

Lesson No. (16)

Ezra the Priest

References

The book of Ezra.

Notes for Servants

- ★ Ezra was a descendant of Aaron. He did not practise his lawful job because of his exile, but he kept the law of the Lord and prepared his heart to seek it and practise it.
- ★ Ezra became a skilful writer of the Law. He did not expect that one day he would be a leader of his people during their second return to Jerusalem. And, you, my dear friend, do not despise yourself being still young, as it is the Lord who works in mankind.

Objectives

General: We should not depend on people, but on God.

Specific: The children will be able to:

- A. Learn that fasting is very effective. Ezra called for fasting although the journey was already long and difficult, and fasting would just make it harder (Ezra 8:23);
- B. Understand the feeling of being crushed with grief and being humble before Lord;
- C. Keep away from evil and confess all our sins [When the people repented, Ezra could gather them (Ezra 10:11)].

Bible Verse

"O Give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever."
(Psalm 136:1)

Teaching Aids

Felt figure and flannel board.

Instruction

- (1) Review last week's lesson.
- (2) Who remembers the verse?
- (3) Remind the children about the church occasions for the coming week.
- (4) Who was Ezra? (a descendant of Aaron.) He could not practise his lawful job because of his exile, but because his heart was filled with extreme love for his God, he refused to keep away from the way of the Lord. He kept the Divine Law and became a skilful writer of it.

Story Time

Ezra was a man of knowledge and wisdom. He tells us about what happened during the reign of Cyrus, the king of Persia.

Cyrus had sent a letter to the people of Babylon saying, "The Lord, the God of Heaven ordered me to build a temple for Him in Jerusalem in Judah. You are to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple of the Lord your God."

All the believers were filled with joy and obeyed the king's command. Their pleasure grew greater when they knew that Cyrus had given orders that all the gold and silver vessels taken by Nebuchadnezzar from the Temple of Jerusalem, would be returned.

About 50,000 men of the people of God carried gifts that were made for Jerusalem. They built an altar there and offered their sacrifices twice each day as their custom was before they were exiled. The altar, however, was small so it was necessary for them to build the house of God in Jerusalem. Thus, the men found themselves in Jerusalem after seventy years of exile. They hurried and quickly bought cedar wood from Lebanon, and after setting the foundation of the House of God, each one of them cried with joy because work began. They all sang hymns of praise, giving thanks to the Lord God. The old men wept when they remembered the glory of the first temple and how God's fire used to come down from heaven and burn sacrifices. They remembered the manna and Aaron's staff which they could not bring back. The prophet Haggai came to the builders and told them that the glory of the house they were building would be greater than that of the first one, as the Messiah whom they were waiting for would come to that temple in heavenly glory. These words made the elders rejoice. No one thought of the glory that would come to Jerusalem when the Lord Jesus came to Jerusalem, walked in its streets and taught in the temple.

While they were building the temple, the Samaritans came to Jerusalem and cunningly offered to help the Jews in building the temple. They wanted to stop the great work. The Samaritans had inhabited the land after the exile of Babylon. The Samaritans said, "Let us help you."

A person by the name of Zerubbel, however, knew them well. He refused saying, "No, we will build the temple for the Lord our God as king Cyrus ordered." The Samaritans became very angry and tried to keep the Jews from building the temple. They kept on bothering them until they stopped working to avoid problems. They were delayed sixteen years until the work began again.

During this period, the rich built houses for themselves. Prophet Haggai and the prophet Zachariah came and encouraged people to go on building the temple. The people listened, trusted the Lord, and finally finished the temple in four years. At the same time, the Jews worked on building the walls of Jerusalem.

Discussion

- 1 - Follow up the story by talking about it with the children.
- 2 - Continue the discussion while they do the activity.

Learning Activities

Activity Sheet.