

Notes on the S. S. Lessons.

The Second Temple.

Ezra 1: 1-4; 3: 8-13.

IN our last lesson we learned how God punished Belshazzar for his wicked pride and his profane use of the holy vessels. The very night he dared to insult God in this way, his city (Babylon) was taken and he was killed by the soldiers of King Cyrus. "So the Lord punished the King of Babylon and that nation for their sin."

In the first year of his reign Cyrus made a decree, that the Jews might go back to their own land; and about fifty thousand of them did so, under Ze-rub-babel, or, as he was called, Shesh-baz-zar, a prince of Judah, grandson of Jehoi-a-kin. Joshua the high priest went with them; and Cyrus gave them back all the vessels of the house of the Lord, five thousand four hundred vessels of silver and vessels of gold, and they took them back to Jerusalem.

In the second year after their return they laid the foundations of that temple in which our Lord afterwards taught. But the people who lived in Samaria wanted to join in building it, as if they belonged to the same people, and wanted to make one nation with the

Jews; but the Jews would not let them, because they were heathens, and were not of the seed of Abraham; so the Samaritans tried to stop them, and at last they sent men to Babylon to tell the king how rebellious the Jews had always been, and he had better not let them build up a strong city like Jerusalem. The building of the temple was stopped for a time, but they went on with the houses of the city.

In the reign of Darius, twenty years later, the Jews tried again, and got a new decree from the king, and he ordered those people who had hindered the Jews to help them, and the governors to give them timber, and stone, and money out of the taxes to help the work on.

Then the temple was finished in the eighth year of Darius; and they de-di-ca-ted it, and kept the Pass-over. But the old men mourned because this house was not what the temple of Solomon had been. They had lost the ark, and the two tables of stone, and the pot of manna, and Aaron's rod, and there was no longer the glory of the Lord sitting between the cherubims.

Nehemiah's Prayer.

Neh. 1: 1-11.

NEHEMIAH, whose name means, "*The comfort of the Lord*," belonged to the tribe of Judah. He was born at Babylon, while the Jews were in captivity. He was a prayerful, patriotic and brave man. One day a man who had come up from Jerusalem told him of the ruin of that city.

Nehemiah felt sorry at heart, and so much did he grieve, that he became sad looking and pale. His sorrow was so great that he did not eat anything for several days. But he did not content himself with fasting and weeping. He knew that these would be of no service to the poor captives. He also knew

that so far as he was himself concerned he was powerless to help. But he remembered one who could help, and who had said, "Call upon me in the day of trouble and I will deliver thee." He knew God, and so he prayed, and asked God to bless that which he purposed doing. And what was that? It was a bold act and a great work. He intended to ask the king to let him go and re-build the walls! Now, there are some things which men do on which they dare not



DEDICATION OF THE SECOND TEMPLE.

ask God's blessing, and if they did it would be withheld. There are other undertakings too, respecting which we forget to ask God's blessing, or think it is not necessary to do so. The work Nehemiah was about to undertake was such that he knew he could not do unless God blessed him, and he was sure he could do it with that blessing. What we want our dear young readers to learn from this lesson is this. Prayer is not to be confined to things concerning religion, but to all you do. You should never go to school without asking God to help you.

We hope our young readers will bear in mind that all the success and blessing which followed Nehemiah's work was answer to the prayer. So if you are going to be useful and happy you must be very much in prayer.

'OUR YOUNG PEOPLE.'

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