

Ellen G. White
Return of the Exiles 1 - 15

This is my annotated copy of these articles that I have highlighted to point me to the more important sections. Dan

RH February 20, 1908 | RH January 23, 1908 | RH January 30, 1908 | RH February 13, 1908 | RH February 27, 1908 | White Return of the Exiles Ezra and His Reforms ---

Particularly good on studying the repeated calls to come out of Babylon.

1 Key Thoughts

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3 [Prosperity is linked to continuing the covenant relationship with God:
4 ***Our prosperity is dependent on the continuance of our covenant relationship***
5 ***with God. In no instance can we afford to compromise principle by entering into***
6 ***covenant with those who fear not God.*** {RH April 25, 1907, par. 12} *There is*
7 *constant danger that professed Christians will come to think that in order to have*
8 *influence with worldlings, they must conform to the world to a certain extent. But*
9 *although the propositions of Satan may appear to afford great advantages, as did*
10 *the offer of the Samaritans to assist in the construction of the temple, they always*
11 *end in spiritual ruin.* God's people must guard against every subtle influence that
12 is seeking entrance by means of flattering inducements from the enemies of his
13 truth. {RH April 25, 1907, par. 13}

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15

16 [Angel helpers are promised to those who walk humbly, distrusting their own
17 wisdom:
18 **In the closing scenes of this earth's history, when intensity is taking possession**
19 **of every earthly element, the Lord requires of us a vigilance that knows no**
20 **relaxation. But we are not left to struggle alone. Amid the dangers increasing**
21 **on every hand, those who walk humbly before God, distrustful of their own**
22 **wisdom, will have angels as their helpers and protectors.** In times of special
23 peril they will know the power of God's keeping care. Those who do not realize
24 their danger because they do not watch, will pay, with the loss of their souls, the
25 penalty of their presumption and their wilful ignorance of Satan's devices. {RH
26 April 25, 1907, par. 18} **Let us trust fully, humbly, unselfishly, in God.** We are
27 his children, and he deals with us as such. When we draw near to him, and renew

28 our covenant with him, he mercifully preserves us from the assaults of the enemy.
29 *Never will he betray one who trusts in him as a child trusts in its parents. He sees*
30 *the humble, trusting souls drawing near to him, and in pity and love he draws*
31 *near to them, and lifts up for them a standard against the enemy.* Touch them
32 not, he says; for they are mine. I have graven them upon the palms of my hands.
33 He teaches them to exercise unquestioning faith in his power to work in their
34 behalf. With assurance they say, “This is the victory that overcometh the world,
35 even our faith.” {RH April 25, 1907, par. 19}

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38 [Failure to work on God’s house kept them in a deplorable state:

39 During the reign of Cambyses, the work on the temple progressed very slowly.

40 Finally, in the brief reign of the false Smerdis (named Artaxerxes in Ezra 4:7), the

41 Samaritans induced the unscrupulous impostor to issue a decree forbidding the

42 Jews to rebuild their temple and city. {RH December 5, 1907, par. 6} For over a

43 year the temple was neglected,—well-nigh forsaken,—while the people dwelt in

44 their homes, and labored to attain temporal prosperity; but their situation was

45 deplorable. Work as they might, they could not prosper. The very elements of

46 nature seemed to conspire against them. A drought prevailed, and the harvests were

47 meager. {RH December 5, 1907, par. 7}

48 These were the conditions existing during the early part of the reign of Darius

49 Hystaspes, king of Medo-Persia. Spiritually as well as temporally, the Israelites

50 were in a pitiable state. So long had they murmured and doubted; so long had they

51 chosen to make their personal interests first, while they viewed with apathy the

52 Lord’s temple in ruins, that many had lost sight of God’s purpose in restoring them

53 to Judea. {RH December 5, 1907, par. 8}

54

55 [Lack of temporal prosperity was due to their neglect to consider God’s interests
56 first:

57 In tender compassion, the Lord wrought in a marked manner to save his chosen

58 people from utter spiritual ruin. *The prophets Haggai and Zechariah were raised*

59 *up to meet the crisis. In stirring testimonies these appointed messengers of God*

60 *revealed to the people the cause of their troubles. Their lack of temporal prosperity*

61 *was the result of their neglect to consider God’s interests first.* By honoring God

62 and by showing him due respect and courtesy, through the building of his house,

63 they would have invited his presence and blessing. {RH December 5, 1907, par.

64 10} “In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of

65 the month, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the

66 son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high

67 priest, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, The time

68 is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." {RH December 5,
69 1907, par. 11} The expression, "This people say," is significant. In the hour of
70 their opportunity, the Israelites had not shown themselves willing. Prompt
71 obedience is expected of those whom the Lord chooses and leads. Pleas for delay
72 are a dishonor to God. And yet those who choose to follow their own way, often
73 frame ingenious excuses in self-justification. Thus the Israelites declared that they
74 had begun to rebuild, but that they were broken off in their work because of the
75 hindrances devised by their enemies. These hindrances, they reasoned, were an
76 indication that it was not the proper time to rebuild. They declared that the Lord
77 had interposed difficulties to reprove their hot haste. This is why, in a
78 communication through his prophet, he referred to them not as "my people," but as
79 "this people." {RH December 5, 1907, par. 12}

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82 [Blessings depended on obedience to God

