

Don't Despise the Day of Small Things!

Introduction:

1. We live in a world in which emphasis is placed upon superlatives; we tend to look down upon things which may appear small and insignificant.
2. We hear people talk about:
 - a. Big incomes.
 - b. Big cars.
 - c. Big houses.
 - d. Big boats.
 - e. Etc.etc.
3. In our emphasis upon that which is big, beautiful, stupendous, "out of this world," etc., we tend to overlook the fact that God can do a lot with a little.
4. Lesson Title: Don't "*Despise the Day of Small Things.*"
5. Text: Zechariah 4:8-10.

Discussion:

I. Background Information.

- A. The Southern Kingdom, Judah, Went into Captivity.
 1. The captivity occurred in three stages, in the days of Jehoikim (606 B.C.), Jehoiachin (597), and the final, or third stage of the captivity, occurred around 586 B.C. during the reign of King Zedekiah, 2 Kings 25:7-9; 2 Chronicles 36; Jeremiah 52:8-15.
- B. The Captivity would last 70 long years, Jeremiah 25:11-12.
 1. After the 70 years passed God promised to bring them back to the land, Jeremiah 29:10.
 2. He even mentioned beforehand (by name!) the King who would allow His people to return to their land and rebuild the temple, Isaiah 45:28.
- C. In fulfillment of divine prophecy, Babylon fell to the Medo Persians, and Cyrus the king issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to their land and begin rebuilding the temple, Ezra 1:1-2.
 1. Accordingly, a remnant of nearly 50,000 Jews, led by Zerubbabel, returned and began rebuilding, Ezra 2.
 2. They laid the foundation of the temple; it was a time of rejoicing, Ezra 3:10-11!
 3. But "*the people of the land*" sought to stop their endeavors, Ezra 4:4, so the work on the temple ceased for around 16 years, Ezra 4:24.
- D. God then raised up two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah (520 B.C), who insisted that they rebuild the temple, Ezra 5:1-2.
 1. Haggai shamed them for their lack of priorities! Haggai 1:5.
 - a. Zerubbabel, and others then went to work on the house of God, Haggai 1:14.
 - b. Zechariah, the prophet, stated that what the hands of Zerubbabel had begun his hands would also finish, Zech. 4:10.
 2. For the record, it might be stated that the prophet Zechariah also prophetically looked beyond the physical temple built by the Jews to the spiritual temple Jesus would build, Zech. 6:12-13.
 - a. Jesus is the One identified as "*The Branch.*" Cf. Isa. 11:1, Rom. 15:8,12.
 - b. Jesus promised to build His church, Matt. 16:18, which is His temple, Eph. 2:16,19-21.
 - c. According to Zech 6:12-13, Jesus would simultaneously serve as both priest and king.
 - (1) He is now our High priest, Heb. 8:1; He is "*high priest over the house of God,*" Heb. 10:21, which is "*the church of the living God,*" I Tim. 3:15.

II. Examine the Text, Zech. 4:8-10.

- A. "*The word of the Lord came unto me,*" Zech. 4:8.
 1. A way of introducing a prophetic oracle. Cf. Zech. 6:9; 7:1,8; 8:1,18.
- B. Zerubbabel would finish what he started, Zech. 4:9.
 1. Even though, between Ezra 4:24 and Zech 4:9, there had been a delay of around 16 years.
 - a. A delay because the people had allowed their enemies to discourage them!
 2. Being discouraged, they had concluded the time had not come for them to re-build, Haggai 1:2, but what they had regarded as a "*mountain*" (of hardship and opposition) would become a "*plain,*" so he that laid the foundation stone would also lay "*the capstone,*" Zech. 4:7.
 3. Formerly they had despised "*the day of small things,*" Zech. 4:10, failing to realize that God can take the "*small things*" and do great things.

III. "Small Things" God used in the past.

- A. In the form of People.

