

=SMALL BOOKS OF THE BIBLE=

Lesson 1

Ezra

INTRODUCTION: We now begin a new series of lessons on the small books of the Bible. Ezra is the first of the books written after the Babylonian captivity. It is the story of the rebuilding of the temple following its destruction and the captivity in Babylon. Most of the Jews stayed in Babylon because they now were happy there. Some, however, desiring to come back to Jerusalem, returned and reconstructed the temple. Let us notice the ups and downs of this building program in the life of God's people.

- I. ALL THE PEOPLE INVOLVED ARE LISTED, FROM THE TOP TO THE BOTTOM. This list is found in Ezra 2:1-65. There are no unimportant people with God. Everyone's job is important. We must build together; we must work together. Each one must do his job in order to do a successful work for the Lord.
- II. BEFORE THE FOUNDATIONS WERE EVEN LAID, THERE WAS AN ALTAR BUILT, AND BURNT OFFERINGS WERE PUT THEREON. Read Ezra 3:2. The same is true in any building program. We must remember that our main job is preaching the Gospel of Christ and holding high the Lamb of God. We must not let brick and mortar substitute for the Rock of Ages. Even in building, we must place first things first.
- III. BEFORE LAYING THE FOUNDATION, THEY ALSO RESTORED THE ANCIENT WORSHIP. See Ezra 3:3-6. In other words, before they even started building, they were sure their hearts were right before God. To build is good; to stay spiritual is necessary to do a work for God.
- IV. THE PEOPLE HAD JOY WHEN THE FOUNDATION WAS LAID. In Ezra 3:10-13, notice especially the words, "...to praise the LORD...they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD." For years there had been no temple; now the work was begun!
- V. AS SOON AS A BUILDING OR WORK FOR GOD IS STARTED, OPPOSITION COMES. The enemies began to cause trouble. In Ezra 4:1, 2, notice the first opposition they brought forth: "Let us build with you." The enemies of God all of a sudden want to unite with the people of God to do the work. This must not be done! God's work can never be done in cooperation with those who do not believe the Bible, the new birth, inspiration of the Scriptures, virgin birth, blood atonement, etc. Let us work together with all born-again believers. We cannot work with those who are enemies of the Christ Whom we serve. Notice the answer in Ezra 4:3b, "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."
- VI. THE ENEMIES TROUBLED THEM IN BUILDING. See Ezra 4:4. When God is working, you can expect the Devil to give trouble.
- VII. THE ENEMIES EVEN HIRED COUNSELLORS OR ATTORNEYS TO FRUSTRATE THEM; YET THE PEOPLE KEPT ON WORKING. Read Ezra 4:5. Let not the people of God turn aside to fight skirmishes when the battle must be won.
- VIII. THE ENEMIES WROTE LETTERS OF ACCUSATION AGAINST THE PEOPLE OF GOD. See Ezra 4:6. Of course, we must be ready. Any time an army advances, the opposite army is going to throw up all of its forces.
- IX. EVEN THE KING FOUGHT AGAINST GOD'S PEOPLE. In Ezra 4:23, 24, the king gave a proclamation or a decree causing the work to cease.
- X. THE WORK DID CEASE! What a sad thing it was when the work ceased! Never let the work of God stop because of opposition. Just keep on building!

- XI. GOD RAISED UP SOME PROPHETS TO ENCOURAGE THE PEOPLE TO RENEW THE BUILDING PROGRAM. See Ezra 5:1-3. These prophets were Haggai, Zechariah and others. In any work for God, preaching is the vital part. These great preachers were called to lead the people to build. Let us always in this church magnify the preaching of the Word of God. Any house that is built for God must be built on preaching.
- XII. PRAISE GOD, THE HOUSE WAS FINISHED! Notice in Ezra 6:15-18 the dedication of the temple and the joy involved.

CONCLUSION: When the house was finished, God received all the glory. In Ezra 7:27, 28, notice this wonderful prayer of praise and thanksgiving to God. God had given the victory—God received the glory. This is the way it should be. Let us at Pacific Baptist keep going for God. Let the enemies write letters, let the enemies criticize, let the enemies fight us, but let's keep building! God will see that the house is finished.