

THE TEMPLE REBUILDING

BIBLE TEXT : Ezra 4:1-24; 5:1-17; 6:1-22.

LESSON 429 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you" (Haggai 2:4).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Ezra 4:1-24

¹ Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the LORD God of Israel;

² Then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither.

³ But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the LORD God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us.

⁴ Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building,

⁵ And hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

⁶ And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they *unto him* an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

⁷ And in the days of Artaxerxes wrote Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of their companions, unto Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the writing of the letter *was* written in the Syrian tongue, and interpreted in the Syrian tongue.

⁸ Rehum the chancellor and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king in this sort:

⁹ Then *wrote* Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their companions; the Dinaites, the Apharsathchites, the Tarpelites, the Apharsites, the Archevites, the Babylonians, the Susanchites, the Dehavites, *and* the Elamites,

¹⁰ And the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Asnappar brought over, and set in the cities of Samaria, and the rest *that are* on this side the river, and at such a time.

¹¹ This *is* the copy of the letter that they sent unto him, *even* unto Artaxerxes the king; Thy servants the men on this side the river, and at such a time.

¹² Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came up from thee to us are come

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Samaritans

When the Children of Israel were taken captives into Babylon, the cities and the land of Israel were left almost without people. The king of Assyria then brought people from other lands and cities to occupy the land of Samaria, which was the capital of Israel after the division of Israel and Judah. These people were known as Samaritans.

The king thought that God would be pleased if the Samaritans worshiped the Lord God of the Jews. A Jewish priest was brought to Samaria to teach the people "how they should fear the LORD" (II Kings 17:28). So the Samaritans feared the Lord but they served idols. When they had moved to Samaria they had "made gods of their own" and worshiped as they had always done in their heathen countries. The Samaritans and the Jewish people were usually not friendly with each other.

Hindrance

When the Jews returned to Jerusalem, they feared the people who were living in Judah. The Samaritans saw that the Jews were beginning to rebuild the Temple. The foundation was laid and the Jews rejoiced in the work that the Lord had helped them to do, but there were some Samaritans who acted as enemies to the Jews. They did not want the temple worship restored and they planned to hinder that work.

At first they offered to "help," but their intentions were not good. The Samaritans said, "We seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him." The words might have sounded good but the people actually did not do what they said -- sacrifice to God in true worship. Their offer was refused. The leaders of the Jewish people knew that God wanted His people "separated . . . from all the people that are upon the face of the earth" (Exodus 33:16). Zerubbabel and Jeshua said, "Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God." The Samaritans had no right or claim to the privilege of rebuilding the Temple.

False Accusations

Some of the Samaritans had no real friendship for the Jewish people, as their actions proved. When they were denied the privilege of helping, they did what they could to hinder the building. They weakened the Jews, perhaps by fear; they troubled them, perhaps by hindering them from getting needed materials. Finally the Samaritans hired advisers to write a letter to the king. They sent a false report that the Jews were building a "rebellious" and a "bad" city when really the Jews were just building the Temple. They reported to the king that the Jews would not pay taxes any more and would cause the whole country to rebel against the king. The Samaritans tried to make it appear that the report was for the king's good and for his honour.

The king believed the false report. He read how in times past the Jewish people had rebelled against foreign rule. And there had been a time when Solomon, king of Judah and Israel, had reigned over the land, and the heathen people paid taxes to him. It had been God's plan and promise that the Jews should rule the

unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and the bad city, and have set up the walls *thereof*, and joined the foundations.

¹³ Be it known now unto the king, that, if this city be builded, and the walls set up *again*, *then* will they not pay toll, tribute, and custom, and *so* thou shalt endamage the revenue of the kings.

¹⁴ Now because we have maintenance from *the king's* palace, and it was not meet for us to see the king's dishonour, therefore have we sent and certified the king;

¹⁵ That search may be made in the book of the records of thy fathers: so shalt thou find in the book of the records, and know that this city *is* a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces, and that they have moved sedition within the same of old time: for which cause was this city destroyed.

¹⁶ We certify the king that, if this city be builded *again*, and the walls thereof set up, by this means thou shalt have no portion on this side the river.

¹⁷ *Then* sent the king an answer unto Rehum the chancellor, and *to* Shimshai the scribe, and *to* the rest of their companions that dwell in Samaria, and *unto* the rest beyond the river, Peace, and at such a time.

¹⁸ The letter which ye sent unto us hath been plainly read before me.

¹⁹ And I commanded, and search hath been made, and it is found that this city of old time hath made insurrection against kings, and *that* rebellion and sedition have been made therein.

