

### Vision Re-cast

“Vision: Becoming God’s People”  
(Ezra / Nehemiah Introduction)  
Sunday, January 15, 2012

## **INTRODUCTION**

- The passion of our church is... ***Glorifying God by Treasuring Christ above all things and Reaching others that they may find lasting joy in Him.***
- SO, WHAT, THEN IS VISION?
  - Vision...
  - Vision is not a business model adapted for the church.
  - Vision is not something that, if absent, will cause people to die (**Proverbs 29:18** misused...unless of course it’s rightly used) -- “*Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.*” (**Proverbs 29:18** ESV)

## **SITUATION**

- Ezra
  - We can structure Ezra this way:
    - **Ezra 1-6: Return to the Land**
    - **Ezra 7-10: Return to the Lord**
- Nehemiah
  - Nehemiah continues the work of restoration begun by Ezra.
  - We can structure Nehemiah around this work:
    - **Neh. 1-6: Rebuilding the wall**
    - **Neh. 7-13: Reform and revival**
- The Focus of Ezra and Nehemiah
  - The high point of Nehemiah is not the completion of the wall, but Ezra’s ministry of the written Word to the people in

**Chapter 8**, the fruit of repentance in **Chapter 9**, and their version of a “church covenant” in **Chapter 10**.

### • So, we see Christ here...

- We have a **people** who are captive and set free by God’s sovereign hand (people like us)
  - **Ezra 1:1,5**
  - **Ezra 6:22**
  - **Ezra 7:27-28**
- We have a **priest**
- We have a **redeemer**
- We have a **homeland**

## ***SO...WHAT DOES ALL THIS HAVE TO DO WITH VISION IN THE LIFE OF UBC?***

### **I. WE ARE PART OF A LARGER REDEMPTIVE STORY**

- A. Whatever our vision is, it should be gospel driven
- B. Our vision should be conceived as something only God can do and get credit for
- C. Our vision should bring more people into joy-filled fellowship with Christ

### **II. GOD DESIRES TO ESTABLISH FOR HIMSELF A PEOPLE OF WORSHIP LOCALLY AT UBC**

- A. God redeems a people so they would worship Him
- B. Our hearts should be burden for God’s glory in our city (like Ezra & Nehemiah)
- C. Our vision to be a healthy church that bears lasting fruit while we wait for His return should incrementally and ultimately culminate in praise

D. Becoming faithful worshippers means that our vision, right here, right now, is for revival!

### **III. GOD HAS A WAY OF DOING THINGS THAT WE MUST EMBRACE**

#### A. God's faithfulness

1. The returnees experienced a new exodus. As soon as the new temple, which took the place of the pre-exilic temple, was completed, they celebrated the Passover (**Ezra 6:19–22**). Later, after reading the Law, they celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles (**Neh 8**). These feasts celebrate God's great saving acts in the exodus.
2. The prayers of **Ezra 9:6–15**; **Neh 1:5–11**; and **Neh 9:5–37** demonstrate their deep consciousness of the covenant

#### B. Holiness

1. The emphasis on continuity with the covenant people of God led to a strong emphasis on separation
2. WE MUST BECOME SEPARATE FROM THE WORLD...DISTINCT.

#### C. The Word of God

1. God's will for the people revealed: Remember the covenant and be God's covenant people
2. God takes pleasure in the His Word proclaimed and responded to (faith pleases God, and faith comes from the Word of God)
3. Ezra's prayer in **Ezra 9** and that of the people in **Nehemiah 9** both show a profound understanding of God and his ways as revealed in the Pentateuch
4. WE MUST BE RADICALLY COMMITTED TO LIFE & DOCTRINE.

#### D. Worship

1. When the first group of exiles returned from Babylon, they first built an altar to sacrifice to God
2. When the temple was completed, the people celebrated with a large dedication service
3. TREASURING CHRIST IN ALL OUR WORSHIP IN SONG, SILENCE, PROCLAMATION.

#### E. Prayer

1. In seeking God's favor to go
2. In response to God's Word spoken (joyful praise, confession, renewed commitment to covenant)
3. WE MUST GAIN A VISION FOR REGULAR PRAYER CHURCH-WIDE
4. BEGIN PLANNED TIMES OF ELDER-LED PRAYER AND WORSHIP FOR OUR CHURCH, CITY, COUNTRY, AND WORLD

#### F. Leadership

1. Nehemiah was a genuine leader
2. Different people, playing different roles
3. WE MUST CEASE DEPENDING ON THOSE WHO APPEAR TO BE FAITHFUL IN SERVICE
4. AS WELL, WE MUST SUPPORT AND PRAY FOR ELDERS / PASTORS

### **IV. A HEALTHY BIBLICAL COMMUNITY LIVES LIKE THEY ARE**

#### A. Overall...

- B. No separation between doctrine and practice, orthodoxy and praxis