83 **The messages of Haggai led the people to feel that the Lord was in earnest**
84 **with them. They dared not disregard repeated instruction that their**
85 **prosperity, both temporal and spiritual, was dependent on faithful obedience**
86 **to the commands of the God of heaven.** As soon as they decided to obey "the
87 voice of the Lord their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their
88 God had sent him," the messages of reproof that had been given were followed by
89 words of encouragement. {RH December 12, 1907, par. 1} "Then spake Haggai
90 the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message unto the people, saying, I am with
91 you, saith the Lord." {RH December 12, 1907, par. 2} How comforting are these
92 words! **The Lord God omnipotent, who reigneth in the heavens, declares, "I**
93 **am with you."** He assures his people that those who are obedient are in a
94 **position where he can bless them, to the glory of his name. And if God's people**
95 **today choose to rely on him, and believe in him, he will bless them.** He will be a
96 present help to all who serve him in preference to serving self. **When the Lord**
97 **sees that his people have a heart to do his will, he will cause them to know of**
98 **the doctrine. He will be with them.** {RH December 12, 1907, par. 3}

99

100 [Great difficulties were present but there to go forward by faith!

101 The *Israelites has resumed the work of the Lord in faith.* ***The difficulties under***
102 ***which they began to labor were of a most discouraging nature. Adversity had***
103 ***attended their efforts to attain temporal prosperity. Their fields were lying waste;***
104 ***their scant store of provisions was rapidly failing. Yet in the face of famine, and***
105 ***surrounded by unfriendly peoples, they moved forward in response to the call of***
106 ***God's messengers, and began anew to restore the ruined temple.*** Such a work
107 required great faith, and the Lord gave them special assurances through Haggai and

108 Zechariah that their faith would be richly rewarded, and that his word would not
109 fail. **The builders were not left to struggle on alone; “with them were the**
110 **prophets of God helping them;”** and the Lord of hosts himself had declared, “Be
111 strong, ... and work: for I am with you.” {RH December 19, 1907, par. 3}

112

113 [Our hearts will be cleansed:

114 “Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall
115 it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean.” {RH

116 December 19, 1907, par. 8}

117 **A soul corrupted by sin is represented by the figure of a dead body in a state**
118 **of putrefaction. All the washings and sprinklings enjoined in the ceremonial**
119 **law were lessons in parables, teaching the necessity of a work of regeneration**
120 **in the inward heart for the purification of the soul dead in trespasses and sins,**
121 **and also the necessity of the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit.** {RH

122 December 19, 1907, par. 9} “Then answered Haggai, and said, **So is this people,**

123 **and so is this nation before me, saith the Lord; and so is every work of their**

124 **hands; and that which they offer there is unclean.”** {RH December 19, 1907,

125 par. 10} A mere participation in religious services and ordinances does not make a

126 sinner a Christian. ***A wicked man does not become righteous merely by***

127 ***associating with those who fear God. A man is made holy, and acceptable with***

128 ***God, only when his unclean heart is made clean by the grace of Christ, through***

129 ***faith, and by obedience to words of truth and righteousness. A work of***

130 ***reformation and restoration must take place in every heart. Those*** who have had

131 great light and many privileges may perform some good works, notwithstanding

132 their impenitence and their refusal to be saved in God’s appointed way. **But these**

133 **good works do not cleanse the soul from corruption. Only those who accept**

134 **the light of God’s truth, choosing to obey him, will be cleansed from the**

135 **defilement of sin.** {RH December 19, 1907, par. 11}

136 Having admonished the builders not to fall into the same error that had brought

137 their forefathers into trial and captivity, and had resulted in the destruction of the

138 first temple, Haggai continued: {RH December 19, 1907, par. 12} “And now, I

139 pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a

140 stone in the temple of the Lord: since those days were, when one came to an heap

141 of twenty measures, there were but ten: when one came to the press-fat for to draw

142 out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty. I smote you with blasting

143 and with mildew and with hail in all the labors of your hands; yet ye turned not to

144 me, saith the Lord. Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and

145 twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the

146 Lord’s temple was laid, consider it. Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine,

147 and the fig-tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive-tree, hath not brought forth:

148 from this day will I bless you.” {RH December 19, 1907, par. 13} Wonderful
149 promise! ***Wonderful assurance of divine favor! Never, never, by their own***
150 ***efforts, could the Israelites have become pure and holy. But when, sinful and***
151 ***polluted as they were, the sport of their enemies, and suffering because of a***
152 ***terrible drought, they turned to the Lord in humility of heart, confessed their***
153 ***sins, and chose to obey the testimonies of his messengers, God recognized their***
154 ***effort to carry out his instruction, and he accepted them as his obedient children.***
155 ***He accepted them not because of their zeal and good works, but because of their***
156 ***faith in the power of the coming Saviour to cleanse from sin.*** {RH December 19,
157 1907, par. 14}

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160 [We will become Christ’s jewels:

161 ***Christians are Christ’s jewels. They are to shine brightly for him, shedding forth***
162 ***the light of his loveliness. Their luster depends on the polishing they receive.***
163 ***They may choose to be polished or to remain unpolished. But every one who is***
164 ***pronounced worthy of a place in the Lord’s temple must submit to the polishing***
165 ***process. Without the polishing that the Lord gives they can reflect no more light***
166 ***than a common pebble.*** {RH December 19, 1907, par. 17}

167 Christ says to man, You are mine. I have bought you. You are now only a
168 rough stone, but if you will place yourself in my hands, I will polish you, and
169 the luster with which you shall shine will bring honor to my name. No man
170 shall pluck you out of my hand. I will make you my peculiar treasure. On my
171 coronation day, you will be a jewel in my crown of rejoicing. {RH December
172 19, 1907, par. 18}