²⁰ There have been mighty kings also over Jerusalem, which have ruled over all *countries* beyond the river; and toll, tribute, and custom, was paid unto them.

²¹ Give ye now commandment to cause these men to cease, and that this city be not builded, until *another* commandment shall be given from me.

²² Take heed now that ye fail not to do this: why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings?

²³ Now when the copy of king Artaxerxes' letter *was* read before Rehum, and Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews, and made them to cease by force and power.

²⁴ Then ceased the work of the house of God which *is* at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

Ezra 5:1-17

¹ Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that *were* in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, *even* unto them.

² Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak,

Holy Land, but because of disobedience, that was changed, for the time being; and the Jews were ruled by others instead of ruling the heathen.

Satan's Attacks

The king gave orders to stop the work of the Jews. The Samaritans "made them to cease by force and power." For a while the Jews stopped building. God's people today have an adversary, an enemy, who is Satan. Sometimes he takes the form of a person or thing. When Eve was tempted in the Garden of Eden, he came as a serpent (**Genesis 3:1** ¹ Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?). Read in Revelation 12:9 (**Revelation 12:9** ⁹ And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.) where "that old serpent" is identified as Satan. He may appear as "an angel of light" (**2 Corinthians 11:14** ¹⁴ And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.). In John 8:44 Satan is referred to as a "liar" and the father of lies. Satan is an "accuser of our brethren" (**Revelation 12:10** ¹⁰ And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.). He tries in many ways to overcome God's people because he is their enemy. He often uses other people to hinder the Lord's work, as he did with the Samaritans.

We are told to "resist the devil, and he will flee . . ." (**James 4:7** ⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.). God has a protection for His people. He tells us: "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11). If we are watchful and prayerful, the enemy will not be able to hinder the Lord's work to a great extent. As we trust God and do our part, Satan will be overcome.

Encouragement

The eyes of the Lord were upon His people and their work. He used the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to encourage the people to start building again. They urged and inspired them with the words of the Lord. Haggai said, "Be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts" (Haggai 2:4). So the leaders, Zerubbabel and Jeshua, began the building again.

God has many wonderful promises in the Bible. He sends encouragement to His people by His ministers, His singers, and His Word. There is an example for us in the Bible: "David was greatly distressed; . . . but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God" (I Samuel 30:6).

Another letter was written to the king, explaining that the Jews were rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem at the decree of Cyrus. They suggested that the king search the records to find if their word was true. This was done, and in the "house of the rolls" (like a library) was found the record of Cyrus's decree: "Let the house be builded" and "let the expenses be given out of the king's house." So the people of Samaria received this answer: "Let the work of this house of God alone." Moreover, whatever the Jews needed as supplies or offerings was to be given to them from the king's goods.

Completed

Though the work of the enemy halted the building for a while, their interference was soon brought to nothing by the Lord. The

and began to build the house of God which *is* at Jerusalem: and with them *were* the prophets of God helping them.

³ At the same time came to them Tatnai, governor on this side the river, and Shetharboznai, and their companions, and said thus unto them, Who hath commanded you to build this house, and to make up this wall?

⁴ Then said we unto them after this manner, What are the names of the men that make this building?

⁵ But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they could not cause them to cease, till the matter came to Darius: and then they returned answer by letter concerning this *matter*.

⁶ The copy of the letter that Tatnai, governor on this side the river, and Shetharboznai, and his companions the Apharsachites, which *were* on this side the river, sent unto Darius the king:

⁷ They sent a letter unto him, wherein was written thus; Unto Darius the king, all peace.

⁸ Be it known unto the king, that we went into the province of Judea, to the house of the great God, which is builded with great stones, and timber is laid in the walls, and this work goeth fast on, and prospereth in their hands.

⁹ Then asked we those elders, *and* said unto them thus, Who commanded you to build this house, and to make up these walls?

¹⁰ We asked their names also, to certify thee, that we might write the names of the men that *were* the chief of them.

¹¹ And thus they returned us answer, saying, We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and build the house that was builded these many years ago, which a great king of Israel builded and set up.

¹² But after that our fathers had provoked the God of heaven unto wrath, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house, and carried the people away into Babylon.

¹³ But in the first year of Cyrus the king of Babylon *the same* king Cyrus made a decree to build this house of God.

¹⁴ And the vessels also of gold and silver of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple that *was* in Jerusalem, and brought them into the temple of Babylon, those did Cyrus the king take out of the temple of Babylon, and they were delivered unto *one*, whose name *was* Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor;

¹⁵ And said unto him, Take these vessels, go, carry them into the temple that *is* in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be builded in his place.

