

Ezra and Nehemiah

BY MC Conti

(3 sections, all start with a Persian king sending an Israelite to rebuild. Zerub does the temple, Ezra teaches the torah and builds the community, Nem does the city walls)

(There will be three definite sections on stage: Jerusalem, on the stage right side, which should be a little worn down, Persia, on the stage left, which should be pretty grand and have a throne; and a spot in the middle for "others". All seven actors walk on stage.)

(For Jesus on the throne there are a few choices, he can sit there through the whole show or you could have him enter and exit after his lines. Or if you can get really fancy, you could roll him on and off in his throne. Make sure he has a crown to take on and off, off when he is doing his narrator bit)

Jesus: The year is 528 BC. Isreal has been in exile for 70 years. Now it's time for them to go back home. My name is Jesus and my friends and I will be taking you on the journey back to Jerusalem. (lights up on the rest of the cast) But first, let us remind you what's happened in the story so far.

Actor 1: God created the world.

Actor 2: Adam and Eve messed it up.

Actor 3: Cain and Able introduced us to sibling rivalry.

Actor 4: Noah builds a boat.

Actor 5: Abraham and Sarah had Issac who led to Jacob

Actor 6: Who led to Josheph

Actor 1: Who led them all to Egypt.

Actor 2: 400 years go by and the newest king started abusing the Israelites.

Actor 3: Then Moses shows up on the scene.

Actor 6: Parting the Red Sea, 40 years in the wilderness, yada yada

Actor 5: Moses dies and Joshua takes them into the promised land.

Actor 1: Lots of bloody battles along the way.

Actor 2: Enter the Judges Era: Othniel, Debrah, Barak, Jael, Gideon, Sampson, and so on, until Samuel.

Actor 3: Then the Israelites say that they want a king not a judge.

Actor 4: Enter Saul. Who started out great but then went not so great.

Actor 5: God called an audible and made David king instead.

Actor 1: But Saul was still alive so you can imagine that didn't go over well.

Actor 2: Saul spent many years trying to kill David.

Actor 3: Instead, Saul was killed in battle.

Actor 4: And almost 20 years after Samuel anointed him,

Actor 6: David finally became king.

Actor 5: He wasn't perfect – Hello, Bathsheba, but God did call him "A man after God's own heart." So that's good.

Actor 4: David ruled a long time and then got old.

Actor 5: God promised to make the next king, David's son... Solomon.

Actor 2: After Solomon, Israel, splits into two tribes: the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

Jesus: House of Judah, y'all. Woop woop!

Actor 6: First and second kings and first and second Chronicles take us through all of the kings of both houses into the ultimate downfall of God's people.

Actor 3: Aka, they get captured and taken into exile by Assyria and Babylon.

Actor 2: Babylon destroys the temple.

Actor 4: Seventy years go by.

Actor 6: And today, King Cyrus is letting them go back to Jerusalem to rebuild.

Jesus: Which Isaiah predicted would happen 150 years before it did.

Actor 1: Like by name! (*He makes a head explode motion*)

Actor 2: Isaiah 44:28: He says to Cyrus, "My shepherd— everything I want, you'll do it." He says to Jerusalem, "Be built," and to the Temple, "Be established."

Actor 5: And that's where our story begins.

Actor 4: Now these books take place over the span of MANY years.

Actor 1: And MANY kings.

Actor 6: To make it more confusing, these books jump back and forth through the timeline.

Actor 3: And since it doesn't really matter which king does what, we're going to simplify this by having one person represent ALL the kings.

Jesus: Me. I am, after all, the king of kings. Ok. Let's get started! (*Jesus walks over, puts his crown on, and sits in the throne*) (**Ezra 1**) People of Judah! Your God has been good to me. And now He wants me to send you back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. So those who want to go should go! And let me give you all your stuff back! (*A crew member walks on with lots of sacks and hands one to each actor. Jesus stands and takes his crown off*) Meet Zerubbabel (he waves), Jeshua (he waves) and Nehemiah (he waves). These 3, along with about 40,000 Israelites, prepared to make the 4-month journey back to Jerusalem.

(**Ezra 2**)

Zerub: All right, are all the heads of the families here?

Jeshua (dad joke): If you're not here, raise your hand. Ha ha ha ha.

Nem: Yeah (*rolls eyes*) that never gets old.

Zerub: OK, let's go! (*The next part is as they are walking across the stage to Jerusalem, Al and Joe watch them cross.*)

Tobiah: WAIT! (*All on stage stop and groan*) I forgot my ID.

Zerub: So, you can't prove what family you're from?

Tobiah: No.

Jeshua: Honestly, Tobiah, you'd forget your head if it wasn't attached.

Nem: What do we do? If he can't prove he is Levite, we can't allow him to serve in the temple.

Zerub: You can come with us, you just can't be priests.

Tobiah: Got it! (*They exit, SR*)

(**Ezra 3**)

Jesus: Meet our villains.

Al (stepping forward from their hiding places): Are those Israelites? And are they heading back to Jerusalem?

Joe: They better not be. Jerusalem is our town now! The King of Assyria said we could have it!

Al: Yeah, but he's gone awhile. What if the new king said they could come back?

Joe: Let's go investigate. (*They cross to the SR exit and look off stage*) Are they...

Al: Rebuilding the temple? Yes, it looks like it.

Joe: I don't want that to happen. We've got a good thing going here. I don't want them to ruin it.

Al: Me neither. Let's go mess stuff up.

(*Zerub and Jeshua enter with blueprints and hard hats*)

Jeshua: No, no, that stone goes here.

Zerub: I don't think so.

Jeshua: It does, because look at that. Wait. (he turns the blueprints sideways) Nope. You're right.