

## Life Group Questions w/b Sunday 24 January 2021

### Ezra – a Story of Rebuilding Week 4

#### Chapters 4-6

##### Historical Background

Following the dedication of the altar and relaying the foundations of the Temple, God's people suddenly found themselves under attack. Opposition to the work came from the various people groups who had begun to populate the land throughout the time of Exile.

##### Read: Ezra 4:1-5

- Why do you think the people reject the offer of 'help' in verses 1-3? In view of the backlash in verses 4-5, do you think they were wise?
- What do you think this means for us today? In our work of mission, should we be working with non-Christian agencies? Or do you think the principles involved apply only to building places of worship?
- What sort of discouragements have you encountered in seeking to follow Jesus today? (For example, see 4:4-5) Notice too that the efforts to discourage them lasted many years.

##### Summary of the Narrative of Chapter 4

By 4:6, Cyrus is long gone, and eventually Artaxerxes becomes ruler of the Persian Empire. The opponents of God's people write a letter to him claiming that to allow the Jews to strengthen their settlement of the land will be to allow a rebellious nation to be 'troublesome' later on. These opponents claim that 'if the city [of Jerusalem] is built and the walls restored, no more taxes, tribute or duty will be paid' to the King (4:13). The answer from the royal court means that work on the rebuilding stalled for sixteen years.

##### Read: Ezra 4:24-5:6

- What can we learn from how they managed to move on at the beginning of the reign of Darius?
- Notice that the people remembered that 'God was watching over them' (5:1) and (5:5) and they listened to God's word through his prophets (5:1) and (6:14).

- How do we learn to listen to wise and encouraging voices bringing us God's word in the midst of trouble? (See also Zechariah 4:9-10)
- How are you doing with your 'word for the year' that many of the Life Groups spent time on at the beginning of this year?

### **Summary of the Narrative of Chapters 5 and 6**

Application is made to this new ruler, Darius, regarding whether or not the Jews had permission under Cyrus to rebuild. It is discovered in the royal archives that they did! (6:1-2) Darius decrees not only are the people free to carry on building, but he also offers them financial support. (6:6-10)

### **Read: Ezra 6:13-18**

- What inspires them to finish the task of building the Temple?
- To whom do the people attribute their success?
- How do they celebrate?

### **Prayer Focus Suggestion**

Follow up the words for the year that you have received, by thanking God for his ongoing work in our lives, sharing our discouragements, and praying that we will see more of his blessing this year.

### **Further Material – only if time!**

#### **Read: Ezra 6:19-22**

- In the light of where we started at the beginning of chapter 4 (4:1-3), what is the significance of sharing the feast of Passover? (6:21)
- Why did it bring them such joy? (6:22)
- What are the similarities and what are the differences between Passover and Holy Communion? How helpful is it to make these links?