

THE GOOD HAND OF OUR GOD IS UPON US

A Study of Ezra & Esther

Big Picture & Class Outline (Chronological Study)

- First Exile Expedition: Temple from Ruins (Ezra 1-6).
- Back in Persia: Everyone almost Dies (Esther).
- Second Exile Expedition: A Return to the Law (Ezra 7-10).

Background of Ezra

- Israelites desire a restoration of the theocratic Kingdom.
 - Need a Davidic King.
 - Need Priesthood (Temple).
 - Need to keep the Mosaic Covenant.
- “The good hand of our God is upon us.”
(Ezra 7:6, 9, 28; 8:18, 22, 31)

Lesson 3 – Ezra 4:1-6:22

4. The adversaries of Israel oppose the work of the Lord (4).

- a. The 2 Kings 17:24-41 people come to offer “help” (4:1-5).
 - a. Discourage & trouble the remnant (4:4).
 - b. Hired professionals to frustrate their purposes (4:5).
 - c. Sent slandorous letter to the king (4:6-23).
- b. Work on the temple ceased for 16 years (4:24).

5. God leads the remnant to begin work on the temple again (5:1-6:12;

Haggai; Zech).

- a. The prophets bring the word of God (5:1-2).
- b. The work is questioned (5:3-6:12).

- i. Tattenai questions the remnant's right to rebuild (5:3-17).
- ii. King Darius searched the archives and found Cyrus' permission letter (6:1-5).
- iii. King Darius responds Tattenai and supports original decree (6:6-12).

6. God turns the heart of the King to strengthen the remnant's hands (6:13-22).

- a. The work of the temple is completed (6:13-15).
- b. The temple is dedicated to God (6:16-18).
- c. The remnant seeks the Lord God of Israel (6:19-22).

So What?

- We can learn to have an open hand to God even when facing hardship (Haggai).
- It's far better to humble ourselves and repent than continue on in the wrong direction.
- God's eye watches over us. Even when we face fearful circumstances, there is nothing to fear. Fear for the child of God is an illusion. A child of God is always safe under God's watchful eye.
- God rules sovereignly. He turns the hearts of kings. He strengthens the hands of His people for the completion of His purposes.
- We must continue to obey God's Word when facing resistance. Opposition is an opportunity for us to glimpse God's wise and powerful plan to provide for His purposes.
- Ultimately, God is the only One who can do the good work. The message of Zechariah is the promise of a coming Priest/King who will accomplish what Israel failed to do. We must trust Him.

Zechariah Study – Part 1 (Chapters 1-8)

Background of Zechariah

- Zechariah was both a prophet and a priest (Levite born).
- Zechariah means *Yahweh remembers*.
- Chapters 1-8 focus on the leadership (priest/king) need for restoring the Kingdom.
- Chapters 9-14 anticipate the piercing of God's chosen Priest/King and His future enthronement.
- Theme: Jesus is the chosen King/Priest who will rebuild the temple and restore the Kingdom to Israel.

Day 1: Read Zechariah 1-2 and think through the following questions:

1. According to 1:1-6, what do the people need to do in order to receive the covenant blessing from God?
2. According to 1:14-17, what did God promise the remnant?
3. According to 2:5, what did God promise to do for the remnant?
4. According to 2:10-11, where did God promise to dwell?

Day 2: Read Zechariah 3-4 and think through the following questions:

1. According to 3:1-2, who opposed Joshua's cleansing?
2. Who is God's Servant the Branch mentioned in 3:8?
3. The lampstand of chapter 3 probably represents the Temple. What fills the two bowls according to 3:12? Who are the two bowls who are the anointed ones of 4:14? (hint: two current leaders of Israel)

Day 3: Read Zechariah 5-6 and think through the following questions:

1. What is the scroll that was to dwell in the house of every dishonest Israelite in 5:1-4?
2. Where was the woman named wickedness taken and for what purpose?
3. What was the point of this vision of the woman named wickedness being taken out from Israel?

4. The horses of 6:1-8 are probably the same as we read in 1:7-11. What do the different descriptions of the horses mean for the judgment of the nations?
5. What is the significance of Joshua, a priest, being crowned in 6:11?
6. Who is the Branch in 6:12-15 and what will He do?

Day 4: Read Zechariah 7 and think through the following questions:

1. What is the question of the people in 7:1-3?
2. Who have the people eaten and fasted for in 7:4-6?
3. What did God desire more than fasting in 7:7?
4. How do the people respond to God's Word in 7:8-12?
5. Who was responsible for the desolation in 7:13-14?

Day 5: Read Zechariah 8 and think through the following questions:

1. According to 8:1-8, what did God promise the remnant?
2. What does God encourage them with in 8:9-17?
3. What will the fasts become when the Kingdom is restored in 8:18-19?
4. What will outsiders think of Israel when the Kingdom is restored in 8:20-23?

Main themes

- What does God repeatedly promise according to verses 2:4, 6-7; 8:7-8?