173 ***The divine Worker spends little time on worthless material. Only the precious***
174 ***jewels does he polish after the similitude of a palace, cutting away all the rough***
175 ***edges. This process is severe and trying; it hurts human pride. Christ cuts deep***
176 ***into the experience that man in his self-sufficiency has regarded as complete,***
177 ***and takes away self- uplifting from the character. He cuts away the surplus***
178 ***surface, and putting the stone to the polishing wheel, presses it close, that all***
179 ***roughness may be worn away.*** Then, holding the jewel up to the light, the Master
180 sees in it a reflection of himself, and he pronounces it worthy of a place in his
181 casket. {RH December 19, 1907, par. 19}

182 “In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, will I take thee, ... and will make thee as a
183 signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of hosts.” Blessed be the experience,
184 however severe, that gives new value to the stone, and causes it to shine with living
185 brightness. {RH December 19, 1907, par. 20}

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189 [Multiple opportunities had been given to return; even strong urges to flee:

190 **It was only about two years afterward that Cyrus, king of Medo-Persia, issued**

191 **the remarkable decree providing for the restoration of all the Israelites, “the**

192 **children of the captivity,” to their home in the land of Canaan. {RH January**

193 **23, 1908, par. 3} **Nearly fifty thousand, under the leadership of Zerubbabel****

194 **and Joshua, took advantage of this providential opportunity to return.** These

195 were, however, comparatively speaking, only a few, a mere “remnant,” of all the

196 Israelites scattered throughout the provinces of Medo-Persia. **Many chose to**

197 **remain in the land of their captivity, rather than to accompany their brethren,**

198 **and to assist in restoring the temple services. {RH January 23, 1908, par. 4}**

199 Nearly twenty years passed by. **Many of the remnant who returned to Judea,**

200 **had fallen into a backslidden condition, and were doing no more to restore the**

201 **house of God than were their brethren living elsewhere in the Medo-Persian**

202 **realm. But as the result of the appeals of Haggai and Zechariah, the returned**

203 **exiles repented before God, and labored diligently to complete the temple. The**

204 Lord blessed them, and they were greatly prospered. *Their efforts were brought to*

205 *the notice of Darius Hystaspes, who was the monarch ruling at that time; and he*

206 *was impressed to issue a second decree, fully as favorable as the one issued by*

207 *Cyrus over twenty years before. {RH January 23, 1908, par. 5} **Thus did God, in***

208 **mercy, provide another wonderful opportunity for the Jews in the Medo-**

209 **Persian capital, and throughout the provinces, to return to the land** whence

210 they had been carried captive. And the Lord not only wrought a change of feeling

211 in the hearts of men in authority, so that they favored the Jews in their realm; but

212 **he also inspired Zechariah, his prophetic messenger, to plead with them most**

213 **earnestly to flee from their Babylonian surroundings, and return to**

214 **Jerusalem. {RH January 23, 1908, par. 6} “Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the**

215 land of the north, saith the Lord: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of

216 the heaven, saith the Lord. Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter

217 of Babylon. For thus saith the Lord of hosts: After the glory hath he sent me unto

218 the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his

219 eye. For, behold I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to

220 their servants: and ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me.” {RH

221 December 26, 1907, par. 17} **How sad it is to contemplate that this touching**

222 **appeal met with so little response! Had this entreaty to flee from Babylon been**

223 **heeded, how different might have been the condition of the Jews in the trying**

224 **times of Mordecai and Esther!** {RH December 26, 1907, par. 18}

225

226 [Failed to flee Babylon:

227 But **God ceased not to plead with the ones who voluntarily remained in the**

228 land of their exile; and, through manifold agencies, he made it possible for
229 them also to return. But the vast number who failed to respond at the time of
230 the decree of Cyrus, remained unimpressible to later influences working in
231 their behalf. *When Zechariah, in unmistakable language, warned them to flee*
232 *from Babylon without delay, they heeded not the gracious invitation.* {RH
233 January 23, 1908, par. 11} Conditions in the Medo-Persian realm rapidly changed.
234 Darius Hystaspes, under whose reign the Jews were shown marked favor, was
235 succeeded by Xerxes the Great, the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther. It was
236 during his reign that the Jews of Medo-Persia, those who had failed of heeding
237 God's warning message to flee for their lives, were called to face a terrible
238 crisis. A few years before, God had provided a way of escape; but this had been
239 passed by, and now all the Jews were brought face to face with death. {RH January
240 23, 1908, par. 12}

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242

243 [The people in Esther's time were persecuted:

244 In their extremity, they decided to appeal to King Xerxes in behalf of their
245 people. Esther was to venture into his presence as an intercessor. "Who
246 knoweth," said Mordecai, "whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time
247 as this?" {RH January 23, 1908, par. 16}

248 The crisis that Esther faced demanded earnest, quick action; but both she and
249 Mordecai realized that unless God should work mightily in their behalf, all
250 their own feeble efforts would be unavailing. So Esther took time for
251 communion with God, the source of her strength, and the One in whose hand is
252 the heart of every earthly ruler, to turn it whithersoever he will, as he turneth the
253 rivers of water. "Go," Esther directed Mordecai, "gather together all the Jews that
254 are present in Shushan, and *fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days,*
255 *night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto*
256 *the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish.*" {RH
257 January 23, 1908, par. 17

258 Start start start

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261 [Ezra longed to be in full harmony with God:

