

GOD'S PROPHETS

jkroberts_us@yahoo.com
www.pacolethillsbaptist.org

October 27, 2019

Ezra 4:23-5:2

1. Around 538 BC Cyrus, King of Persia, issued a proclamation encouraging willing Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. Ezra 1:1-4
2. Cyrus even returned some of the temple articles that had been taken during the Babylonian exile.
3. 42,360 Jews plus a number of servants returned to Jerusalem under the leadership of a man named Zerubbabel in 536 BC
4. They were successful in laying the foundation for the temple the following year amid much rejoicing and tears. Ezra 3:10-13

Now when the builders had laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests stood in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the Lord according to the directions of King David of Israel. 11 They sang, praising and giving thanks to the Lord, saying, "For He is good, for His lovingkindness is upon Israel forever." And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. 12 Yet many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' households, the old men who had seen the first temple, wept with a loud voice when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, while many shouted aloud for joy, 13 so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the shout of joy from the sound of the weeping of the people, for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the sound was heard far away.

NOTE: The tears were shed by the few surviving Jews who remembered the grandeur of Solomon's Temple.

5. The enemies of the Jews first tried to assimilate with them, and, when that was not successful they sought to discourage and frighten the people through intimidation and misrepresentation. Ezra 4:1-5
6. In Ezra 4:24 we read, "Then work on the house of God in Jerusalem ceased, and it was stopped until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia." (A period of 14 years.)
7. We need to understand that the world, the flesh, and the devil stand in opposition to every purpose of God.
8. God had previously revealed His will related to the temple, but his people had failed to fully trust and obey Him.
9. So, after fourteen years of inactivity, God used Haggai and Zechariah to get the temple project back on track.

I. God's prophets. Ezra 5:1-2

- A. Haggai and Zechariah did not prophesy on their own authority but in the name of the God of Israel.
- B. They reminded the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem that God was over them.
- C. Zerubbabel and Jeshua, the chief priest, got busy and began to rebuild the temple.
- D. I like the part of verse 2 which states, "the prophets of God were with them supporting them."

E. The local officials again tried to frustrate the work, “But the eye of their God was on the elders of the Jews, and they did not stop them until a report could come to Darius, and then a written reply be returned concerning it.”

NOTE: In response to a letter written to Darius by the local officials a search of the archives was made and the decree issued by Cyrus was located. Darius then sent a non-sense letter to Tattenai the governor. Ezra 6:6-12

F. A true prophet of God is going to faithfully represent Him and stand with and support those who are earnestly seeking to advance God’s plans and purposes.

NOTE: The prophet’s job is not to make half-hearted, disobedient professing Christians happy and comfortable.

II. God’s prophetic word. Haggai 1:1-7

A. Notice first of all that Haggai’s message constituted the word of the Lord.

B. It was blunt, to the point, and initially directed at Zerubbabel and Joshua (Jeshua).

C. They had listened to the people rather than to God.

“This people says, ‘The time has not come, even the time for the house of the Lord to be rebuilt.’”

NOTE: The true man of God must be loyal to Him whether people like it or not.

D. However, while the work on the temple stopped the people continued to focus on their own interests.

E. The time had not come to rebuild the temple, but the time had come for them to build comfortable homes for themselves. 4

NOTE: Most of us find the time and resources to do the things we want to do for ourselves and for the people we love and care about.

F. God called on them to consider their ways.

G. Because of their disobedience and wrong priorities God was withholding His blessing and frustrating their efforts. 6-11

NOTE: God’s people should honestly consider their ways, and by doing so, determine whether or not their ways demonstrate that they are first and foremost committed to glorifying God and advancing His purposes in their lives and in this world.

H. When the people and their leaders obeyed God’s voice and showed reverence for Him God sent a message of encouragement. 12-13

III. God’s prophetic promise. Zechariah 4:6-10

A. God’s work would be accomplished through His Spirit. 6

B. Every obstacle would be overcome. 7a

C. What God began He would complete. 7b-9

NOTE: We need to be encouraged by these words as we continue to fulfill God’s plan and purpose for our lives and for Pacolet Hills Baptist Church.

D. Some may look with disdain at our present situation, but we should look to God to do a work in us and through us.

NOTE: Jonathan, the son of King Saul, understood that God was not constrained by a lack of numbers. 1 Sam 14:6-8

Then Jonathan said to the young man who was carrying his armor, "Come and let us cross over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; perhaps the Lord will work for us, **for the Lord is not restrained to save by many or by few.**" 7 His armor bearer said to him, "Do all that is in your heart; turn yourself, and here I am with you according to your desire."

APPLICATION

1. Like Haggai and Zechariah, Ezra the priest had a job to do.
2. He was the historian related to the events that led to the rebuilding of the Temple, and came to Jerusalem in 458 BC to rebuild the religious life of the Jews. Ezra 7:6-10

This Ezra went up from Babylon, and he was a scribe skilled in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given; and the king granted him all he requested **because the hand of the Lord his God was upon him.** 7 Some of the sons of Israel and some of the priests, the Levites, the singers, the gatekeepers and the temple servants went up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes. 8 He came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. 9 For on the first of the first month he began to go up from Babylon; and on the first of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, **because the good hand of his God was upon him.** **10 For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.**

NOTE: Ezra was a contemporary of Nehemiah who came to Jerusalem in 445 BC to rebuild the walls of the city.

3. These men, Haggai, Zechariah, and Ezra, were called to the ministry of the Word just like every New Testament pastor-teacher is called to the ministry of the Word.
4. Those called to the ministry of the Word are to teach and equip God's people to fulfill their individual ministries leading to the building up of the church, the body of Christ.

NOTE: The pastor-teacher is also to shepherd the church by exercising oversight under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

5. May God help each of us to exercise our spiritual gift, or gifts, to building up of Pacolet Hills Baptist Church.