

Building the Kingdom - Lessons from Zerubbabel

Read Ezra chapters 1 – 6, Haggai chapters 1-2, Zechariah 4:1-10.

Background

2 Chronicles 36:11-23/Jeremiah 25:4-12

- The temple was destroyed and Jews taken captive to Babylon, Persia for 70 years by Nebuchadnezzar because of their disobedience and rebellion against God (2Chronicles 36:11-21).
 - They worshipped false gods
 - They did not rest the land on the 7th year. Over a period of 490 years, they owed God 70 years of rest. God took them into captivity for 70 years (Leviticus 25:4-5).
- God raised up the Persian King Cyrus and stirred his heart to rebuild the temple. Cyrus asked the Jews “*Who will go?*” to build a house for God in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 36:22-23/Ezra 1:1-3).
- The first group to return to Jerusalem were led by Zerubbabel. They were those whose spirits were moved by God. 49,897 Jews returned to Jerusalem (out of approximately 2 million – the rest remained in Babylon). This first group included 42,360 people plus 7,337 servants, and 200 singers – men and women. (Ezra 2:64-65)
- Those left behind were encouraged to give financially and materially towards the building.
- Cyrus entrusted Sheshbazzar (later named Zerubbabel) with gold and silver from the first temple.

Sheshbazzar = joy in affliction

Zerubbabel = a stranger in Babylon

The work began:

Built an Altar

Built Foundations

Faced Adversity:

Attempts to compromise them/unequally yoked – “we seek *your* God as you do”

Discouragement

Troublemaking (hired)

Frustration

Written accusations about rebellion and nonpayment of taxes

Result

- Work on the temple stopped
- The people said it wasn't God's timing, and focused on their own homes (Haggai 1:1-3)

God's answer

He sent prophets Zechariah and Haggai to bring His word, to stir up their hearts to continue the work. The word of His Spirit and truth through His prophets convicted and encouraged Zerubbabel to continue the work.

Zechariah 4:1-10

- "Not by might, nor by power but by MY Spirit" says the Lord
- Who are you Oh great mountain. Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain.
- He will bring it forth saying "grace, grace" to it.
- The hands of Zerubbabel laid the foundations – his hands will finish it.
- Everyone will know this is the Lord
- Who has despised the day of small things?

Haggai 1 and 2

- "My house is in ruins while every one of you runs his own house"
- "I am with you, says the Lord"
- "In comparison with the former temple this is nothing in your eyes".
- "Yet now be strong Zerubbabel, and Joshua and work, for I am with you" says the Lord of hosts."
- "According to My covenant, My Spirit remains on you, so do not fear!"
- "I will fill this temple with My glory"
- "The glory of the latter temple will be greater than the former"
- "I will take you Zerubbabel My servant, and will make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you," says the Lord of hosts.

Result

Ezra 5 and 6

- The people rose up and finished the building
- They still faced opposition but continued the work
- The opposition was overturned when Darius found King Cyrus' decree.
- The opposition Tattenai governor of the region beyond the River, had to pay taxes from his region to help with the building work.
- Anyone who opposed the building of the temple would be hanged.
- The enemy diligently obeyed the king!
- The temple was complete in the next 4 years!