262 Artaxerxes Longimanus is the one who issued the third and final decree for
263 the restoration of Jerusalem, 457 B. C. While on the throne, he saw the return
264 of a company of Jews under Ezra, the completion of the walls round about
265 Jerusalem by Nehemiah and his associates, the reorganization of the temple
266 services, and great religious reformations instituted by Ezra and Nehemiah.
267 During the long period when Artaxerxes held universal sway, he often showed

268 favor to God's people, and recognized in his trusted and well-beloved Jewish
269 friends, Ezra and Nehemiah, men of God's appointment, raised up for special
270 work. {RH January 30, 1908, par. 1} The *experience of Ezra while living among*
271 *the Jews who remained in Babylon, was so unusual that it attracted the*
272 *favorable notice of King Artaxerxes, with whom Ezra freely conversed regarding*
273 *the power of the God of heaven, and his purpose in restoring his people to*
274 *Jerusalem.* Born of the sons of Aaron, Ezra, in addition to his priestly training,
275 had acquired a familiarity with the writings of the magicians, the astrologers,
276 and the so-called wise men of the Medo-Persian realm. But *he was not satisfied*
277 *with his spiritual condition. He longed to be in full harmony with God: he*
278 *longed for wisdom to carry out God's will. And so he "prepared his heart to seek*
279 *the law of the Lord, and to do it."* This led him to apply himself diligently to a
280 study of the history of God's people, as given in the writings of Old Testament
281 prophets and kings. He was impressed by the Spirit of God to search the
282 historical and poetical books of the Bible, to learn why the Lord had
283 permitted Jerusalem to be destroyed, and his people to be carried captive into
284 a heathen land. {RH January 30, 1908, par. 2}

285

286 [Principles of True Sanctification came into Ezra's life:

287 Ezra inquired into the oracles of God diligently, that he might exert an
288 influence in accordance with the expressed will of God. He felt that, for
289 himself, he must do the will of the Lord; for only as he should bring his mind
290 into harmony with truth could he be taught to labor in harmony with the
291 Word of God. *As he learned to yield his mind and will to the control of God,*
292 *there were brought into his life the principles of true sanctification,* which, in
293 latter years, had a molding influence not only upon the minds of the youth
294 who sought his instruction, but upon all others who associated with him. {RH
295 January 30, 1908, par. 7}

296

297 [Ezra's faith brought the decree from Artaxerxes:

298 Ezra's faith that God would do a mighty work for his people, led him to make
299 known to King Artaxerxes his desire to return to Jerusalem that he might
300 revive an interest in the study of God's Word, and assist his brethren in
301 restoring and building up the holy city. *Ezra declared that his entire trust was*
302 *in the God of Israel, who was abundantly able to protect and care for his people.*
303 *The king was deeply impressed.* He well understood that the Israelites who wished
304 to return, were going to Jerusalem in order that they might serve the living God,
305 the Creator of the heavens and the earth; yet *so great was the king's confidence*
306 *in the integrity of Ezra, that he showed him marked favor.* Artaxerxes not
307 only granted him his request, but bestowed rich gifts for the temple service,

308 made him a special representative of the Medo-Persian kingdom, and
309 conferred on him extensive powers to carry out the purposes that were in his
310 heart. {RH February 6, 1908, par. 4} **This decree of Artaxerxes Longimanus for**
311 **the restoring and building of Jerusalem, is the third issued since the close of**
312 **the seventy years' captivity. It is remarkable for the expressions it contains**
313 **regarding the God of heaven; for the recognition it gives to the attainments of**
314 **Ezra; and for the liberality of the grants made to the remnant people of God.**
315 Artaxerxes refers to Ezra as "the priest, the scribe, even a scribe of the words of the
316 commandments of the Lord, and of his statutes to Israel;" "a scribe of the law of
317 the God of heaven." The king united with his counselors in offering freely "unto
318 the God of Israel, whose habitation is in Jerusalem;" and in addition to the
319 bestowal of rich gifts, he made provision for meeting many heavy expenses by
320 ordering that they be paid "out of the king's treasure-house." {RH February 6,
321 1908, par. 5} **The king's special anxiety was to assist in carrying out the**
322 **commands of the God of heaven.** "Thou art sent of the king, and of his seven
323 counselors," he declared to Ezra, "to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem,
324 according to the law of thy God which is in thine hand." And he further decreed:
325 **"Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for**
326 **the house of the God of heaven:** for why should there be wrath against the realm
327 of the king and his sons?" {RH February 6, 1908, par. 6}

328
329 [Time had come where it was perilous to remain among the heathens; they were to
330 bless Babylon:

331 As Ezra looked over the company assembled, he was surprised to find "none of the
332 sons of Levi." Where were the members of the tribe that had been set apart for the
333 sacred service of the temple? To the call, "Who is on the Lord's side?" the Levites
334 should have been the first to respond. During the period of the captivity, and
335 afterward, they had been granted many privileges. They had enjoyed fullest liberty
336 to minister to the spiritual needs of their Jewish brethren in Babylon. Synagogues
337 had been built, in which the priests conducted the worship of God, and instructed
338 the people. The observance of the Sabbath, and the performance of sacred rights
339 peculiar to the Jewish faith, had been freely allowed. {RH February 13, 1908, par.
340 4}

341 But **with the passing of the years after the close of the captivity, conditions**
342 **changed, and many new responsibilities rested upon the leaders in Israel. The**
343 **temple at Jerusalem had been rebuilt and dedicated, and more priests were**
344 **needed to carry on its services. There was pressing need of men of God to act**
345 **as teachers of the people. And besides, the Jews remaining in Babylon were in**
346 **danger of having their religious liberty restricted. *Through the prophet***
347 ***Zechariah, as well as by their late experience in the troublous times of Esther***

