

## LESSON NOTES.

## FIRST QUARTER.

## STUDIES IN JEWISH HISTORY,

B.C. 536.] LESSON VIII. [Feb. 21.

## THE SECOND TEMPLE.

Ezra 1. 1-4; 3. 8-13. Commit to mem. v. 2-4.

## GOLDEN TEXT.

They praised the Lord because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.—Ezra 3. 11.

## CENTRAL TRUTH.

God disciplines, but never forsakes his people.

## DAILY READINGS.

M. Ezra 1. 1-8. Th. Ezra 2. 1, 64-70. W. Ezra 3. 1-13. Th. Ezra 4. 1-24. F. Ezra 5. 1-17. Sa. Ezra 6. 1-22. Su. Haggai 1. 1-15.

DATES.—The Jews returned from exile B.C. 536. The second temple was begun May, 534, and completed after 19 years, in March, 515.

PLACE.—Babylon and Jerusalem.

RULERS.—Cyrus, king of the Persian empire, 558-529. He began as sole ruler of Babylon in 536.

EZRA.—A Jewish scribe who lived in Babylon, and came to Jerusalem for a time 80 years after the return.

BOOK OF EZRA.—(1) It is a continuation of Chronicles. (2) The first part was compiled by Ezra, the latter written by him.

THE CAPTIVITY.—It began in 604, and lasted 70 years. It was caused by the idolatry of the people. Their trials in captivity rooted out idolatry forever from the Jews; as soon as this was settled, they were allowed to return. It produced a selected stock with which to begin anew, for (1) the best of the people were made captives, and (2) of these and their descendants the most religious and heroic would return. The captivity led to new study of the Scripture, and better education in religion, and deeper spirituality.

HELPS OVER HARD PLACES.—1. *Jeremiah fulfilled*—Jer. 25. 12; 29. 10. *The Lord stirred up Cyrus*—Probably through Daniel, who may have showed him the prophecies of Isaiah (44. 26-28; 45. 1-4). 2. *Charged me*.—See Isa. 44, etc. 4. *Who-soever remained*—The heathen population were to aid the return. *Freewill offering*—The vessels of the temple which Cyrus gave (Ezra 1. 7-11).

THE RETURN.—About 50,000 people returned (see Ezra 2. 1, 64, 65) with 8136 beasts of burden. They took with them 5400 gold and silver vessels of the temple (1. 7-11). Their leader was Zerubbabel of David's royal line. Their journey would require more than four months (7. 9). On their arrival they made a great offering of 61,000 gold darics=\$275,000, and 5000 minas of silver=\$135,000.

8. *Second month*—May. 10. *Trumpets*—For calling assemblies, like our church-bells. 11. *By course*—Responsively. 12. *Wept*—Because there was little hope of making as beautiful a temple as the former one. The temple was not complete for 19 years (6. 15).

SUBJECTS FOR SPECIAL REPORTS.—The captivity, its cause and length.—Its effect on the people.—The prophecy of Jeremiah (25. 12; 29. 10).—The prophecy of Isaiah (44. 26-28; 45. 1-4).—Cyrus.—The proclamation.—The numbers who returned.—The gift of Cyrus (1. 7-11).—The journey from Babylon to Jerusalem.—The rebuilding of the temple.—The delays and hinderances.

## QUESTIONS.

INTRODUCTORY.—In what country did the events of our last lesson take place? What people were captives here? Who was now king of Babylon? Who was Ezra? What can you tell about the book of Ezra?

SUBJECT: A GREAT REVIVAL OF RELIGION.

I. THE CAPTIVITY OF GOD'S PEOPLE.—When were the children of Israel carried captive to Babylon? Why did God allow this evil to come upon them? (2 Chron. 36. 14-20.) What was the effect of this affliction on the people? How long did the captivity last? (2 Chron. 36. 20, 21.)

II. GOD MOVING ON THE HEARTS OF MEN (vs. 1-4).—Who was Cyrus? What had been foretold of him? (Isa. 44. 26-28; 45. 1-4.) Was Daniel alive at this time? (Dan. 10. 1.) May he have showed these prophecies to Cyrus? What had Jeremiah foretold? (Jer. 25. 12; 29. 10.) Had God been moving upon the hearts of the people? What proclama-

tion did Cyrus make? Who were to help those who would go? What was Cyrus's freewill offering? (1. 7-11.)

