

We will now begin the second lecture on the Book of Ezra and the Book of Nehemiah. /Today, we will study Ezra chapter 3. /In verses 1-7, /the people made the altar, kept the appointed feasts, and gave offerings to God. /The first group of the people of Judah returned from Babylon in 538 BC.

/They they settled into their home towns. /On the seventh month of that year, they gathered in Jerusalem. /They gathered so that they could celebrate the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, /and the Feast of Tabernacles.

/At that time, Jeshua the priest and his fellow priests gathered. /Zerubbabel the governor and his associates gathered as well. /The priests wanted to sacrifice burnt offerings to God, according to the Law. /In verse 3, it says that the people of Judah worked together to build the altar.

/Then they gave morning and evening sacrifices to God. /The people of Judah observed the seasons. /It says, “Despite their fear of the peoples around them, they built the altar on its foundation.” /The people of Judah served God more in the midst of fear and hardships.

/The number of people who returned from captivity was small. /There were also many surrounding nations who opposed the building of the temple. /Thus, the people of Judah were afraid.

/However, the threats strengthened the people in building the altar. /The people of Judah cried out to God. /The people of Judah kept the Law and sacrificed offerings.

/Persecution from the surrounding nations made the people of Judah build the altar. /The people found their old faith and kept the Law. /When we are at peace with life, we do not find the need to rely on God.

/When we are at peace, we lose the determination to live by God’s word. /This happened to Jacob. /When Jacob was at the ford Jabbok, /he heard the news that his brother Esau was approaching him with four hundred men.

/Jacob relied on God, and he wrestled with an angel. /As a result, Jacob earned the name, Israel. /When Jacob had gained peace, /his children sinned in Shechem.

/After that, Jacob began to fear all people. /Then Jacob went up to Bethel. /He built an altar at Bethel to find his first faith. /Then all the surrounding peoples began to fear Jacob.

/All hardships that believers encounter come from God’s grace. /Philippians 1:29 says, /“For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ /not only to believe on him, /but also to suffer for him.”

/A man of faith once said, “If you do not have any hardships, go find some.” /We must strive to live by God’s word. /2 Timothy 3:12 says, /“In fact, everyone who wants to live

a godly life in Christ Jesus /will be persecuted.”

/The people who returned observed God’s words of the Law. /They sacrificed burnt offerings each day. /They continuously gave offerings on the first day of each month. /They gave burnt offerings. /They gave burnt offerings in every season.

/“Burnt offering” is an offering in which the sacrificial offering is completely burned. /This symbolized one’s complete sacrifice before God. /This also symbolized the redemption of the coming Christ.

/“The Feast of Tabernacles” was a remembrance of the time the Israelites lived in the wilderness after the exodus. /The Feast of Tabernacles took place for one week beginning from the fifteenth day of the seventh month, in which the people resided in tents at the time.

/The Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated to remember that God delivered the Israelites from Egypt. /It was kept to thank God for guiding them through the wilderness. /It was kept to remember the sufferings of the past.

/The Feast of Tabernacles was a season of giving thanks to God. /We too must be thankful that we have been saved through Christ. /We must thank God for his grace and protection in times of our hardships.

/Verse 6 says, “the foundation of the LORD’s temple had not yet been laid.” /They built an altar before they built the foundation of the temple. /Then they gave offerings to God. /This teaches that we believers must first pray to God /before we begin God’s work. /It also teaches that we must first worship God.

/Verse 7 says the people gave money to the masons and carpenters to rebuild the temple. /They gave food, drink, and oil to the people of Sidon and Tyre. /They brought cedar logs from Lebanon.

/This is also what they did in Solomon’s time. /The people of Judah followed the example of how Solomon’s temple was built. /The people of Sidon and Tyre were foreign people, but the people of Judah used them to build the temple. /We too can use the help of unbelievers when we build the temple or do God’s work.

/In verses 8-9, /the people began construction of the temple. /The people of Judah began construction in the second month of the second year after they returned from Babylon. /They prepared to build the temple for about one year.