348 *and Mordecai, God had plainly warned his people to flee from Babylon. The time*
349 *had come when it was perilous to dwell longer in the midst of heathen*
350 *influences. In view of these changed conditions, the priests in Babylon should*
351 *have been quick to discern in the call*, “Who is on the Lord’s side?” a special call
352 to them to return to Jerusalem. {RH February 13, 1908, par. 5}

353

354 [By prayer and fasting, self examination, etc. they prepared. If they obeyed they
355 would be protected:

356 *Under ordinary circumstances, it would have been wholly right and proper for*
357 *Ezra to accept the offer of an armed escort. But in this instance, he had*
358 *expressed himself to King Artaxerxes so freely regarding his steadfast*
359 *confidence in the protecting care of the God of Israel, that he was ashamed to*
360 *ask the king for protection. He believed that in view of all that had been said*
361 *regarding the true God, the faith of the king in the power of God would be*
362 *strengthened if the Israelites, on their part, would exercise faith.* {RH February
363 13, 1908, par. 11}

364 In this matter, Ezra and his companies *discerned an opportunity to magnify the*
365 *name of God before the heathen; and so they determined to put their trust wholly*
366 *in him. They knew that if they kept the law of the Lord continually before them,*
367 *and practised this law, they would be protected by the breastplate of*
368 *righteousness.* They realized *that if they wilfully chose to violate even one precept*
369 *of the decalogue, they would be like a soldier without a breastplate,—unprotected*
370 *from the assaults of Satan.* “So we fasted,” said Ezra, “and besought our God for
371 this: and he was entreated of us.” {RH February 13, 1908, par. 12}

372 *By prayer and fasting, by self-examination and confession of sin, they sought to*
373 *come into harmony with God and his holy law. They pleaded with the Lord to*
374 *purge them from their sins. All harshness and impatience of spirit were put*
375 *away. Self was crucified; the Lord God was exalted, and he alone.* They knew
376 that their strength was to be gained not in wealth, not in the power and influence of
377 idolatrous men, but in the favor of God. **Through conformity to his will, they**
378 **hoped for success. They could not afford to lessen their influence over men, in**
379 **behalf of the truth, by allowing unsanctified traits of character to obtain the**
380 **mastery. Nor could they afford to create in the minds of their heathen friends**
381 **a single doubt as to the sincerity of the profession of faith made by God’s**
382 **commandment-keeping people.** They well knew that *if they succeeded in their*
383 *important mission, it would be because they had complied with the requirements*
384 *of God, thus making it possible for his blessing to accompany them.* Under these
385 peculiar circumstances, they asked for no guard of soldiers. The heathen must not
386 be given occasion to ascribe to the strength of man the glory that belonged to God
387 alone. {RH February 13, 1908, par. 13}

388

389 [Ye are holy; the vessels are holy too:

390 **But the blessing of God does not take the place of prudence and forethought.**

391 **As a special precaution in safeguarding the treasure, Ezra “separated twelve**

392 **of the chief of the priests,”—proved men, wise men of opportunity, men of**

393 **faithfulness and determined fidelity,—“and weighed unto them the silver, and**

394 **the gold, and the vessels, even the offering of the house of our God, which the**

395 **king, and his counselors, and his lords, and all Israel there present, had offered.”**

396 *These men were solemnly charged to act as vigilant stewards over the treasure*

397 *entrusted to their care. “Ye are holy unto the Lord,” Ezra declared; “the vessels*

398 *are holy also; and the silver and the gold are a free-will offering unto the Lord*

399 *God of your fathers. Watch ye, and keep them, until ye weigh them before the*

400 *chief of the priests and the Levites, and chief of the fathers of Israel, at Jerusalem,*

401 *in the chambers of the house of the Lord. {RH February 13, 1908, par. 14}*

402

403 [Journey to be one of trust with armor of righteousness and peace

404 **The Christian pilgrim is to *make his journey one of trust in the keeping power***

405 ***of God. There will always be enemies, emissaries of Satan, on the alert to hurt***

406 ***and destroy every soul who is not on guard, and who has not provided himself***

407 ***with the Christian armor of righteousness and peace.*** {RH February 13, 1908,

408 par. 19}

409 Fellow pilgrim, let strict faithfulness and determined fidelity characterize your

410 every act. Let every step of the journey to the New Jerusalem be taken with

411 eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith. ***Those who will keep the***

412 ***way of the Lord, in strict obedience, will have the guardianship of heavenly***

413 ***angels as they travel Zionward. All self-seeking, all dissension and strife, will be***

414 ***put away. Unity and harmony will prevail.*** {RH February 13, 1908, par. 20}

415

416 [Ezra and his associates had humbled themselves before returning:

417 The *indifference of many of the Israelites who had returned, is directly traceable to*

418 *their violation of the plain precepts of the law given at Sinai. Some who had*

419 *returned, remained faithful; but many of their children and children’s children,*

420 *lost sight of the law of heaven. The Mosaic code, given for the good of the people,*

421 *was sadly disregarded. Sin was in the camp. Even some of the men who had been*

422 *entrusted with sacred responsibilities, lived in open sin. Their course of action*

423 *largely neutralized the efforts of others to advance the cause of God; for so long as*

424 *flagrant violations of God’s law were allowed to go on unrebuked, the blessing of*

425 *heaven could not rest richly upon the people.* {RH February 20, 1908, par. 2} ***In***

