

Ezra Lesson 05

Ezra Chapter 5

Distributed by: KJV Bible Studies

Website: www.KjvBibleStudies.net

e-Email: mail@KjvBibleStudies2.net

Introduction: After an interval of approximately fourteen years, work resumed on the Temple. Immediately, the local representatives of the Persians king demanded to know by whose authority the work was proceeding.

The Jews explained how Cyrus had given a decree for the work and they were in compliance with it. Word was sent to Babylon. The decree of Cyrus was confirmed.

I. The Rebuilding Begins Anew

Ezr 5:1 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.

Ezr 5:2 Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem: and with them were the prophets of God helping them.

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. The events here synchronize with Haggai and portions of Zechariah.

They, through their preaching, urged the Jews to get back to rebuilding their Temple. In the interim, they had built comfortable, nice homes; but the Temple remained in a dismal state and only partially started. Weeds no doubt had grown back up on the site. It was a pathetic testimony of unfinished business. See Haggai Chapter 1.

Some claim they don't have enough time to do needful things. This really is not an excuse. Zig Ziglar said "Lack of direction, not lack of time, is the problem. We all have 24 hr days." We must be disciplined and make the best use of our time.

The record of Zechariah being the son of Iddo when referenced with Zechariah 1:1 describes such. Zechariah was the son of Berechiah and the grandson of Iddo. In any event, these prophets stood and preached it was high time to begin work on the Temple once again.

Zec 1:1 In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, Zec 1:2 The LORD hath been sore displeased with your fathers.

It is noteworthy how the decree to cease and desist by Cambyses (a.k.a. Ahaseurus and Artaxerxes) was specifically directed only at the rebuilding of the city and by assumption, its wall. See Ezra 4:21.

Ezr 4:21 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.

Haggai and Zechariah urged the Temple project be restarted.

In Verse 2, Zerubbabel, the royal heir of the line of David, along with Jeshua (Joshua) the high priest assumed the leadership “and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem: and with them were the prophets of God helping them.” The prophets mentioned certainly included Haggai and Zechariah, but probably included other lesser known prophets of the day.

Ezra 4:24 notes that two years earlier, Darius I had assumed the throne of the Persian empire. Knowledge of this may have been some of the momentum for Haggai and Zechariah urging the work to recommence. A new ruler hopefully brought a new outlook, which indeed he did.

When we trust God, things tend to always go our way. Norman Vincent Peale was quoted as saying “Let nothing disturb you. Let nothing frighten you. Everything passes away except God. God alone is sufficient.”

Ezr 5:3 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?

Ezr 5:4 Then said we unto them after this manner, What are the names of the men that make this building?

The local Persian authorities, Tatnai the governor “on this side the river” (i.e., west of the Euphrates River—probably the province of Syria having jurisdiction of Judaea and Samaria) along with another Persian official named Shetharboznai, immediately challenged the work. Though no direct mention is otherwise made of any rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem (which had military-political implications of rebellion), it may have been in clearing the rubble in Jerusalem, the foundations of the former walls had been exposed raising the suspicion the Jews planned to rebuild them.

It is noteworthy in chapter 4 how the adversaries likewise accused the Jews of rebuilding the wall. It may be some work had been started thereon. More likely, the wall noted is in reference to the wall of the Temple under construction. In any event, they demanded to know who authorized it and they wanted to know the names of those involved.

Ezr 5:5 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.

God's providential intervention and protection is evident. Where He guides He not only provides, but also protects and prospers. Though challenged by the Persian authorities, the work continued. God's hand was upon it. Indeed, there often comes opposition in God's work. Nevertheless, as God's servants forge ahead with what God has called them to do, He providentially intervenes and prospers. Note is made of the letter soon to be sent to Darius.

II. Tattenai's Letter to King Darius

Ezr 5:6 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:

Ezr 5:7 They sent a letter unto him, wherein was written thus; Unto Darius the king, all peace.

The letter prepared by Tatnai and Shetharboznai to Darius concerning the work is formally noted and introduced.

Ezr 5:8 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.

Ezr 5:9 Then asked we those elders, and said unto them thus, Who commanded you to build this house, and to make up these walls?

Ezr 5:10 We asked their names also, to certify thee, that we might write the names of the men that were the chief of them.

The letter sent by the Persian officials is noted in detail. There is not the hostile tone of the earlier letter of accusation in chapter 4. Tatnai seems to endeavor to accurately present the overall picture of events of recent history. Note in verse 8 how Tatnai makes reference to "the great God." The mention of "great stones" literally is of "rolling stones." The idea probably is how the stone work of the Temple was of such magnitude, rollers were necessary under them to move them.

The implication is how that a massive project was underway. Notice also how the Jews answered the inquiry of who they were and what they were doing. Their reply was, "We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth." Indeed they were. And indeed God is the God of heaven and earth.

There is a forceful nuance of distinction implied. Most idolaters, including the Persians, had the idea that their gods were local and pertained to specific functions such as fertility or warfare etc. However, what clearly is implied here is that the God of the Jews was God of the entire earth and the entire universe which indeed He is. He therefore is far greater than any pagan idol.

Ezr 5:11 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.

Ezr 5:12 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.

Ezr 5:13 But in the first year of Cyrus the king of Babylon the same king Cyrus made a decree to build this house of God.

Ezr 5:14 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;

Ezr 5:15 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.

Ezr 5:16 Then came the same Sheshbazzar, and 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.

The "great king" noted in verse 11 is Solomon and his original Temple construction. The Jews in continuing their reply to Tatnai's interrogation gave candid answer. They acknowledged that their deportation to Babylon was because they had provoked the "God of heaven." However, they also correctly pointed out how the authority for their work was vested in the decree of Cyrus some years earlier.

Once again, the Sheshbazzar mentioned in verse 16 is Zerubbabel. What is implied is though the work had formally stopped with the decree of Artaxerxes in 4:21, the decree of Cyrus had never been abrogated. They therefore had resumed work on that basis.

Ezr 4:21 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.

Ezr 5:17 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.

Tatnai requested of King Darius that a search of the archives be made in Babylon whether Cyrus ever made such a decree. He requested a reply in the matter. It is always good to seek things out and prove things.

They sought what was truth. Sandra Carey said “Never mistake knowledge for wisdom. One helps you make a living, and the other helps you to make a life.” We need Godly wisdom to know how to live a life pleasing in the Lord’s sight. Similarly, the King needed wisdom to know the truth.

KJV Bible Studies are prepared and distributed free of charge. The lessons may not be sold without consent. If you have questions or wish to discuss the lessons, or possibly need help in finding Jesus Christ as your Personal Lord and Savior, contact us at the email below.

Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Website: www.KjvBibleStudies.net
e-Email: mail@KjvBibleStudies2.net

Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.