

Support for Needed Projects

General Topic: Liberating Passover

Sunday, March 13, 2022

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Lesson Text: Ezra 6:1-12

Background Scripture: Ezra 5; 6:1-12; 10:1-5

Ezra 6:1 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

Lesson Objective(s):

By the end of this lesson, we will review the pivotal role of Darius in getting the new temple built in Jerusalem; ponder excuses we offer for failing to act in accord with

god's will; and confess our failings before God, receive the joy of forgiveness, and get on with the task at hand.

Teaching Tools:

Word puzzles may be developed from the following site: www.puzzlemaker.com. Also, www.dtlk.com has several visual aids that may be beneficial, as well as www.kidssundayschool.com which provide other helps for teaching.

Bible Journaling may be an interesting way to involve older teens in self-expression of the lessons they are taught. Visit www.lifeway.com/Articles/how-to-start-bible-journaling-in-six-easy-steps to find ways to use this valuable tool to learn and reinforce Scripture.

The Lesson:

Through the prophets, God had given His prophecy that the children of Israel would go into captivity for seventy years because of their sin (Jeremiah 25:4-11). In this week's lesson, we see God having moved on the hearts of pagan rulers as well as His own people to get to work on the destroyed temple now that they were back in the Promised Land. By the rediscovered decree by King Cyrus, the Israelites were to rebuild the temple and re-establish the prescribed worship at Jerusalem. After 70 years of captivity, God was restoring the freedom to worship Him to His people at Jerusalem.

Background

During the reign of the Persian King Cyrus the foundation of the temple was laid (about 536 B.C.), but work stopped on the temple until the second year of King Darius which was about 520 B.C. about 16 years later. There was both outside and inside opposition that

caused this delay. The opposition from outside came from Judah's enemies who's request to help in the building project was denied (Ezra 4:1-5, 24). The delay in completing the temple also had opposition from within Israel as the people put their own interests first and became lax in finishing the work (Haggai 1:2-11). Because of this, the LORD sent a famine throughout Judah draining the people of their resources. The building project was resumed under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Jeshua accompanied by God's prophets some sixteen years after the foundation was finished (Ezra 5:2; Haggai 1:12-15). At that time Tatnai and Shethar-boznai the Persian officials placed in Israel along with some others wanted to know who gave the returning captives the authority to rebuild the temple (Ezra 5:3). As a result, they sent a letter to King Darius and asked him to investigate this (Ezra 5:3-17). Our lesson begins with Darius' response in chapter 6.

Resurrected Decree (Ezra 6:1–4)

King Darius investigates his imperial records after he receives an inquiry from his governor Tatnai about whether or not the Jews could rebuild their Temple. It is a sign of wisdom and humility that the king looked for the decision of his predecessor rather than simply dismissing prior history and making a new decree himself. The information was not found in the place he expected, but in a fortress in a completely different city.

The original decree from Cyrus the Great was for the Jews to rebuild their Temple in the same place it had been, and to have it paid for from the royal treasury of the Persian Empire. This was an incredible set of circumstances that led to incredible news. God's will to have the Jews rebuild the Temple was being carried out, and He was using the wisdom, authority, and resources of a conquering king to do it. What documentation methods do your church and local governments use to make sure they stand by previous decisions

Restored Protection (Ezra 6:5–7)

King Darius adds to this decree that the materials that were stolen from the Temple by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon are to be restored to the Temple in Jerusalem. Further, in addition to restoring precious treasures, the king restores the protection of Judah.

He commands his governor to leave the Jews alone as they rebuild the Temple, and to command all of his other officials in the region to leave the Jews alone as well. This would not only protect the peace of the people of Judah as they rebuilt but would mean the king was protecting the rebuilding project.

Renewed Resources (Ezra 6:8–12)

The final portion of these verses instructs the governor to help the people of Judah rebuild the Temple and make sure they have all of the resources they need to finish. This goes a step beyond leaving them alone, to actively helping them. What a testimony of God's power, that those who were (and still are) enemies are used as servants and helpers.

King Darius doesn't stop there. He wants to make sure the priests have everything they need to give proper sacrifices to the Lord, not just once, but consistently. He asks that they honor the Lord on his behalf as well. He is an unbeliever who wants to help God's people worship and add his own worship as well. Lastly, the king adds that anyone who tries to stop the Jews from rebuilding their Temple will be executed and their houses destroyed. The king had spoken, and his decree would not be broken!

Final Thoughts

From this week's lesson we learn that the heart of kings is in the hand of God, and He turns it whatever way He

pleases. Whatever they are, God makes them to be, for "*He removeth kings, and setteth up kings*" (Daniel 2:21). We also learned that when God's time has come for the accomplishing of His gracious purposes concerning His people, He will raise up instruments for our good who may be people we never expect to fulfill God's plans.

Be Salt! Be Light! Be Blessed!