426 ***the providence of God, those who returned with Ezra had sought the Lord***

427 ***earnestly, before undertaking their journey. They had humbled themselves***

428 *before God, confessing their sins, and imploring forgiveness. With agony of soul*
429 *they had pleaded for divine guidance and blessing. The experiences through*
430 *which they had just passed, led them to realize that in God alone was their*
431 *strength, and that sin, by separating them from the source of their power, would*
432 *leave them weak and defenseless. Many of them had become strong in faith; and*
433 *as these mingled with the discouraged and the indifferent, their influence for*
434 *good was a powerful factor in the work of reform instituted soon afterward by*
435 *Ezra.* {RH February 20, 1908, par. 3}

436

437 [Apostasy was largely traceable to mingling with the surrounding nations:
438 In his study of the causes that led to the Babylonish captivity, Ezra had learned that
439 the terrible apostasy of Israel was largely traceable to their mingling with the
440 surrounding nations. Had they obeyed God's command to keep separate from the
441 heathen, they would have been spared many sad and humiliating experiences. And
442 **so, when the servant of God was informed that notwithstanding the plain**
443 **lessons of the past, men of prominence in Israel had dared transgress the laws**
444 **given them as a safeguard against apostasy, his heart was made inexpressibly**
445 **sad.** "When I heard this thing," he says, "I rent my garment and my mantle, and
446 plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished. {RH
447 February 20, 1908, par. 7}

448

449 [Ezra diligence, etc. was actuated by a love for souls. While firm, he showed
450 sympathy and forbearance:
451 *His steadfastness of purpose, his careful methods of study, his diligence in*
452 *teaching the Holy Scriptures to the common people, his unwavering trust in God,*
453 *his abhorrence of sin, his patience and kindly consideration in dealing with the*
454 *erring,—these and other striking characteristics of his life have had an*
455 *ennobling influence on the lives of many who have been impressed by the Holy*
456 *Spirit to emulate his example. Ezra's motives were high and holy; all that he did*
457 *was actuated by an intense love for souls. And to the end of time, the compassion*
458 *and tenderness that he ever revealed toward those who had sinned either wilfully*
459 *or through ignorance, should be an object-lesson to all who seek to bring about*
460 *reforms. God desires his servants to be as firm and unyielding as a rock, where*
461 *right principles are involved; and yet, withal, they are to manifest the kindly*
462 *sympathy and the forbearance revealed in the lives of Ezra and of Christ.* Like
463 Ezra, they are to teach transgressors the words of life, which contain principles that
464 are the foundation of all right-doing. {RH February 27, 1908, par. 2}

465

466

467

468

469 The Return of the Exiles—No. 1

470 The End of Seventy Years

471 Soon after the fall of Babylon and the beginning of the universal empire of Medo-
472 Persia, in the first year of the reign of Darius the Mede, Daniel the prophet
473 “understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came
474 to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations
475 of Jerusalem.” {RH March 14, 1907, par. 1}

476 Daniel and his companions had been taken to Babylon “in the third year of the
477 reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah.” They were members of the first company of
478 captives whom Nebuchadnezzar brought from Jerusalem into the land of Shinar.
479 Daniel was well acquainted with the prophecies of Jeremiah at the time they were
480 given, and he had passed through the periods immediately succeeding the first and
481 the second sieges of Jerusalem, when many false prophets had arisen with the
482 claim that the captivity was to be of short duration. {RH March 14, 1907, par. 2}

483 “In the fourth year of Jehoiakim,” very soon after Daniel was taken to Babylon,
484 Jeremiah predicted the captivity of many of the Jews, as their punishment for not
485 heeding the word of the Lord. The Chaldeans were to be used as the instrument by
486 which God would chastise his disobedient people. Their punishment was to be in
487 proportion to their intelligence and to the warnings they had despised. “This whole
488 land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment,” the prophet declared; “and these
489 nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass,
490 when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and
491 that nation, saith the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and
492 will make it perpetual desolations.” {RH March 14, 1907, par. 3}

493 In the light of these plain words foretelling the duration of the captivity, it seems
494 strange that any one should hold that the Israelites would soon return from
495 Babylon. And yet there were in Jerusalem and in Babylon those who persisted in
496 encouraging the people to hope for a speedy deliverance. God dealt summarily
497 with some of these false prophets, and thus vindicated the truthfulness of Jeremiah,
498 his messenger. {RH March 14, 1907, par. 4}

499 To the end of time, men will arise to create confusion and rebellion among the
500 people who profess to obey the law of God. But as surely as divine judgment was
501 visited upon the false prophets in Jeremiah’s day, so surely will the evil workers of
502 today receive their full measure of retribution, for the Lord has not changed. Those
503 who prophesy lies, encourage men to look upon sin as a light thing. When the
504 terrible results of their evil deeds are made manifest, they seek, if possible, to make
505 the one who has faithfully warned them responsible for their difficulties, even as
506 the Jews charged Jeremiah with their evil fortunes. {RH March 14, 1907, par. 5}

507 Those who pursue a course of rebellion against the Lord can always find false

508 prophets who will justify them in their acts, and flatter them to their destruction.
509 Lying words often make many friends, as is illustrated in the case of these false
510 teachers among the Israelites. These so-called prophets, in their pretended zeal for
511 God, found many more believers and followers than the true prophet who delivered
512 the simple message of the Lord. {RH March 14, 1907, par. 6}

513 In view of the work of these false prophets, Jeremiah was directed by the Lord to
514 write letters to the captains, elders, priests, prophets, and all the people who had
515 been taken captive to Babylon, bidding them not to be deluded into believing their
516 deliverance nigh, but to submit quietly, pursue their vocations, and make for
517 themselves peaceful homes among their conquerors. The Lord bade them not to
518 allow so-called prophets or diviners to deceive them with false expectations.