/Now, construction of the temple began. /In verse 9, all the Levites who were over twenty years of age were appointed to supervise the building of the temple. /Masons, carpenters, and many experts worked together to build the temple. /Hence, there needed to be many supervisors.

/It is important to entrust work to those who are able to work. /It is also important to supervise workers. /We pastors must supervise well /as believers build their spiritual temple.

/Pastors must supervise presbyteries and general assemblies. /The general assembly must be moved by God and God's word.

/In verses 10-13, /there were people who shouted with joy and others who wept when the foundation of the temple was laid. /The people of Judah finally laid the foundation of the temple. /The priests wore their vestments /and sounded the trumpets. /Those who had instruments sounded the instruments.

/Then in verse 11, all the people praised God. /They rejoiced because God's temple was being built, they praised God, and they sang, /"He is good; his love to Israel endures forever."

/God is good and his love is unchanging, /and thus, the people were able to lay the foundation of the temple. /The majority of these people were those who were born in Babylon. /They did not even see Solomon's temple.

/That is why they were greatly moved when they saw the foundation of the temple. /However, the elderly priests, Levites, and leaders of the tribes /saw the grand temple of Solomon.

/The elderly wept when they saw the foundation of the temple being laid. /Solomon's temple was burned down during the third captivity in the eighteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar. /Now, the foundation of the temple was being laid /in the second year of the first return of the captives.

/This was a fifty-year difference. /Those who were ten years old when Solomon's temple was burned was now sixty years old. /Those who were twenty years old were now seventy years old. /Solomon's temple was a grand and splendid temple.

/The nation was power and wealthy at the time. /However, the nation was now poor and worthless. /This was because there was only a small number of people who returned from captivity to build the temple, /and they were building the temple in times of poverty.

/However, the elderly did not realize that the temple was being built by the power of God. /The elderly wept loudly because they only saw the outside of the temple. /Haggai 2:3 says, /"Who of you is left /who saw this house in its former glory? /How does it look to you now? /Does it not seem to you like nothing?"

/Then God continued to speak. /Haggai 2:6-7 says, /"This is what the LORD Almighty says: /'In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. /I will shake all nations, /and the desired of all nations will come, /and I will fill this house with glory,' /says the LORD Almighty."

/Zechariah 4:10 says, /“Who despises the day of small things? /Men will rejoice when they see the plumb line in the land of Zerubbabel. /“(These seven are the eyes of the LORD, which range throughout the earth.)”

/The temple seemed small at the moment under the leadership of Zerubbabel. /Yet, soon God would shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land, /Christ the treasure of all nations would come, /and God’s glory would fill the place.

/The temple would become more glorious than Solomon’s temple. /Therefore, we must not despise things that seem small in the beginning. /It would later become great by the power of God.

/God would personally be in that place. /Then the heavens and the earth would be shaken. /The enemies would run away in trembling and fear. /God would also fill the temple with silver and gold.

/This is the same for us today. /When we first believe, we must not only think about great grace. /We must not despise small grace in the future. /We must not despise love, serving, and abiding by God’s word.

/We must have hope and continuously go forward in the work of salvation. /Then, God’s power will become greater. /The building of the temple shook all the nations of the world. /God’s glory would be greater than before.

/Even if we are poor and weak, /we can build the spiritual temple by the power of God. /God will give us the silver and gold that we need. /Today, when believers build the spiritual temple, it means that their reborn spirits grow.

/It also means that our spiritual ears are opened. /Our spiritual eyes are opened and we see the spiritual world. /We will be shaped by God’s word. /We will abandon sin and be more and more like Jesus Christ.

/In Ezra chapter 4, the building of the temple is stopped. /In verses 1-6, /the enemies interrupt the building of the temple. /There were enemies when the people of Judah began to build the temple. /The enemies were the people of Samaria.

