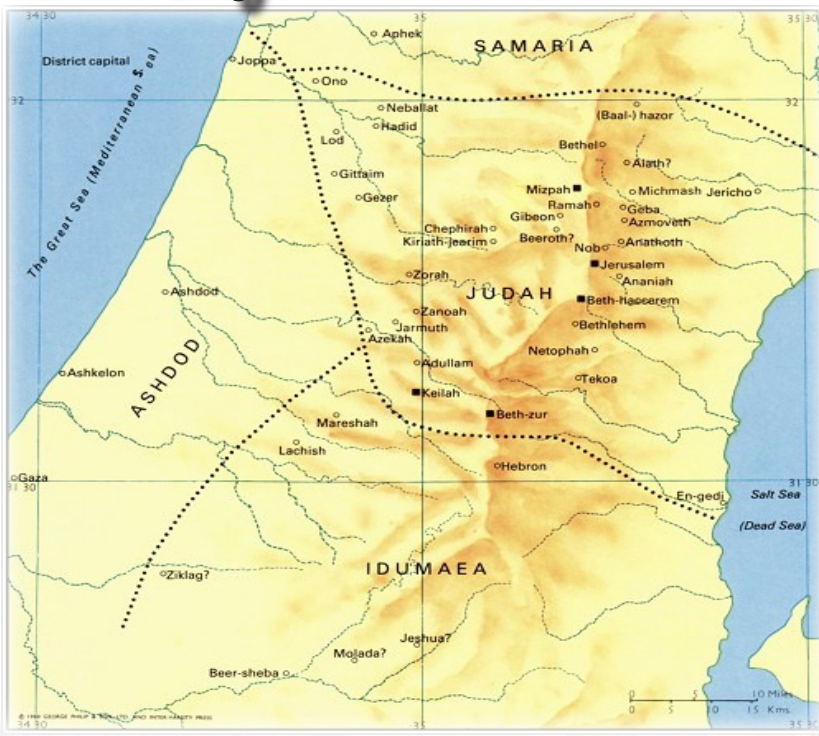


- B) Not only does King Darius command Tattenai to assist in the building of the Temple, he makes crystal clear that any rebellion against his edict would be met with capital punishment (Ezra 6:11).

- C) When we learn of God's great work through Darius, it makes it easy to wonder -- "How could anyone doubt God's great provision, given these great miracles?!" Recall, though, that God's miracles never became obvious until God's people walked through both opposition and normal circumstances!

- D) What is the "take-away" principle? Be faithful to God in the **ALL** circumstances! You may not be able to perceive God's miraculous work, but God is actively working -- JOIN HIM!

Israel During The Time Of Ezra & Nehemiah



Surprising Power

Long Beach Alliance Church • April 27th, 2008 • Pastor Chris Lankford

AND I ISSUED A DECREE THAT ANY MAN WHO VIOLATES THIS EDICT, A TIMBER SHALL BE DRAWN FROM HIS HOUSE AND HE SHALL BE IMPALED ON IT AND HIS HOUSE SHALL BE MADE A REFUSE HEAP ON ACCOUNT OF THIS. MAY THE GOD WHO HAS CAUSED HIS NAME TO DWELL THERE OVERTHROW ANY KING OR PEOPLE WHO ATTEMPTS TO CHANGE IT, SO AS TO DESTROY THIS HOUSE OF GOD IN JERUSALEM. I, DARIUS, HAVE ISSUED THIS DECREE, LET IT BE CARRIED OUT WITH ALL DILIGENCE!"

~EZRA 6:11-12 (NASB)

1) The Proper Focus Of God's People

- A) Under the prophetic ministry of Haggai and Zechariah (Ezra 5:1), the Jewish community re-starts the rebuilding of the temple under the leadership of Zerubbabel* and the High Priest, Jeshua (5:2).

- B) The preaching of the prophets, the spiritual leadership of the priests, and the leaders of the community were all focused on being obedient to God (Zechariah 3:7). This was the singular **primary** focus of the community!

2) God Is At Work In The Midst Of Opposition

- A) Almost immediately upon returning to the rebuilding of the Temple of God, God's people begin to experience opposition from the local government officials (Ezra 5:3-4).
- B) While the people had been called to primarily focus on being obedient to the Lord, they were also called to rebuild God's Temple (Haggai 1:4-5).
- C) When the people were faithful to the Lord, God assured that the opposition would not delay the building of the Temple, even in the face of opposition (Ezra 5:5).
- D) What is the "take-away" principle? Be faithful to God in the midst of opposition! You may not be able to perceive His protection, but God is actively working -- JOIN HIM!

* This is the last reference to Zerubbabel in Ezra, which has led to wild speculation (from silence) that Zerubbabel was involved in seditious activity against Persia and was thus deposed from his governorship. However, no weight should be put on the fact that Zerubbabel (and Jeshua) are not mentioned by name again (though cf. 6:7). Ezra composed all his narrative directly out of the available sources, and in these the Jews dealt collectively with Tattenai following the terms of Cyrus's permission to them. Since Zerubbabel would not have been mentioned in the Persian records, it would not have assisted their case to emphasize his leadership. The silence about what happened to Zerubbabel should thus not be interpreted as implying that he was removed from office because of involvement in seditious activity or the like, as has sometimes been supposed. This is in any case most unlikely, since (a) Jeshua is not mentioned again either, though no one doubts that he continued in office. (b) Darius explicitly confirmed Zerubbabel in office and allowed his work to continue after Tattenai's inquiry (6:6-7). This permission would not have been given had there been any suggestion of involvement in sedition. (c) It appears from Ezra 4 that "the enemies of Judah and Benjamin" waited until the walls of Jerusalem were being rebuilt in the reign of Artaxerxes before accusing the city and its inhabitants of being "rebellious and wicked" (4:11-16). Again, this delay would be hard to explain if there had been occasion for such an accusation in the earlier period. Thus we simply do not know (nor, probably, did our author) what happened to Zerubbabel after the events of this chapter, though it seems likely on the basis of Zechariah 4:9 that he at least lived long enough to see the building completed. Collected from various sources including *Ezra & Nehemiah, Word Biblical Commentary Series, #16*, H.G.M. Williamson, Page 76).

3) God Is At Work In The Midst Of Normal

- A) A detailed inquiry is written from Tattenai (representing the local government and (perhaps) the "enemy" Samaritans, cf. 4:10) to King Darius of Persia (5:6ff).
- B) Tattenai's inquiry is notable because it is rooted in facts (5:8), and genuinely seeks to validate the words of the Jewish leadership (5:7-17). This is in dramatic contrast to the previous prejudiced inquiry of Ezra 4:8ff.
- C) In fact, it is probably improper to view Tattenai's inquiry as an action of an enemy. Tattenai appears to be interested in just leadership, keeping the enemies of the Jews controlled.
- D) These events would have taken some months to work through, especially since Darius was in Babylon, an 1760-mile round-trip walking trek for the inquiry.
- E) It would have been easy to get discouraged or get caught up in the "what-if's" of the results of the inquiry for God's people. Rather, the people kept being faithful to the Lord and kept faithfully building the Temple of God.
- F) What is the "take-away" principle? Be faithful to God in the midst of normal circumstances! You may not be able to perceive it, but God is actively working -- JOIN HIM!

3) God Is At Work In The Midst Of Miracles

- A) As it turned out, the inquiry resulted in the discovery of King Cyrus' edict (Ezra 5:17-6:5), which King Darius miraculously reinforces with his own powerful edict (6:6ff).