1. He took Abraham, the son of an idolater, Joshua 24:2, and used him to become the father of a great nation, Gen. 12:1-3.
 2. He took Moses, who tended the flock of his Midianite father in law, Ex. 3:1, and used him to be the one whom He would bring Israel out of bondage, Ex. 3:10.
 3. He took David a young shepherd boy to kill the giant Goliath and win the battle over the Philistines, I Samuel 17.
 4. He took some uneducated fishermen and used them to become “*fishers of men*,” Matt. 4:18-22.
 5. He took perhaps the greatest earthly enemy Christ ever had (Saul, Acts 7:58; 8:1; 9:1), and turned him into the great apostle to the Gentiles, one who also wrote 13 of the New Testament books.
- B. In the form of things.
1. Moses’ rod was used to convince the nation of the Jews to follow him out of the land of Egypt, Ex. 4:1-5.
 2. One smooth stone was used to kill Goliath, the giant that caused the nation of Israel to tremble, I Sam. 17.
 3. Samson used the jawbone of a donkey and killed 1,000 Philistines, Judges 15:15-16.
 4. A little meal and a jar of oil was used to sustain a widow through years of famine, I Kings 17:16.
 5. Five barley loaves and two small fish were used to feed a multitude, Matt. 14:13-21.
 6. The tiniest of seeds can produce the greatest of herbs, Matt. 13:31-32.
 7. Note the poem contained in the book **This Grace Also**, by Mac Layton:
“Shamgar had an oxgoad; Rahab had a string.
Gideon had a trumpet; David had a sling.
Samson had a jawbone; Moses had a rod.
Dorcas had a needle; But all were used for God.”
- C. The Kingdom of God started out as a small stone which filled the whole Daniel 2:35,44!

IV. Application:

- A. We must not Despise the “*day of small things*.”
1. So often we delight in the “big preachers,” who have become “brotherhood figures.”
 - a. But some of those same people are the ones who have led the most people into apostasy.
 - b. In many quarters the real work is being done by hard-working, behind-the-scenes brethren who are more concerned about saving souls than making a name for themselves.
 2. We also delight in those men who have made many evangelistic journeys into difficult areas, and we rejoice to hear of the many conversions which often accompany their labors.
 - a. But we tend to overlook their wives “back home” who keep the home fires burning and are making innumerable sacrifices to make their work possible.
 - b. As well as those countless unnamed Christians who sacrificially give of their meager means in order to enable the local church to support the preaching of the gospel both at home and abroad.
- B. “*Small things*” which God can use to great advantage.
1. Saints who regularly make phone calls, write cards, letters, visit the sick, and do countless “*small things*” which mean so much to the work of the church, without which it would greatly suffer.
 2. Saints who consistently encourage those who need it, Heb. 10:24.
 3. Those modern Barnabases who give liberally of their means, Acts 4:36-37, who “stick their necks out” for others in time of need, Acts 9:26-27, and are willing to give someone who has been a disappointment a second chance, Acts 15:36-41.
 4. Those concerned individuals who look for opportunities to share the gospel, 2 Tim. 2:2, or try to arrange Bible classes for others to teach.
 - a. One never knows who might be the most successful in this realm.
 5. Christians who are “*given to hospitality*,” and open their homes for special Bible studies, or for people to get together, interact with, and encourage one another, I Peter 4:9.
 6. Faithful children of God who, though hindered by age and ill health, make it a point to attend every Bible study and worship service which they possibly can. Heb. 10:25.
 - a. They provide great encouragement to others, and motivate them to “keep on keeping on,” I Cor. 15:58.
 7. Saints who, regardless of the circumstances, manage to “*shine as lights in the world*,” Phil. 2:15.

Conclusion:

1. A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. “*Small things*” add up! “*With God all things are possible*,” Matt. 19:26.
2. It is a long way from earth to heaven, but it begins with one’s obedience to the gospel.

--Bobby Witherington, June 12, 2016