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First Baptist Church of Rochester
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Sermon #10 in Rebuild by Revival Series: Ezra and Nehemiah

"P" PEOPLE
Ezra 6:13-22

Last week, from Ezra 6:1-12 we learned that God will accomplish what He intends. It is best to not oppose God's work being done by God's people. It will not end well for you.

- I. The Problem People complied at once to the command of Darius (v. 13).
- II. The Prophets People (vv. 14-15)
 - A. The Prophets were Preaching (v. 14).
 1. The people were greatly exhorted (provoked) by the preaching (Zechariah 7).
 - a. They changed their life while doing the work.
 - b. Not either/or but both/and
 2. Were greatly encouraged (prospered) by the preaching
 - a. Second time the preaching of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah mentioned
 - b. In 5:1 they prophesied in the name of the God of Israel to the Jews.
 - c. The prophets of God were with them and helped them 5:2.
 - B. The Place was Polished – The Temple was finished (vv. 14-15).
 1. As commanded by the God of Israel
 - a. This is not the normal term for *commandment*, but it is the same word translated *decree* or *administrative order* throughout the book.
 - b. The message *He is powerful*. It was the decree from God, the Sovereign of the universe, which gave the administrative authority to rebuild the temple.
 2. As commanded by Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes, the kings of Persia
 - a. The decrees, same word of three of the greatest monarchs in the history of the ancient Near East, were only a secondary issue.
 - b. God rules the universe, and He raises up kings, then pulls them from their thrones when they have served His administration.
 3. The temple is finished in the sixth year of the reign of Darius on March 12, 515 B.C.
 4. Usually, spiritual transformation takes more time than we had originally planned. It took more than 20 years, but the temple was finally finished. The long process had been sometimes tedious, sometimes disillusioning, and sometimes actually heartbreaking. But it was done, and it was worth every minute or it! Restoration of our own lives is not easy either, but the end result will make the difficult process worth it.
- III. The Persistent People (vv. 16-18)
 - A. After this long, drawn-out process was finally over, what was the people's response to success?
 1. They acknowledged God in the entire project.
 2. They formally recognized the completion in a dedication ceremony.
 3. They celebrated this victory with great joy.
 4. We need to celebrate our own spiritual progress.
 5. What is worth celebrating more than a life brought back into a right relationship with God and other people?
 - B. The temple was dedicated with great solace.

1. Everyone was involved – People of Israel, the priests, the Levites, the rest of the people – descendants of the captivity.
 2. In the OT law, the people were commanded to worship and celebrate their festivals with joy (Dt. 12:7,12,18; 16:11,14).
 3. They kept the dedication of the house of God with joy. The word for dedication is *Hanukkah*. Just as the *Hanukkah* of the first temple filled the people with joy (1 King 8:66) and as the rededication, *Hanukkah*, of the temple and the restoration of Passover in Hezekiah's day brought joy (2 Chron 30:21), so now with the *Hanukkah* of the second temple, the people responded with great joy. *Hanukkah* became the name of a festival in memory of the temple's reconsecration in 165 B.C. after its profanation by Antiochus Epiphanes.
 - C. The temple was dedicated with great sacrifice (vv. 16-17).
 1. Solomon had offered more than 200 times as many oxen and sheep at the dedication of his temple (1 King 8:63) with 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. The people were much poorer and fewer in number at this time.
 2. The number is not as important as the heart attitude behind the sacrifice.
 - D. The new temple allowed the full implementation of the sacrificial system that existed before the disaster of 586 B.C. when the first temple was destroyed.
 - E. This celebration of Passover, probably April 21, 515 B.C., would have been a momentous occasion for God's people to remember their forefathers' deliverance from Egypt as well as their won deliverance from exile.
- IV. The Prepared People (v. 18) – The priests and Levites divided into divisions following all the instructions recorded in the Book of Moses.
- A. The right people doing the right job the right way
 - B. The Bible was the guide.
- V. The Purified People (vv. 19-21)
- A. The author had used Aramaic from 4:8-6:18 since he was working with official Persian correspondence written in Aramaic. With that correspondence completed, in verse 19 he returned to Hebrew until 7:11.
 - B. Verse 20 – Before they could lead the people in worshiping God, it was necessary for the priests and Levites to purify themselves. They had to be ritually clean.
 1. Now purification is available to all through Jesus Christ. When we trust in Jesus, He purifies us and allows us to come before the God of Israel.
 - C. Verse 21 – The people were purified as well.
 1. Separated from the uncleanness of the heathen of the land
 2. Separated to seek the Lord God of Israel
 3. Separation from uncleanness and to the Lord is prerequisite to worship.
 - D. Verse 22 – By turning the heart of the king in their favor in allowing them to complete the rebuilding, God encouraged His people. They understood the verse, "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD" (Prov 21:1) better through this ordeal.

Today we have looked at several different groups of people. Sometimes they are the same group, but with a different emphasis. With which group do you best identify? The Problem People who opposed God's people doing God's work but as they lost this battle comply on the outside? The Persistent People who continue on over thick and thin until the job is complete? The Prepared People who are equipped

to do the work as they are the right people doing the right job the right way? The Purified People who purify yourself before entering into worship?