III. THE RETURN TO THE PROMISED LAND.—How many persons returned to Judea? (Ezra 2. 64, 65.) How many beasts of burden did they take? (Ezra 2. 66, 67.) What treasures did they carry? (Ezra 1. 7-11.) How long was the journey? (Ezra 7. 9.)

IV. REBUILDING THE HOUSE OF GOD (vs. 8-13).—What offering was made soon after their arrival? (2. 69.) When did they begin to rebuild the temple? What was their first work? (3. 2-5.) What were the ceremonies of laying the foundation? Why did the old men weep? Why did the younger rejoice? Were both right? What glory did the old have that the new lacked? What greatest glory came to the new? (Hag. 2. 7-9.) How long was it before the temple was finished? (6. 15.) What two prophets gave great aid?

## PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

1. God has power over nations and events.
2. God's promises will all be fulfilled in due time.
3. When God's people have learned the lessons their trials are intended to teach, he will bring them again to peace and prosperity.
4. Those who remain at home should give freely to sustain those who go forth to preach the Gospel.
5. The best power of song should be used in the service of God.
6. In all progress there are some things to regret, as well as much to rejoice in.
7. Let us build up the temple of God in our hearts.

## REVIEW EXERCISE.

16. Where were the Jews in captivity? ANS. In Babylon. 17. How long were they captive? ANS. 70 years. 18. What was the effect of this affliction? ANS. It wholly cured them of idolatry. 19. Who was moved to aid their return? ANS. Cyrus, king of the Persian empire. 20. How many returned to Jerusalem? ANS. About 50,000. 21. What was their first work? ANS. To rebuild the temple.

B.C. 445.] LESSON IX. [Feb. 28.

## NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER.

Neh. 1. 1-11. Commit to mem. vs. 3, 9.

## GOLDEN TEXT.

Give us help from trouble; for rain is the help of man.—Ps. 108. 12.

## CENTRAL TRUTH.

God helps his people in answer to prayer.

## DAILY READINGS.

M. Ezra 7. 1-28. Th. Neh. 9. 1-15. W. Neh. 1. 1-11. Th. Neh. 2. 1-20. F. Neh. 4. 1-23. Sa. Neh. 5. 1-19. Su. Neh. 6. 1-19.

DATE.—B.C. 445. 70 years after completion of the second temple, and 90 years after the return.

PLACE.—Susa (Sushan), the chief capital of the Persian empire, 250 miles east of Babylon. Daniel was here part of the time (Dan. 8. 2), and Queen Esther lived here.

INTERVENING HISTORY.—The second temple was finished B.C. 515 (see last lesson). Then comes an interval of 57 years, in which occurred the story of Esther. Then Ezra the Scribe came to Jerusalem, B.C. 457, with 1500 more men from Babylon (over 5000 including women and children) (Ezra 8. 1-20). He made great reforms. After 13 more years Nehemiah went up to Jerusalem, according to his prayer in this lesson.

HELPS OVER HARD PLACES.—1. *Chisleu*—9th month, Nov.-Dec. *Twentieth year*—Of Artaxerxes. 2. *Hananiah*—Probably brother of Nehemiah (Neh. 7. 2). 3. *Walls broken down*—By Nebuchadnezzar, 140 years before this. They had been partially rebuilt (Ezra 4. 12), and were destroyed again (Ezra 4. 8-24; Neh. 2. 11-15). 4. *Certain days*—Three or four months, December to April. (Compare cha. 1. 1 with 2. 1.) *Fasted*—(1) to express his deep sorrow, and (2) to keep the mind clear for devotions. 5. *Terrible God*—To his enemies. Able to overcome them. *Keepeth covenant*—His promises to them if they would obey. 7. *We have dealt corruptly*—Wickedly; their wickedness was the cause of their captivity (2 Chron. 36. 14-17; Ezra 9. 1; Neh. 5. 1-7). 8. *If ye transgress*, etc.—Lev. 26. 27-39; Deut. 28. 45-52, 62-67. 9. *But if ye turn*—See Lev. 26. 40-45; Deut. 30. 1-10. 11. *Cup-bearer*—One of those who pressed the wine and brought

it to the king. It brought him in close contact with the king, and gave him great power and wealth.