/The enemies said that they too served God. /In verse 2, Esarhaddon king of Assyria took many Israelites who lived in Samaria captive. /Then the king brought other people into the region of Samaria.

/Thus the Israelites and the foreign peoples lived together and became a mixed people. /They served both foreign gods /and also the Lord God of Israel.

/Therefore, the Samaritans served God, but they did not properly live by God’s word. /They tolerated idols, but they also served God. /They were syncretic. /The Samaritans

served both God and idols.

/The Samaritans came forward and said that they wanted to help build the temple. /However, this was their attempt to interrupt the building of the temple. /In verse 3, Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the heads of the families firmly rejected their offer.

/They said that the Samaritans had nothing to do with building a temple to God. /If they allowed the Samaritans to help, the temple could have been built at a faster speed. /Yet, then they would not stand upright in the truth.

/It would not be a temple that God would be pleased with. /This is the same with us today. /Churches that are syncretic /will not be able to build God's spiritual temple. /Churches that approve of new theologies, liberation theology, and mysticism will not be able to build God's spiritual temple.

/They will not build the spiritual temple by the truth. /Therefore, we must not compromise with falseness, but construct the spiritual temple ourselves.

/The leaders of Judah said that they would do /"as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, commanded us." /It was wrong for the leaders of Judah to say this before their enemies.

/Next, they said, /"We alone will build it for the LORD, the God of Israel." /It was right for the leaders of Judah to say this.

/It would have been better if they first said, "We will build the temple according to God's command." /The leaders did not say, "God commanded us," /but they said, "King Cyrus of Persia commanded us."

/The leaders did not speak up with faith. /They relied on King Cyrus more than God. /The leaders were building the temple for God, /but they did not believe in the power of God.

/The leaders relied on the worldly King Cyrus. /Therefore, the enemies did not help build God's temple. /The enemies' scheme succeeded. /Thus, in verses 23-24, /King Artaxerxes commanded that the building of the temple be stopped.

/Hence, the people of Judah were forced to stop the construction of the temple. /They failed /because they did not rely on God, /but relied on powers of the world.

/In verses 4-6, /it says that the enemies frustrated the plans to build the temple throughout many generations. /In verse 5, the enemies of the land bribed officials to work against the people of Judah. /The officials were the secretaries of the king. /They were the king's assistants.

/The enemies bribed the officials to interrupt the construction of the temple. /The people of Judah returned in the first return, /and they began to build the temple in the second year of their return, /and they built the temple for two years. /The building of the temple

was put to a halt in 534 BC. /Fourteen years had passed.

/Then in 520 BC, the construction of the temple began again. /In verses 23-24, /the construction of the temple is completely halted in the time of King Artaxerxes. /Then it was the second year of the reign of King Darius.

/In verse 6, the enemies wrote an accusation to the king during the reign of King Ahasuerus, or King Xerxes. /The enemies of Judah made several accusations. /In each generation, there are followers of a fallen religion that work together with political powers to persecute the true church.

/The enemies interrupt so that we do not build up the truth. /This happened in Jesus' time as well. /The priests and the Pharisees worked together with the power of Pontius Pilate. /Then together they nailed Jesus to the cross.

/In verses 7-10, /the enemies made an accusation to the king. /The enemies wrote an accusation to the king in the time of King Ahasuerus. /The enemies became great in power and wrote an accusation to the king of Persia. /In verse 10, the enemies came together and wrote an accusation to the king of Persia.

/In this way, people of the world believe that they have greater power when they come together. /However, believers find power in God alone. /It is wrong to believe in mob psychology. /The hearts of people can change from morning to night, according to the circumstances.

/In verse 7, "King Artaxerxes" refers to Cambyses, the son of King Cyrus. /He reigned as the king of Persia /from 529 BC to 522 BC. /Then, Smerdis (or Bardiya) plotted a rebellion.

/Hence, Smerdis reigned as king of Persia for about seven months. /However, Darius, a relative of Artaxerxes and a commander of the army, /killed Smerdis. /Thus, Darius reigned as king of Persia /from 522 BC to 485 BC.

