

+++ The House of the Rolls

Ezra Chapters Five and Six

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~ Our Spiritual Safari is observing the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem by the Israelites after captivity in Babylon for seventy years. Cyrus made a decree to restore the city and the temple, and this work is being done by the remnant of the children of Israel who have now returned to their land. We have seen how the opposition towards rebuilding Jerusalem persuaded the new king, Artaxerxes, who succeeded Cyrus, to halt the work. The opposition called Jerusalem “... *that rebellious and bad city.*” Well, God never called them that – even though they *HAD* rebelled against Him!

Anyways, our last report left off with the enemy successful in suspending the work temporarily. When Artaxerxes learned that Judah had, in fact, rebelled three separate times, he was alarmed, apparently. Unfortunately, he had not investigated these allegations thoroughly. What they overlooked – probably intentionally ignored – is that a decree had been made by Cyrus to rebuild the city. Remember, a Persian decree could *NEVER* be changed or altered.

Naturally, this was a period of extreme discouragement for the Jewish remnant. These Israelites had left the affluence and wealth of Babylon to return and build a broken-down Jerusalem — in which the temple was completely destroyed — and now they can't even commence construction. Well, we'll find out later that they were *SO* frustrated that they felt like abandoning the job altogether. From a human perspective, that would seem like the best way to solve their problems.

Most people today seem to feel that if they could just get away from where they are, they would have all of their problems solved. That may be true under certain circumstances, but we cannot run away from our spiritual

problems; and these people had deep spiritual problems — or they wouldn't have returned in the first place.

So, this is when God raised up His prophets Haggai and Zechariah. Frankly, the best possible safari course would be to consider those two books at this time in connection with Ezra and Nehemiah; in fact, Esther and Daniel also belong in that same package — but, we're going to follow the canons of Scripture on this expedition. These prophets were raised up specifically to encourage the children of Israel in the rebuilding. These men had knowledge of the decree made by Cyrus — that could never be changed. Haggai calls the "*Lord's messengers*" those who God raised up to bring His message. As we have said many times before on safari: the Word of God is a complete reaffirmation of itself. This is an excellent example of that.

Haggai and Zechariah could not have been more different; in fact, the *ONLY* thing they had in common was that they were both prophets of God. Haggai was no non-sense with his feet planted firmly on the ground. He had a measuring rod and meticulously estimated everything; and he gets right down to the nitty gritty of the matter. Haggai spoke to the conscience of the nation with a message that cut deep and hurt badly. That type of a man is not popular today, by the way. If you speak the Word of God properly, correctly and completely today, you are going to find yourself in deep trouble — or — you're not doing it right. Haggai spoke the Word of God.

Zechariah, on the other hand, didn't have his feet on the ground. He had his head in the clouds. He had tremendously wild visions. Can you imagine a woman floating through the air in a bushel basket? That's trippy, no matter how you look at it. See, Zechariah appealed to the hearts and emotions while Haggai appealed to the mind of the thinking man. God has given us all a conscience and a heart; so, God has the total and complete psyche covered with these two prophets to His chosen people at the time in which we are studying. Apparently, Haggai was also considered the chief leader of the people....

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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, 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?

~ So, Tatnai and Shetharboznai want to know what's going on. Zerubbabel isn't going to answer them very nicely. This is the only place we come across these two particular enemies, Tatnai and Shetharboznai, in the Word of God. These are men of the world and Zerubbabel isn't about to cast his pearls before swine. See, the secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him – and with no one else. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. Zerubbabel isn't about to say the prophets told them to go ahead and build, either; he is just going to answer a fool according to his folly....

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 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.

~ So, the enemy discovers the children of Israel are rebuilding the temple under an alleged decree, and off goes another special-delivery letter to the king. At this time, Darius is the king. Obviously, Babylonian kings never got too comfortable on the throne before they were killed or overthrown – or both. Anyways, this letter tells the king they really aren't Israel's enemy; but they just happened to be riding by the temple site and this is what they found. It was all a huge lie, of course. See, they didn't believe any decree had ever been made by Cyrus. They challenged whether a record could be produced for this commission to rebuild the temple.

There is a distinction to be made between the *position* of God's people and the *condition* of God's people. Our condition and our position are quite separate. *Positionally*, these people were in the very place God wanted them to be – back in the land; remember, Cyrus acknowledged that the decree he had made had been made at the direction of the God of Heaven! Unfortunately, the *condition* of these people at this time was not good. They were considering walking away from the effort when adversity struck. Many people today have their condition and their position totally mixed-up. If you are in Christ you are safe – there's no doubt; but – how's your *condition* today? Are you a discouraged and defeated saint? Do you want to give up today and leave everything behind? Hopefully this message will encourage you to remember that God's will is going to be done – period. We need to learn to pray for that.

Now, in chapter six, we learn the work continued, and the written decree was physically located. That encouraged them to continue the work; and

when King Cyrus offered to pay the entire bill for the construction — they became highly motivated! They never would have known about these things if the enemy hadn't mentioned them. The enemy always blunders when he attacks God's children and lies to them or about them. They did it in ignorance because they didn't believe a decree had been made. What they did believe was that they could actually stop God's work. See, we can depend on God to keep His eyes on those of us who are His Own, friends. Let this passage bring you hope today....

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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.

~ So, our Spiritual Safari concludes this leg of our expedition through the entire Word of God with the rebuilding work of Jerusalem and the temple continuing. Not only was the work freed from hinderance, but the taxes

gathered by the enemy would now pay for the construction project. God *ALWAYS* makes the wrath of man to praise Him. Here is just such a case. That's how the God of Heaven operates, friends. Now, there would be a severe penalty for anyone who did not help the children of Israel in *ALL* that they desired to do.

Notice the offering in verse seventeen was for all twelve tribes – not just Benjamin and Judah! There are no ten lost tribes; insisting that ten tribes have been misplaced is simply nonsense teaching. They're all together here after the captivity in Ezra — and God knows exactly where they're at today, too. These people at this time in which we are studying now gather around the Passover feast – which means gathering around the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. They were looking forward to Christ's appearance. Christ was the Passover Lamb Who died in our place so we might receive the gift of salvation. I hope you will come to the realization that *YOU* are a sinner who needs a Savior — and that you will place your trust in Him today ~

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