SUBJECTS FOR SPECIAL REPORTS.—The intervening history.—Nehemiah.—The state of Judea at this time.—The qualities of true prayer found in the prayer of Nehemiah.—How the good man could say "we have dealt corruptly."—The answer to the prayer.

## QUESTIONS.

INTRODUCTORY.—How much time intervenes between the last lesson and this? What were some of the events during this time? To what date do we now come? Who was king of Persia? What great men lived about this time?

SUBJECT: A PRAYER AND ITS ANSWER.

I. THE NEED OF PRAYER (vs. 1-3).—How long was it since the Jews began to return to Jerusalem? Where did Nehemiah live? How did he learn about the state of things in Judea? What was the condition there? (2 Kings 25. 10; Ezra 4. 8-24; Neh. 2. 11-15.)

II. THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER (v. 4).—What was the effect of this report on Nehemiah? In what other ways did he show his sorrow? What is the meaning and use of fasting? What does Christ say about fasting? (Mark 9. 29; Matt. 6. 16-18. (See also Matt. 4. 1, 2.)

III. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF HIS PRAYER (vs. 5-11).—(1.) ADORATION. What qualities does Nehemiah here ascribe to God? When is God terrible? Meaning of "that keepeth covenant." With whom? Who alone have a right to expect his good gifts? (2.) CONFESSION. Whose sins did Nehemiah confess? (vs. 7, 8.) What were some of these sins? (2 Chron. 36. 14-17; Ezra 9. 1.)

(3.) PLEADING THE PROMISES. Of what words of God were the present condition of the Jews a fulfilment? (v. 8; Lev. 26. 27-39; Deut. 28. 45-52, 62-67.) How would the fulfilment of this give assurance that the promises would also be fulfilled? What promises had been made to them? (v. 9; Lev. 26. 40-45; Deut. 30. 1-10.) Name some of God's promises that we can plead in prayer?

(4.) ASSURANCE FROM FORMER MERCIES. To what in their past history does Nehemiah refer? (v. 10; Ex. 12. 51; Joshua 3. 15, 16; Heb. 11. 32-34.) How do God's former mercies give us assurance in present need?

(5.) PETITION. What did Nehemiah ask of God? (v. 11; See chap. 2. 3-5.)

(6.) PERSEVERANCE. How long did Nehemiah pray before the answer came? (Compare 1. 1 with 2. 1. See *Helps*, v. 4.)

IV. THE ANSWER.—How was the prayer first answered? (2. 1-6.) Through whom did it come? What did Nehemiah do toward the answer? (2. 7-9.) What did he do when he arrived at Jerusalem? (2. 11-15.) Should churches make a like examination of the needs around them? How did the people help? (4. 6.) In what way did they work? (3. 28.) What command of Christ did they fulfil? (Chap. 4. 15-22.)

## LESSONS FROM NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER.

1. There is need of much prayer on account of the sins and troubles of the world, of the Church, of ourselves.

2. The only source of help is in God.

3. In the hour of need we should (1) repent, (2) fast and consecrate ourselves, (3) pray.

4. The qualities of true prayer are adoration, confession, pleading the promises, definite petitions, perseverance.

5. The effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much.

6. The answer may be delayed, but it is sure to come.

7. The answer comes (1) by means of the prayer, (2) by willingness to do our part, (3) by new consecration, (4) by surveying the field, (5) by each one doing his part, (6) by working each one against his own house, (7) in spite of enemies, (8) by watching as well as working, (9) by the favour of God.

## REVIEW EXERCISE.

1. Who was Nehemiah? ANS. A Jew of the captivity, and cup-bearer to Artaxerxes, king of Persia. 2. What news did he hear from Judea? ANS. That the people were in great poverty and distress. 3. What did Nehemiah do? ANS. He wept, and fasted, and prayed. 4. What were the characteristics of his prayer? ANS. Worship, confession, faith, earnestness, and perseverance. 5. How was his prayer answered? ANS. He was sent to Judea, and he built the walls of Jerusalem.

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