/Next, Darius' son, Ahasuerus, became king. /He reigned as king from 485BC /to 465 BC. /In verses 7-18 of today's passage, his name is recorded in Aramaic.

/From verses 1-6 and from verse 19, his name is recorded in Hebrew. /The enemies wrote an accusation to King Artaxerxes in Aramaic for the following reasons. /At the time, the main language of Persia was Aramaic.

/In verses 11-16 /are the contents of the accusation. /The enemies wrote an accusation to King Artaxerxes. /They wrote that Jerusalem was rebellious and wicked city.

/In verse 13, they said that the people would not pay taxes, tributes, or duties if the city were to be built. /They said that they king would face damages. /"Tributes" are national taxes. /"Duties" are poll taxes.

/“Taxes” are local taxes. /The enemies flattered King Artaxerxes. /In verse 14, the enemies said that they were informing the king because they ate the salt of the palace, /and so that the king would not be dishonored.

/This meant that they made a living of the things that King Artaxerxes gave them. /No one can live without salt. /The enemies flattered the king by saying that they could not live without the things that the king gave them.

/The enemies harshly criticized Jerusalem, saying that Jerusalem was a rebellious and wicked city. /The enemies said that Judah brought much damage to the kings of Persia. /They said that this was the reason for why the city was destroyed.

/In verse 15, they said that the king would know when he saw the archive of his predecessors. /The enemies meant that history would prove that their words were true. /In verse 16, they said that the king would lose everything in Trans-Euphrates if the city were to be built.

/That is why they asked the king to declare a decree so that the temple would not be built. /In this way, the enemies harshly criticized the people of Judah so that they would not be able to build the temple. /The enemies made the king feel threatened and afraid.

/The predecessors that they spoke of were not only the forefathers of King Artaxerxes, but also of the king of Babylon. /They spoke of King Jehoiakim and King Zedekiah.

/Verses 17-22 /speak of the king’s prohibition. /King Artaxerxes received the letter of accusation /and then commanded his servants. /He issued an order and a search be made to see if Jerusalem was rebellious /and a wicked city in the past.

/Then the servants of the king of Persia did not find any advantageous writings for Israel to continue to build the temple. /Rather, they found writings that were disadvantageous to the people of Judah. /In verse 19, it was found that the city of Jerusalem was rebellious and was a wicked city of sedition.

/In verse 20, it says that there were powerful kings in Jerusalem in the past. /These kings ruled the whole of Trans-Euphrates. /Hence, the people of the land gave taxes to their kings.

/This possibly referred to the times of David and Solomon. /The servants of the king of Persia found such disadvantageous records /because the people of Judah did not rely on God while they constructed the temple.

/The people of Judah relied on the king of Persia. /The enemies flattered King Artaxerxes, and the king believed in the critical writings about Jerusalem. /The king of Persia then issued an order that the building of the temple in Jerusalem be put to a stop based on the writings that his servants discovered.

/Verse 21 says, “this city will not be rebuilt.” /The “city” here refers to the wall that protected the temple. /It included the temple. /The city of Jerusalem would be continued to be built about ninety years later in the time of Nehemiah.

/In verses 23-24, /the work of the construction of the temple is put to a stop. /The building of the temple was halted by the order that the king of Persia issued. /The construction of the temple was put to a stop until the second year of reign of King Darius of Persia.

/The external reason for why the construction of the temple was put to a stop /was because of the opposition of the enemies. /It was also because of the issued order of King Artaxerxes. /However, the fundamental reason was because /the people of Judah did not rely on God, but relied on the king of Persia instead.

/Haggai 1:2-4 says, /the people of Judah were busy building their own houses. /It was not yet time for the people of Judah to build the temple.

/Therefore, construction of the temple was halted for fourteen years /until the second year of reign of King Darius.

/Here we will conclude the second lecture on Ezra and Nehemiah. /Thank you.