519 Through his servant Jeremiah he assured them that after seventy years' bondage
520 they should be delivered, and should return to Jerusalem. God would listen to their
521 prayers and show them his favor, when they would turn to him with all their hearts.
522 "I will be found of you, saith the Lord: and I will turn away your captivity, and I
523 will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven
524 you, saith the Lord; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you
525 to be carried away captive." {RH March 14, 1907, par. 7}

526 With what tender compassion did God inform his captive people of his plans for
527 Israel! He knew what suffering and disaster they would have to undergo, were they
528 led to believe, according to the prediction of the false prophets, that they should be
529 speedily delivered and brought back to Jerusalem. He knew that this belief would
530 make their position a very difficult one. Any effort on their part to regain freedom
531 would awaken the vigilance and severity of the king, and their liberty would be
532 restricted in consequence. The Lord desired them to submit quietly to their fate,
533 and make their servitude as pleasant as possible. {RH March 14, 1907, par. 8}

534 (To be concluded.)

535

536

537

538 March 21, 1907

539 The Return of the Exiles—No. 1

540 (Concluded.)

541 A copy of the letters sent by Jeremiah to the Hebrew captives in Babylon, and of
542 the letters sent by the false prophets to these captives and to the authorities of
543 Jerusalem, together with a story of the controversy between the true and false, is
544 found in the twenty-seventh to the twenty-ninth chapters of Jeremiah. {RH March
545 21, 1907, par. 1}

546 It was immediately after this interchange of letters between Jeremiah and the elders
547 of the Israelites in captivity, that the prophet was instructed to write in a book all

548 that had been revealed to him regarding the restoration of Israel. This is recorded in
549 the thirtieth and the thirty-first chapters of Jeremiah. {RH March 21, 1907, par. 2}
550 These, with the prophecies of the twenty-fifth chapter, are the letters and the
551 records that Daniel the prophet, during “the first year of the reign of Darius the
552 Mede,” prayerfully studied, three-score years and more after they were written.
553 Daniel was familiar with the circumstances connected with Jeremiah’s testimonies
554 given very soon after the beginning of the Babylonian captivity. He well knew that
555 the promise of the return was sure; and yet, a short time before, “in the third year
556 of the reign of King Belshazzar,” the angel of the Lord had instructed him in
557 vision, “Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be
558 cleansed.” {RH March 21, 1907, par. 3}

559 Daniel “sought for the meaning” of the vision. He could not understand the relation
560 sustained by the seventy years’ captivity to the twenty-three hundred years that
561 were to elapse before the cleansing of God’s sanctuary. Gabriel gave a partial
562 interpretation; and when he declared that the vision “shall be for many days,”
563 Daniel fainted. “I Daniel fainted,” the prophet writes, “and was sick certain days;
564 afterward I rose up, and did the king’s business; and I was astonished at the vision;
565 but none understood it.” {RH March 21, 1907, par. 4}

566 In his perplexity, Daniel studied anew the prophecies of Jeremiah. They were very
567 plain,—so plain that he “understood” by these testimonies recorded in books “the
568 number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet,
569 that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.” {RH
570 March 21, 1907, par. 5}

571 **With faith founded on the sure word of prophecy, Daniel pleaded with the**
572 **Lord for the speedy restoration of the captive exiles to the land of their**
573 **fathers. “I set my face unto the Lord God,” he declares, “to seek by prayer and**
574 **supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: and I prayed unto the**
575 **Lord my God, and made my confession.”** “We have sinned,” he acknowledged;
576 “neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his laws, which
577 he set before us by his servants the prophets.” {RH March 21, 1907, par. 6}
578 **“O Lord, according to all thy righteousness,”** the prophet pleaded, “let thine
579 anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain:
580 because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people
581 are become a reproach to all that are about us. Now therefore, **O our God, hear**
582 **the prayer of thy servant,** and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon
583 thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord’s sake. **O my God, incline thine ear,**
584 **and hear;** open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called
585 by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our
586 righteousness, but for thy great mercies. **O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord,**
587 **harken and do; defer not,** for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy

588 people are called by thy name.” {RH March 21, 1907, par. 7}
589 The prayer of Daniel was not offered in vain. Even before he had finished pleading
590 with God, Gabriel again appeared to him, and called his attention to the vision he
591 had seen prior to the fall of Babylon at the death of Belshazzar. The angel then
592 outlined in detail the period of the seventy weeks, beginning at the time of “the
593 going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem.” {RH March
594 21, 1907, par. 8}

595 **Daniel’s prayer in behalf of his people, as recorded in the ninth chapter, was**
596 **“in the first year of Darius” the Mede. Darius was favored of heaven; for in**
597 **the first year of his reign the angel Gabriel “stood up to confirm and to**
598 **strengthen him.”** It was this king who, early in the establishment of the Medo-
599 Persian empire, “set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which
600 should be over the whole kingdom; and over these three presidents; of whom
601 Daniel was first.... This Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes,
602 because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the
603 whole realm.” {RH March 21, 1907, par. 9}