¹⁶ Then came the same Sheshbazzar, *and*

Jews received encouragement as well as materials, and the "house was finished." How good when this work of the Lord was finished! It will be wonderful, too, when we have finished our work for the Lord.

There are examples in the Bible of others who finished their work for the Lord. Jesus said to His Father, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). Near the end of Paul's life, he said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (II Timothy 4:7). If we trust God and obey Him we can successfully finish our work here. No one need fail with God's help.

Temple Worship

At last came the time of the dedication. What rejoicing there must have been! Everyone and everything were in place. All was done according to the Law. Many animals were slain as sacrifices to God, although not so many as when Solomon dedicated the first Temple. God accepted them as He does consecrations today. A sin offering was made, too: twelve he goats, one for each tribe. So the Temple worship was begun.

Then the people were able to keep the feasts that God had commanded. As they were not allowed to offer sacrifices anywhere but in the Temple, they had not been able to make their sacrifices through all the years they were in captivity. The last record of the Children of Israel's keeping the Passover had been during the reign of Josiah (II Chronicles 35:1), perhaps one hundred years before. How happy they were to be able to obey God and to worship Him according to His plan. "The LORD had made them joyful," just as today when one obeys the Lord and His example. He has promised, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17).

QUESTIONS

1. Who were the Samaritans?
2. Why were they not permitted to help build the Temple?
3. Instead of helping to build, what did the people of the land do?
4. Why was a letter written to the king?
5. Why did the Children of Israel stop working on the Temple?
6. Name two prophets of God who lived at this time.
7. How did King Darius help in building the Temple?
8. Why did the Children of Israel keep the Feast of Passover?

laid the foundation of the house of God which *is* in Jerusalem: and since that time even until now hath it been in building, and *yet* it is not finished.

¹⁷ Now therefore, if *it seem* good to the king, let there be search made in the king's treasure house, which *is* there at Babylon, whether it be *so*, that a decree was made of Cyrus the king to build this house of God at Jerusalem, and let the king send his pleasure to us concerning this matter.

Ezra 6:1-22

¹ Then Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in the house of the rolls, where the treasures were laid up in Babylon.

² And there was found at Achmetha, in the palace that *is* in the province of the Medes, a roll, and therein *was* a record thus written:

³ In the first year of Cyrus the king *the same* Cyrus the king made a decree *concerning* the house of God at Jerusalem, Let the house be builded, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid; the height thereof threescore cubits, *and* the breadth thereof threescore cubits;

⁴ *With* three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber: and let the expenses be given out of the king's house:

⁵ And also let the golden and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took forth out of the temple which *is* at Jerusalem, and brought unto Babylon, be restored, and brought again unto the temple which *is* at Jerusalem, *every one* to his place, and place *them* in the house of God.

⁶ Now *therefore*, Tatnai, governor beyond the river, Shetharboznai, and your companions the Apharsachites, which *are* beyond the river, be ye far from thence:

⁷ Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his place.

⁸ Moreover I make a decree what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews for the building of this house of God: that of the king's goods, *even* of the tribute beyond the river, forthwith expenses be given unto these men, that they be not hindered.

⁹ And that which they have need of, both young bullocks, and rams, and lambs, for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the appointment of the priests which *are* at Jerusalem, let it be given them day by day without fail:

¹⁰ That they may offer sacrifices of sweet savours unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons.

¹¹ Also I have made a decree, that whosoever shall alter this word, let timber

be pulled down from his house, and being set up, let him be hanged thereon; and let his house be made a dunghill for this.

¹² And the God that hath caused his name to dwell there destroy all kings and people, that shall put to their hand to alter *and* to destroy this house of God which *is* at Jerusalem. I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with speed.

¹³ Then Tatnai, governor on this side the river, Shetharboznai, and their companions, according to that which Darius the king had sent, so they did speedily.

¹⁴ And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded, and finished *it*, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.

¹⁵ And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.

¹⁶ And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy,

¹⁷ And offered at the dedication of this house of God an hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and for a sin offering for all Israel, twelve he goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel.

¹⁸ And they set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God, which *is* at Jerusalem; as it is written in the book of Moses.

¹⁹ And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth *day* of the first month.

²⁰ For the priests and the Levites were purified together, all of them *were* pure, and killed the passover for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves.

²¹ And the children of Israel, which were come again out of captivity, and all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the LORD God of Israel, did eat,

²² And kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the LORD had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.