

Short Talk #7

Jeshua, Zerubbabel, and Haggai

“Jeshua, Zerubbabel, and Haggai Those three ancient worthies who forms the First Grand Council and their meetings in Jerusalem”.

As we listen to the opening of a Royal Arch Chapter, we hear this phrase, how many times have you wondered what it meant? Were you ever the least bit curious as to the origin of these characters, their names and their contribution to our craft?

JESHUA... This name has been used throughout the Bible as the name of important places and people. It is a basic name in Hebrew history and appears with many different spellings. Some of which are Oshea, Joshua, Jeshua, and Jesus. The name indicates Deliverer or Savior and is used in connection with persons who eventually had a part in the deliverance and salvation of the people.

Moses was led to appoint Joshua, the son of Nun, as his successor during the final wanderings in the wilderness, and it was this Joshua who delivered the children of Israel into the Promised Land. His leadership role was military, political, and spiritual.

Jeshua, the son of Jozaddek the High Priest, was the spiritual leader in the rebuilding of the temple, when the children of Israel were delivered from captivity in Babylon. He share the political leadership with Zerubbabel. He was probably born in Babylon during the exile. He being the local successor in the Priestly line, was we assume educated for the priestly task even in exile. As the spiritual leader, the Jewish people in captivity surely knew and trusted him. Since there was no government in exile, it is logical to believe that Jeshua had a great deal of influence in promoting the leadership of Zerubbabel during this return. To give us some idea of the number of people who were involved in this return, the house of Jeshua along number 973, a small house of only one priest.

Zerubbabel, "Son" (male heir) of Shealtiel, Governor of Judah. , He was indeed a part of the Davidic line. Jeconiah had several sons, among them Shealtiel, who was an uncle to Zerubbabel. In the Old Testament, the male heir is always referred to as the son of his predecessor. The genealogy of Zerubbabel was through Abraham, David, and after him we trace to the birth of Christ. Zerubbabel was born in captivity and being a Prince of the House of Judah, he was probably afforded chances that other young captives would not have been offered. He was possibly a part of the King's Body Guard. In those days, even royal captives were considered royal.

Zerubbabel was appointed first guard by Cyrus as the "Governor" of Judah and later by Darius. By this choice of a Prince of a house of Judah and working with Jeshua the High Priest, the people were eager to follow these men in returning to Jerusalem to rebuild the city and the Temple. Zerubbabel was able to accomplish much in restoring the city and completing and rededicating the temple.

Haggai was the first prophet of the restoration. His name means festal or feast. He was a contemporary of Zachariah. He was probably present at the destruction of the first temple. He was a Levite and as such was given special treatment during his captivity. He was an old man when he came back to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel to participate in the rebuilding of the Temple. The book of Haggai in the Bible is one of the most precisely dated of all the books. At one point there was a fifteen year lapse in the work of rebuilding the Temple. During this period, the people had spent their time building homes, farming and doing almost anything but God's work. They began to suffer crop failures, personal problems, bickering and fighting among themselves to a greater extent than usual.

The Old Prophet encouraged them to repent and come back to God. Just twenty four days after his encouragement, work was resumed on the Temple. Immediately their other problems ceased and their needs were abundantly met.

As we study these three characters, we find that they lived in the sixth century before Christ. They were a part of the Jewish nation in exile. It was during this time period, that

synagogue worship began. The worship outside the Temple in Jerusalem was a new experience for the Jewish people. The governments had been overthrown, many of the political leaders turned away from the worship of God, many of the people had been in captivity, the Temple had been destroyed, and confusion must have been the order of the day. Yet, many of the people did repent and returned to God.

Jeshua, Zerubbabel and Haggai are important to our noble craft. Our Blue Lodges thread the Masonic allegory around the building of the Temple of King Solomon. In Royal Arch Masonry, the allegory completes the erection of that temple, witnesses its destruction, and follows through to the building of the second temple, representing the temple of our spiritual life. This leads us to contemplate our relationship to the Creator. As Solomon and the two Hiram's labored to build the first temple, so we labor to build our present temples. As Jeshua, Zerubbabel and Haggai labored at the second temple, so we should build the foundation of our spiritual life.