

Manifest Destiny

Studies in Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther

Little House on the Prairie

Introduction to Ezra 4-6

Just as the "little house on the prairie" in the television show was a haven in the midst of the wild west, so God's "little house" (compared to Solomon's temple) in Jerusalem would bring great comfort to Israel when it was completed. However, finishing the building project which had begun a few months after they arrived would prove to be no easy task. Once the foundation had been laid the enemies' attempts to stop the work kicked into high gear. At first they tried to infiltrate the workers so they could nullify the work, then they tried intimidation tactics and false counselors. Israel wouldn't let any of these things stop them. The enemies, though, wrote a letter to the Persian king accusing

the Jews of rebellion, and the king wrongly decreed a halt to the temple construction. It was over 15 years later that two of God's prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, began to encourage the people to resume the work, and with God's watchful eye on them, courageously they completed the construction of the temple. God's oversight was underscored when another letter to King Darius led to the discovery of Cyrus' earlier decree to rebuild the temple. Finally, through the encouragement of God's Word and His blessing the temple was completed. This was cause for a great worship celebration, and led to the reestablishment of the priestly service in



Understanding how God's destiny for us is fulfilled.

the temple. Israel followed this with the observance of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and along with the priests were purified as they separated themselves from the pagans around them. As they looked back they could see that God had made the heart of the foreign king favorable to them, and now they could worship Him in His "little house on the prairie".

The 5 Purposes of the Purpose Driven Life

- **Worship**—You were planned for God's pleasure
- **Fellowship**—You were formed for God's family
- **Discipleship**—You were created to become like Christ
- **Ministry**—You were shaped for serving God
- **Evangelism**—You were made for a mission

Daily Questions for Ezra 4-6

(For answers to questions attend an ABF or go to www.celebrationnet.com/resources/leader resources)

<p>1. Read 4:1-3. How did Judah and Benjamin's enemies first try to stop the building project (v2)? How did the leaders react and why (v3)?</p>	
<p>2. Based on 4:4-5 what were the next 2 tactics that the enemies used to try and stop the work (v4, 5)?</p>	
<p>3. According to 4:6-16 what was the enemies' last step to stop the work (v6)? What was the basis for their accusation (v12-16) and what can we learn from this entire episode?</p>	

(Continued on Next Page)

Ezra 4-6 Study Questions (cont)

4. From 4:17-24 what was the result of the enemies tactics (v17-18, 21, 24)? What had the king failed to do (see 1:2) and does this show us?

5. In 5:1-5 what happened that caused the work to resume (v1-2)? Why were they able to continue on (v5)? Apply this to your life.

6. Looking at 5:6-17 what did the enemies recount for King Darius (v7-16) and what did they ask (v17)? What do you think they expected to happen?

7. Using 6:1-12 what did Darius do (v1) and what was the outcome (v2-5)? What was his response (v6-7) and what else did he command (v8-12)? How does this show God's hand in this?

8. Read 6:13-15. What did the Jewish elders do (v13-14) and why (v14)? Twenty years after Israel's return, what finally happened (v15)?

9. According to 6:16-18 how did everyone respond to the dedication of the temple (v16)? What did they establish (v18), and what does this show?

10. Based on 6:19-22 what did the returnees get to do (v19, 21), and what was required first (v20). What did they realize had happened (v22)?

11. Looking back on Ezra 4-6 what tactics do God's enemies use on us (4:1-16), what overcomes these (5:1-5), and what is the payoff of perseverance (6:16-22)?

Scripture to Remember

“And they finished building according to the command of...God.”

Ezra 6:14 (NAS)

Celebration Fellowship

*Reaching—
Restoring—Raising Up*

We're on the web

www.celebrationnet.com

Life Group Questions—How to Get What's Yours

(Using questions based on today's message, Life Groups meet in homes to build supportive relationships with others at Celebration Fellowship that enable us to grow in Christ.)

1. Tell your group about a toy or gift you wanted, but when you got it you were kind of let down. Have you ever felt that way about the Christian life?
2. Read Joshua 1:1-9. How do you think you would have felt if you had been through what the Jews had been through, and were now on the border of the Promised Land?
3. What is especially good about these 4 things that God promises us—liberty, plenty, rest, possessions? Why must these come from God to truly satisfy us?
4. What are some possible dangers we face when God leads us to a new place? Why are God's promises of power and presence so important for us at that time?
5. How do you apply God's promises to your life? How can you help each other specifically “proclaim” the Word, “ponder” the Word, and “practice” the Word effectively?
6. Discuss anything else important to you from the message today if you have time.