

Great Glory

Scripture Reading: Ezra 3-6; Psalms 118

At first, the Jews built for themselves small homes to stay in. After that they built an altar on top of Moriah mount and worshipped God there. It was in the same place that the beautiful temple built by Solomon stood. Even David made sacrifices in the same place. It was the same place where Abraham brought Isaac to be sacrificed. They planned to build the temple again in that same location. With much toiling they laid the foundation. All those who saw it celebrated with joy. They worshipped God and sang praises to Him.

Zerubbabel along with Joshua the high priest carried out the work continuously. But the enemies tried with much efforts to somehow hinder the work. Therefore it took 19 long years to finish the "temple project". The Samaritans were the enemies. When Shalmaneser captured Israel, he brought in other people to dwell there. A few Jews had relationship with such people. They are called the Samaritans. They worshipped both God and idols. They approached Zerubbabel and said that even they wanted to be a part of building the temple and they tried to combine themselves with the Jews.

Zerubbabel did not accept their plea. He said that those who worship the true living God would never unite themselves with those who worship idols. Therefore they became the enemies of the Jews. They gave letters to Cyrus the Persian king regarding the Jews. Cyrus had died and the king after him was Artaxerxes. He was not favorable to the Jews. Therefore the temple works were paused for 15 years. At those times, the Jews were united. We can see how God encouraged them through in Haggai 1:4-8, 2:9 & Zechariah 4:6-10.

A new king came up in Persia. The Jews sent a letter to him requesting to restart the work they had begun by the orders of King Cyrus in his first year. Then Darius the King ordered that the work be started and all the funds required will be given from the king's treasury. He also ordered all the officials to give full support regarding the same. The temple was completed by the next 20 years. All the people were filled with joy and worshipped their Lord God.

Questions:

- 1. In how many years was the temple built?**
2. Whom did God send to encourage the people?
3. Why did Zerubbabel deny to unite with Samaritans?