**Today’s big ideas: Ezra and Nehemiah: People of the Book**

1. The book Ezra and Nehemiah bring to the Hebrew people is a work completed in Exile that asserts a shared past and a shared set of rules that will define the second-temple community they are building. The book is new to the people who hear it.
2. Ezra is associated with the P writer (author of the latest material in the Torah). P texts emphasize origin and correct observance of ritual, the role of the priesthood, and the necessity of separation from other non-Jewish communities (including the Samaritans) through purity of observance and association (no foreign wives).
3. Literacy or at least an understanding of Hebrew texts (in the original or in translation) is vital to the second-temple re-invention of the Hebrew people.
4. They emphasize the importance of documentation in conflicts with other countries, in disputes over community membership (pedigrees), and securing agreement for their policies.
5. They introduce public prayer as a new means of direct communication with Yahweh. It is part of an overall realignment of worship as a community activity. Direct individual communication to God through prophecy is discouraged.
6. They stress that the success of their community means absolute deference to Persian authority. They stress continuity and discourage all military activity.