

EZRA

From Exile to Home

Israel had forsaken God by worshiping idols like the nations around them.

Each of their kings were more-evil than those before them. The prophets warned but they would not listen. Finally, God had enough. Nebuchadnezzar conquered them taking many into exile in Babylon.

Later, God delivered a message to Belshazzar, son of Nebuchadnezzar, by writing it on his wall. Daniel interpreted the message – God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting; your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.

The time of their exile was drawing to an end. Cyrus king of Persia issued a proclamation “The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel— he is the God who is in Jerusalem. And let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.” (Ezra 1:1-4)

There were 42,360, besides their male and female servants who went up from exile to Jerusalem.

Key points from Exile to Home

- God is never pleased when His people, Children of Israel or Christians, cease doing His will.
- The Lord told His Old Testament people the consequences of following other gods, and idols was physical captivity.
- Christ tells His New Testament people the consequences of their unrepentant sins is eternal captivity with the Devil and His angels.

Rebuilding the Temple

Judah was carried away into captivity at three different times. After seventy years in captivity, the first of three groups returned and after seven months, they built an altar and offered burnt offerings to God. But the foundation for the temple had not been laid. So, they appointed workers and supervisors and when the foundation was laid, they sang praises and shouted greatly.

Doing God’s will always brings opposition so the adversaries of Judah attempted several ways to stop the rebuilding; making fun, bribing and making false statements and rumors. “Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah and made them afraid to build” so the work stopped. Discouragement is one of Satan’s most powerful tools.

Later Zerubbabel built the wall. He was challenged by the nearby governors which did not stop the rebuilding. The governors sent letters to King Darius for orders to cease rebuilding. His reply was not what they desired or expected “Let the work on this house of God alone. Let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews rebuild this house of God on its site. Moreover, I make a decree regarding what you shall

do for these elders of the Jews for the rebuilding of this house of God. The cost is to be paid to these men in full and without delay from the royal revenue. ... let it be done with diligence.”

They finished their building on the third day of the month of Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the King. At the dedication, they offered sacrifices of sin for all Israel and set the priests and Levites in their divisions for the service of God at Jerusalem, as it is written in the Book of Moses.

Key points from Rebuilding the Temple

- It pleases God when people's hearts are set on pleasing Him. Nothing can stop God's will from being done. So, if we are not willing to do the work He desires, then someone else will do that work.