

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR READ THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY- 01/09/13

1. Ezra reports that Cyrus, king of Persia, thought that he had been appointed by the Lord, the God of heaven, to build a temple for God at Jerusalem (Ezra 1:2). Here is an example of an unbelieving ruler being used by God to fulfill His Messianic purposes. Does God still use civil authorities to accomplish His purposes? Can you cite some examples?
2. Review Ezra 3:1-13. Another picture of the Lord building His church is in 1 Peter 2:4-12. Who is the "living stone" (2:5)? How do believers become "living stones" (1 Corinthians 15:45)? According to Peter, what are some other things "living stones" do? In your prayers ask the Spirit for the strength to do this?
3. According to the decree issued by King Cyrus regarding the temple of God in Jerusalem, provisions were supplied so that the priest could "offer sacrifices pleasing to the God of heaven and pray for the well-being of the king and his sons" (Ezra 6:10). Relate the practice of prayers for government leaders in Old Testament times to that which is still practiced by God's people today (1 Timothy 2:1-2).
4. Ezra describes the hand of the Lord blessing the people along their way, providing protection from enemies and bandits (Ezra 8:31). That blessing did the Ezra, the leader, receive as the hand of the Lord was upon him (see Ezra 7:28)? See also Joshua 1:9.
5. Relate the following segment from Ezra's prayer to yourself and God's other faithful people around you. "O Lord, God of Israel, You are righteous! We are left this day as a remnant. Here we are before You in our guilt, though because of it not one of us can stand in Your presence" (Ezra 9:15).
6. upon learning of the deplorable conditions in Jerusalem, Nehemiah comes before God in repentant prayer. According to Nehemiah 1:10, what is the relationship between God's people and God? How was this relationship established?