

MAY 20

Read Ezra 4-7

CHAPTER 4

NOW when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the LORD God of Israel;

2 Then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye *do*; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither.

3 But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the LORD God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us.

4 Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building,

5 And hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia,

even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

6 And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they *unto him* an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

7 ¶ And in the days of Artaxerxes wrote Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of their companions, unto Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the writing of the letter *was* written in the Syrian tongue, and interpreted in the Syrian tongue.

8 Rehum the chancellor and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king in this sort:

9 Then *wrote* Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their companions; the Dinaites, the Apharsathchites, the Tarpelites, the Apharsites, the Archevites, the Babylonians, the Susanchites, the Dehavites, *and* the Elamites,

10 And the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Asnap-

par brought over, and set in the cities of Samaria, and the rest *that are* on this side the river, and at such a time.

11 ¶ This *is* the copy of the letter that they sent unto him, *even* unto Artaxerxes the king; Thy servants the men on this side the river, and at such a time.

12 Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came up from thee to us are come unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and the bad city, and have set up the walls *thereof*, and joined the foundations.

13 Be it known now unto the king, that, if this city be builded, and the walls set up *again*, *then* will they not pay toll, tribute, and custom, and so thou shalt endamage the revenue of the kings.

14 Now because we have maintenance from *the king's* palace, and it was not meet for us to see the king's dishonour, therefore have we sent and certified the king;

15 That search may be made in the book of the records of thy fathers: so shalt thou find in the book of the records, and know that this city *is* a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces, and that they have moved sedition

within the same of old time: for which cause was this city destroyed.

16 We certify the king that, if this city be builded *again*, and the walls thereof set up, by this means thou shalt have no portion on this side the river.

17 ¶ *Then* sent the king an answer unto Rehum the chancellor, and to Shimshai the scribe, and to the rest of their companions that dwell in Samaria, and *unto* the rest beyond the river, Peace, and at such a time.

18 The letter which ye sent unto us hath been plainly read before me.

19 And I commanded, and search hath been made, and it is found that this city of old time hath made insurrection against kings, and *that* rebellion and sedition have been made therein.

20 There have been mighty kings also over Jerusalem, which have ruled over all *countries* beyond the river; and toll, tribute, and custom, was paid unto them.

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.

22 Take heed now that ye fail

not to do this: why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings?

23 ¶ Now when the copy of king Artaxerxes' letter *was* read before Rehum, and Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews, and made them to cease by force and power.

24 Then ceased the work of the house of God which *is* at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

CHAPTER 5

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?

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 Shesh-

bazzar, *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.

CHAPTER 6

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 command-

ment 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.

CHAPTER 7

NOW after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra the son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah,

2 The son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub,

3 The son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth,

4 The son of Zerahiah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki,

5 The son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest:

6 This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he *was* a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request,

according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him.

7 And there went up *some* of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, unto Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king.

8 And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which *was* in the seventh year of the king.

9 For upon the first *day* of the first month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first *day* of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him.

10 For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do *it*, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

11 ¶ Now this *is* the copy of the letter that the king Artaxerxes gave unto Ezra the priest, the scribe, *even* a scribe of the words of the commandments of the LORD, and of his statutes to Israel.

12 Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect *peace*, and at such a time.

13 I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and *of* his priests and Levites, in my realm,

which are minded of their own freewill to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee.

14 Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king, and of his seven counsellors, to enquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which *is* in thine hand;

15 And to carry the silver and gold, which the king and his counsellors have freely offered unto the God of Israel, whose habitation *is* in Jerusalem,

16 And all the silver and gold that thou canst find in all the province of Babylon, with the freewill offering of the people, and of the priests, offering willingly for the house of their God which *is* in Jerusalem:

17 That thou mayest buy speedily with this money bullocks, rams, lambs, with their meat offerings and their drink offerings, and offer them upon the altar of the house of your God which *is* in Jerusalem.

18 And whatsoever shall seem good to thee, and to thy brethren, to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, that do after the will of your God.

19 The vessels also that are given thee for the service of the

house of thy God, *those* deliver thou before the God of Jerusalem.

20 And whatsoever more shall be needful for the house of thy God, which thou shalt have occasion to bestow, bestow *it* out of the king's treasure house.

21 And I, *even* I Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the treasurers which *are* beyond the river, that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, it be done speedily,

22 Unto an hundred talents of silver, and to an hundred measures of wheat, and to an hundred baths of wine, and to an hundred baths of oil, and salt without prescribing *how much*.

23 Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven: for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons?

