

A FRIEND IN PERSIA. EZRA 5-6. 07/07/24. #08.

III – British help to post-war Jews

5 Then the prophet Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophets, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them. 2 So Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak rose up and began to build the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them, helping them. 3 At the same time Tattenai the governor of the region beyond the River and Shethar-Boznai and their companions came to them and spoke thus to them: "Who has commanded you to build this temple and finish this wall?" 4 Then, accordingly, we told them the names of the men who were constructing this building. 5 But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, so that they could not make them cease till a report could go to Darius. Then a written answer was returned concerning this matter.

1. A concerned governor

- a. The previous opposition to rebuilding the temple came from Samaritans who were rivals of the Jews
 - a1. They did not want to see Jerusalem rebuilt
 - a2. A strong Jewish nation was a threat to them
- b. This time, the Persian governor (lit., investigator) was wary
 - a1. King Darius experienced rebellion in his empire during the 1st 2 years of his reign
 - a2. When Gov. Tattenai heard that there was increased activity at Jerusalem he went to investigate
- c. In 520 BC Haggai had given his scathing speech, chastising the Jews for not rebuilding the temple (Hag. 1-2)
 - a1. The Jews were motivated to begin rebuilding
 - a2. Zechariah (visionary prophet) & Haggai (admonishing prophet) spurred on the workers
- d. The Persian governor inquired about the building process
 - a1. Why are they moving large stones (fortification?)
 - a2. What were their credentials?
 - a3. Who was involved in leading this effort?
- e. The Jews answered directly without deception or antagonism
 - a1. They were rebuilding God's temple
 - a2. King Cyrus had given a decree to do so
- f. The gov. was satisfied enough with the answer that he allowed them to continue working until we inquired about it of Cyrus
- g. The letter sent to Cyrus was not deceptive, but just contained the facts as Tattenai had learned them
 - a1. The Jews had restarted building the temple in accordance to a decree given by King Cyrus
 - a2. The Jews were moving great stones & timbers there
 - a3. The gov. requested that the king check to archives to see if the report was true & the Jews could continue
- h. God used this threat to actually secure the project (God smiled upon the work & used the king to promote it – Pv. 21:1)
- i. The inquiry actually ends up providing protection to the Jews

2. The king speaks

6 Then King Darius issued a decree, and a search was made in the archives, where the treasures were stored in Babylon. 2 And at Achmetha, in the palace that is in the province of Media, a scroll was found, and in it a record was written thus: 3 In the first year of King Cyrus, King Cyrus issued a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem: "Let the house be rebuilt, the place where they offered sacrifices; and let the foundations of it be firmly laid, its height sixty cubits and its width sixty cubits, 4 with three rows of heavy stones and one row of new timber. Let the expenses be paid from the king's treasury. 5 Also let the gold and silver articles of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple which is in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, be restored and taken back to the temple which is in Jerusalem, each to its place; and deposit them in the house of God"— 6 Now therefore, Tattenai, governor of the region beyond the River, and Shethar-Boznai, and your companions the Persians who are beyond the River, keep yourselves far from there. 7 Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God on its site. 8 Moreover I issue a decree as to what you shall do for the elders of these Jews, for the building of this house of God: Let the cost be paid at the king's expense from taxes on the region beyond the River; this is to be given immediately to these men, so that they are not hindered. 9 And whatever they need—young bulls, rams, and lambs for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the request of the priests who are in Jerusalem—let it be given them day by day without fail, 10 that they may offer sacrifices of sweet aroma to the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king and his sons. 11 Also I issue a decree that whoever alters this edict, let a timber be pulled from his house and erected, and let him be hanged on it; and let his house be made a refuse heap because of this. 12 And may the God who causes His name to dwell there destroy any king or people who put their hand to alter it, or to destroy this house of God which is in Jerusalem. I Darius issue a decree; let it be done diligently.

- a. After Darius's inquiry of the archives at Ectbana in Media found that Cyrus did issue the decree to rebuild the temple
 - a1. He supported the project & promoted it among all his subjects so they would donate to its completion
 - a2. Cyrus had decreed that the priests were to offer sacrifices & prayers for the king & his family
- b. Darius sent back a positive response:
 - a1. The gov. was to allow the building to be completed
 - a2. Any funds, animals, or provisions that the Jews needed would be taken from the king's treasury
 - a3. All other people were to stay away from the Jews as they worked so they would not be hindered
 - a4. Anyone who interfered with Jews in their work would be hung on a pillar taken from the offender's own house

3. Providence in the affairs of men

- a. There are times that God touches the hearts of secular men to aid God's people (Cyrus, Pharaoh aiding Joseph, Lysius rescuing Paul, Darius protecting Daniel, Xerxes aiding Jews...)
- b. God is in control of all things & can overcome evil in high places
- c. After 20 years in the land the temple is finally finished
- d. Victories confirm God's sovereignty, but the battle continues