

Gifts for the Temple

***Key Verse: “I said unto them, Ye are holy unto the LORD; the vessels are holy also; and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering unto the LORD God of your fathers.”
—Ezra 8:28***

***Selected Scripture:
Ezra 8:24-30***

what each of them had received. They would be held accountable for faithfully delivering what they had been given to the designated representatives of the Jews once they arrived in Jerusalem.—Ezra 8:24-29

This offering included: “The silver, and the gold, and the vessels, even the offering of the house of our God: . . . I even weighed unto their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, and silver vessels an hundred talents, and of gold an hundred talents; Also twenty basons of gold, of a thousand drams; and two vessels of fine copper, precious as gold.” (vss. 25-27) It is estimated that the value of these precious metals and objects in today’s market would be in the millions of dollars.

It is of a certainty that a great responsibility rested upon these twelve men, and their ten helpers, for they

OUR LESSON BEGINS WITH

a consideration of how Ezra divided the gold and silver contributed by “the king, and his counsellors, and his lords, and all Israel” as a freewill offering, prior to journeying to Jerusalem. He selected twelve of the chief priests, and ten others with them, carefully weighing to each of them a portion of all the gold and silver of the offering. A strict and detailed count was completed and recorded of

had been entrusted with a very important task. They were further instructed by Ezra, in verse 29 of the account, “Watch ye, and keep them, until ye weigh them before the chief of the priests and the Levites, and chief of the fathers of Israel, at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of the LORD.”

Through the guidance and providential care of the Heavenly Father, they successfully completed their long journey. “The hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way.” (vs. 31) These sentiments remind us of the words of the psalmist, “I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.” (Ps. 91:2,3) On the fourth day after completing their journey, all of the gold, silver, and vessels were weighed in the Temple by several of the priests and Levites—“by number and by weight of every one: and all the weight was written at that time.”—Ezra 8:34

A lesson for the footstep followers of Jesus can be found in the realization that he is the Captain of our Christian journey. He desires to bring us to his heavenly kingdom, and gives each of us valuable “pounds” and “talents” for which we are responsible. As faithful stewards, we must diligently watch over and keep these spiritual gifts and treasures which have been committed to us. (I Cor. 4:1,2; 12:1-12) We read in James 1:17, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.” God desires that we faithfully use all of these precious spiritual things, for we will ultimately be required to give an account of them. “Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.” (Luke 12:48) Our “freewill offering” can be summed up in the words, “By the mercies of God, . . . present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”—Rom. 12:1 ■