24 Also we certify you, that touching any of the priests and Levites, singers, porters, Nethinims, or ministers of this house of

God, it shall not be lawful to impose toll, tribute, or custom, upon them.

25 And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that *is* in thine hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that *are* beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know *them* not.

26 And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether *it be* unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment.

27 ¶ Blessed *be* the LORD God of our fathers, which hath put *such a thing* as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the LORD which *is* in Jerusalem:

28 And hath extended mercy unto me before the king, and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes. And I was strengthened as the hand of the LORD my God *was* upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me.

DEVOTIONAL COMMENTS

Chapters 4 and 5 describe two other key events in the history of the remnant of Israel. In chapters 1 and 2 the work of the Lord was progressing well. But now Satan steps in.

In chapter 4 we find the remnant resisting the enemy. Satan never wants the work of the Lord to prosper. Christ is always the builder, and Satan always tries to destroy. We now see Satan's hand as he seeks to oppose and hinder the work. For nearly fifteen years the work on the Temple ceased. However, in chapter 5, the work is resumed. Actually, there is about a fifteen-year span of time between chapters 4 and 5, and it is not until the Word of God is proclaimed by the two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, that the work on the Temple begins again. Notice carefully that it was the Word of God that began the work (Ezra 1:1); now it is the Word of God which encourages the workers to ultimately finish the work (chapter 6:14). From 520 to 515 B.C., the people labored feverishly and finished the Temple. What was the secret of the victory of completing the Temple? I sincerely believe it was the preaching of God's Word. For no work can stand, apart from the Word of God.

Chapter 6 records the completion of the Temple. The Jews joyfully dedicated the house of the Lord, even though the building was not as grand and glorious as Solomon's Temple. They kept the Passover and the Feast of the Unleavened Bread. God had answered prayer. The nation had its Temple again.

In verse 10 of chapter 7 we read, "For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." We find the secret of Israel's success in this verse. Ezra was successful in his undertaking, for he believed, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Not only was he a godly man, but he was aware that the Lord must work in the hearts of men before anything real can happen. He acknowledged that God had moved upon the king's heart to effect the rebuilding of the Temple. He knew the meaning of Proverbs 21:1: "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD..." God is able to change the affairs of mankind through the believing prayer of one saint!

PROVERB FOR TODAY

"It is an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling" (Proverbs 20:3).

TREASURE PATH TO SOUL WINNING

ASSIGNMENT 16: For today's memory verses, follow instructions on page 12.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO

EDDIE TENA
ROBERT HALL
MARY L. WILSON

HYMN FOR TODAY

HOLY GHOST, WITH LIGHT DIVINE

by Andrew Reed, 1787-1862

"As the earth can produce nothing unless it is fertilized by the sun, so we can do nothing worthwhile for God without the energizing Holy Spirit's power operating in our lives." Unknown

"I used to ask God to help me. Then I asked if I might help Him. I ended up by asking Him to do His work through me." Hudson Taylor

One of the marks of spiritual maturity in any believer's life is the growing conviction of the necessity of the Holy Spirit's presence and power for daily living. How natural it often seems to attempt to live our lives and even minister for God in our own wisdom and strength. How tragic it is when churches and religious organizations institutionalize themselves with dogma or legalistic rules and practices and gradually replace the invigorating ministry of the Holy Spirit in the lives of their people. It is said that religious movements often follow a predictable course: A Spirit-filled leader, an efficient machine, a dead monument.

"Holy Ghost, with Light Divine" has been for many years one of the church's important teaching hymns regarding the Holy Spirit's ministry. The first stanza tells us that we need a sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's presence in order to have clear directions for our lives. Then we are reminded that we need the Holy Spirit's ministry in order to live lives of purity and power (verse two). We also need the work of the Holy Spirit to balance the emotional sorrows of life with "joy divine" (verse three). Finally, we need the all-prevailing control by the Holy Spirit if our lives are to be totally committed and conformed to God (verse four).

This fine text, written by Anglican minister Andrew Reed, first appeared in a publication by its author in 1817.

*Holy Ghost, with light divine,
Shine upon this heart of mine;
Chase the shades of night away;
Turn my darkness into day.*

Holy Ghost, with pow'r divine,

*Cleanse this guilty heart of mine;
Long hath sin without control
Held dominion o'er my soul.*

*Holy Ghost, with joy divine,
Cheer this saddened heart of mine;
Bid my many woes depart;
Heal my wounded, bleeding heart.*

*Holy Spirit, all divine,
Dwell within this heart of mine;
Cast down ev'ry idol-throne;
Reign supreme and reign alone.*

ON THIS DATE IN HISTORY

1506

COLUMBUS DIED IN POVERTY IN SPAIN.

