Jesus described, embracing His teaching not as idealistic theory but as the normal pattern of life for those who belong to Him. The Sermon on the Mount is not a checklist for earning salvation, but the clear expectation for those who have been saved and transformed by grace. It defines authentic discipleship—a righteousness that surpasses external religion, reaching the heart and expressing itself outwardly through humility, purity, reconciliation, sacrificial love, prayer, generosity, integrity, and wholehearted obedience to Christ as King.

- *A church that hastens the Bridegroom's return by readiness.*

We want to build a different type of church—one that aims to be fully prepared for the Bridegroom. We envision a people who actively pursue readiness by growing in spiritual maturity, deep intimacy with Jesus, watchful alertness, and victorious overcoming of everything that hinders wholehearted devotion. Readiness is not automatic at conversion, but is cultivated through intimacy, obedience, and love over time. We desire to be a church that does not merely believe in His return, but lives in such a way that hastens it through faithful, watchful, and obedient preparation—ordering our lives around His coming.

- *A church that overcomes the world, the flesh, and the devil.*

We want to build a different type of church—one that lives in the victory Jesus secured at the cross by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. We envision a people who overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, not through self-effort, but through faith-filled union with Christ and obedient perseverance. This is a church that resists the loss of first love, rejects false teaching and false prophecy, and refuses lukewarmness, indifference, and apathy. We are called to remain faithful to

Jesus no matter the cost, even in the face of pressure, opposition, or persecution. Those who overcome will share in Christ's eternal rewards—intimacy with Him, authority in His kingdom, and experiencing and radiating His glory.

- *A church with deep understanding of the prophetic Scriptures concerning the second coming.*

We want to build a different type of church—one that is grounded in biblical revelation about the end of the age and, as a result, lives with alertness, watchfulness, and readiness. We envision a church equipped with clear, scriptural understanding of the events surrounding Christ's return as revealed in the Olivet Discourse, the epistles, the books of Daniel and Revelation, and the writings of the Old Testament prophets. Prophetic insight is not given to satisfy curiosity or create fear, but to anchor us in truth, producing clarity, endurance, and steadfast hope. When the church is rooted in what God has spoken about the end of the age, we will remain focused, unshaken, and prepared to stand faithful through the challenging days ahead.

- *A church that stands with God's prophetic promises for Israel and the Jewish people.*

We want to build a different type of church—one that is aligned with God's unchanging covenant promises for Israel and the Jewish people. We envision a church that partners with the Lord through prayer and intercession for His will to be accomplished in Israel, Jerusalem, and the Middle East. This requires rejecting the long-standing error of replacement theology, rightly understanding Romans 9–11, and holding fast to the clear testimony of the Old Testament prophets concerning Israel at the end of the age. This is not a trivial issue or secondary matter; Israel stands at the very center of God's redemptive and prophetic purposes, and many end-time events flow directly from God's dealings with the Jewish nation.

- *A church faithful and diligent to fulfill our kingdom assignment.*

We want to build a different type of church—one that faithfully carries out the kingdom assignment the Lord has entrusted to us. We envision a fully equipped body, mobilized in gifts, callings, talents, and resources, to make disciples of all nations and to prepare a people ready for the Lord's return. This faithfulness requires discerning and stewarding what the Lord has entrusted to each of us, laboring diligently rather than passively, and multiplying what belongs to Him rather than squandering it through spiritual laziness or neglect. As we labor to fulfill our kingdom assignment, we position ourselves not only for fruitfulness in this age, but for responsibility, authority, and reward in the ages to come.

- *A church that prepares the way of the Lord as a forerunner in the spirit and the power of Elijah.*

We want to build a different type of church—one that functions as a forerunner, preparing a people made ready for the Lord. We envision a church anointed and empowered by the Holy Spirit with the same forerunner calling seen in Elijah and John the Baptist—boldly calling hearts back to God, confronting compromise, restoring devotion, and pointing people to Jesus Christ. Just as John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus' first coming in the spirit and power of Elijah, the Lord will raise up forerunner messengers and churches across the earth to prepare the way for His second coming. This is not a ministry of hype or elitism, but of repentance, restoration, clarity, and faithful witness—an essential calling of the end-time church to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.