THIS IS CONSIDERED BY SOME THE TRADITIONAL DATE OF PENTECOST.

Of course, Pentecost was an annual occasion celebrated by the Jews, but we normally associate Pentecost with the great revival of Acts 2 when 3,000 were saved. Oh, to have this kind of revival again! Oh, to see people saved by the hundreds and thousands. Oh, to feel the breath of the power of God. What a need there is today for this kind of Christianity.

1749

THE FIRST FIRE ENGINE WAS USED IN AMERICA.

The first fire engine was used in America at Salem, Massachusetts. This should lead us to think about our faithful fire departments. Thank God for the fire department and the firemen.

1490 B.C.

THE CLOUD LIFTED AND THE JOURNEY STARTED FROM SINAI FOR THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL.

1927

LINDBERGH FLEW NON-STOP FROM NEW YORK TO PARIS.

1943

THE DATE OF DR. MYRON CEDARHOLM'S ORDINATION.

Dr. Cedarholm was president of the Maranatha Baptist Bible College in Watertown, Wisconsin. For many years he was director of the Conservative Baptist Association of America. He was a faithful Gospel preacher. Pray today for the work of the Maranatha Baptist Bible College. Also, pray for Christian colleges everywhere.

ON THIS DATE IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY

1704

ELIAS NEAU FOUNDED SCHOOL FOR SLAVES IN NEW YORK.

1868

REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION, MEETING IN CHICAGO, NOMINATED U.S. GRANT FOR THE PRESIDENCY.

Convention marked the national debut of black politicians. P.B.S. Pinchback of Louisiana and James J. Harris were delegates to the convention. Harris was named to the committee which informed Grant of his nomination. Blacks also served for the first time as presidential electors. Robert Meacham was a presidential elector in Florida. The South Carolina electoral ticket included three black Republican leaders, B.F. Randolph, Stephen A. Swails, and Alonzo J. Ransier.

ROBERT N. C. NIX ELECTED TO CONGRESS.

1961

MOB ATTACKED FREEDOM RIDERS IN MONTGOMERY.

Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy dispatched four hundred U.S. marshalls to Montgomery to keep order in Freedom Rider controversy.

1971

PENTAGON REPORT SAID BLACKS CONSTITUTED 11 PER CENT OF U.S. SOLDIERS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA.

The report said 12.5 per cent of all soldiers killed in Vietnam since 1961 were black.

THE STORY OF THE PSALMS

Psalms 42 and 43

AUTHOR: David

THE STORY BEHIND THE PSALMS

One of the loveliest little stories in the Bible pertains to a man named Barzillai. When David had fled the city of Jerusalem because of Absalom's rebellion, numbers of people had forsaken him. Included in these numbers were his own son, his trusted servant Shimei, the cripple Mephibosheth whom David had befriended in such a beautiful way, and David's close beloved lifetime friend, Ahithophel. When David got to Mahanaim, he was discouraged, lonely and heartbroken. An 80-year-old man named Barzillai came to David and brought him some victuals. He brought him food necessary for his sustenance. Upon receiving the food and the love of this wonderful old man, David wrote the 42nd Psalm. In verses 1 and 2 you will find how hungry he was to get back to the house of God. Notice verse 1, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God." David was so hungry to get back to the house of God and the place where God had put him. In verse 7 David says, "Deep calleth unto deep." This meant that one problem came right after another. How refreshed he must have been to find one old friend who cared! While meditating upon this sweet friendship, David writes these beautiful Psalms.

THE WAY THEY WERE USED BY GOD'S PEOPLE

These Psalms were especially dear to the Jewish people when they were in Babylonian captivity. They would especially read verses 5 and 11 and pray, long, and hope for deliverance from captivity back to their beloved homeland. They found strength in the fact that God provided for David while he was away from Jerusalem and that God restored him. This gave them hope that perhaps the same fortune could be theirs.

The Treasure Path to Soul Winning

MEMORY VERSE TOPIC FOR THIS WEEK:

DIFFICULT PROBLEMS SOLVED: "I AM AFRAID I COULD NOT HOLD OUT"

(Assignment 16)

Please recite all three components of each of these five verses aloud, five times each morning, and five times each evening, for seven days. The three components of each verse are: Subject, Scripture Reference, and Scripture Text. (For more details, see "The Treasure Path to Soul Winning" link back on the DailyKJV page.)

() John 10:28

And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

() John 10:29

My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

() Romans 14:4

Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

() 2 Timothy 1:12

For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

() 1 Peter 1:5

Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.