604 **Darius reigned over Medo-Persia two years after the fall of Babylon. During**
605 **this time, Daniel was cast into the lions’ den and came out unharmed. This**
606 **deliverance led Darius to write “unto all people, nations, and languages, that**
607 **dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, That in**
608 **every dominion in my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of**
609 **Daniel: for he is the living God, and steadfast forever, and his kingdom that**
610 **which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. He**
611 **delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth,**
612 **who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. So this Daniel prospered in**
613 **the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.”** {RH March 21, 1907,
614 par. 10}

615 Thus, **while those who had remained loyal to God in the midst of Babylon were**
616 **seeking the Lord and studying the prophecies foretelling their deliverance,**
617 **God was preparing the hearts of kings to show favor to his repentant people.**
618 {RH March 21, 1907, par. 11}

619

620

621

622

623 March 28, 1907

624 The Return of the Exiles—No. 2

625 The Decree of Cyrus

626 **Over a century before the birth of Cyrus the Great, the prophet Isaiah was**

627 **inspired to mention this ruler even by name, and to write a prophecy outlining**

628 **his work**, as recorded in the forty-fifth of Isaiah: {RH March 28, 1907, par. 1}
629 “Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to
630 subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him
631 the two-leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and
632 make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut
633 in sunder the bars of iron: and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden
634 riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which call thee by
635 thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant’s sake, and Israel mine elect,
636 I have even called thee by thy name: I have summoned thee, though thou hast not
637 known me. {RH March 28, 1907, par. 2}

638 “I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee,
639 though thou hast not known me: that they may know from the rising of the sun, and
640 from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the Lord, and there is none else. I
641 form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all
642 these things.” {RH March 28, 1907, par. 3}

643 “Cyrus, he is my shepherd,” the Lord declared, “and shall perform all my pleasure:
644 even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation
645 shall be laid.” “I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways:
646 he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward,
647 saith the Lord of hosts.” {RH March 28, 1907, par. 4}

648 **The year that Cyrus succeeded Darius the Mede to the throne of Medo-Persia**
649 **marked the completion of seventy years since the first company of Hebrews**
650 **had been carried captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar.** Daniel, who was
651 familiar with the prophecies of Jeremiah and Isaiah regarding the duration of the
652 captivity, and with the prophecies of Isaiah regarding the restoration by decree of
653 Cyrus, was still living, and was occupying a position of leading responsibility in
654 the Medo-Persian court. His faith in these prophecies led him to plead with God in
655 behalf of his people. And now, when the time came for the temple in Jerusalem to
656 be rebuilt, God moved upon Cyrus as his agent to discern the prophecies
657 concerning himself, and to grant the Jewish people their liberty. And furthermore,
658 Cyrus furnished them the necessary facilities for rebuilding the temple of the Lord.
659 {RH March 28, 1907, par. 5}

660 In the book of Ezra is found an account of this work of Cyrus, and a copy of his
661 decree: {RH March 28, 1907, par. 6}

662 “In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of
663 Jeremiah the prophet might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king
664 of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also
665 in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath
666 given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an
667 house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people?

668 his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build
669 the house of the Lord God of Israel (he is the God), which is in Jerusalem. And
670 whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place
671 help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, besides the
672 free-will offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.” {RH March 28, 1907,
673 par. 7}

674 *“Let the house be builded, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the*
675 *foundations thereof be strongly laid; the height thereof threescore cubits, and*
676 *the breadth thereof threescore cubits; with three rows of great stones, and a row*
677 *of new timber: and let the expenses be given out of the king’s house: and also let*
678 *the golden and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took*
679 *forth out of the temple which is in Jerusalem, and brought unto Babylon, be*
680 *restored, and brought again unto the temple which is at Jerusalem, every one to*
681 *his place, and placed there in the house of God.”* {RH March 28, 1907, par. 8}

682 The Lord God omnipotent reigneth. All kings, all nations, are his, under his rule
683 and government. His resources are infinite. The wise man declares, “The king’s
684 heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever
685 he will.” {RH March 28, 1907, par. 9}

686 Those upon whose actions hang the destinies of nations, are watched over with a
687 vigilance that knows no relaxation by him who “giveth salvation unto kings,” to
688 whom belong “the shields of the earth.” {RH March 28, 1907, par. 10}

689 **There were faithful servants of the Most High who were prepared to respond**
690 **to this decree.** Over threescore years before, the Lord had declared that “after
691 seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good
692 word toward you, in causing you to return.... Then shall ye call upon me,” the Lord
693 declared, “and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will harken unto you. And ye
694 shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I
695 will be found of you, saith the Lord: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will
696 gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you,
697 saith the Lord; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be
698 carried away captive.” **Those who were seeking the Lord were prepared to take**
699 **advantage of the wonderful opportunity afforded them by Cyrus to return to**
700 **their homes and to restore the temple of God.** {RH March 28, 1907, par. 11}

701 “Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and
702 the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house
703 of the Lord which is in Jerusalem. And all they that were about them strengthened
704 their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with
705 precious things, besides all that was willingly offered. {RH March 28, 1907, par.
706 12}

707 “Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the Lord, which

708 Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house
709 of his gods; even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of
710 Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar, the prince of
711 Judah. And this is the number of them: thirty chargers of gold, a thousand chargers
712 of silver, nine and twenty knives, thirty basons of gold, silver basons of a second
713 sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand. All the vessels of gold and
714 of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Sheshbazzar bring up
715 with them of the captivity that were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem.”

716 {RH March 28, 1907, par. 13}

717 The company that returned to Jerusalem was led by Zerubbabel (Sheshbazzar), a
718 descendant of King David, and appointed by the king as governor of the restored
719 Israelites. Associated with him were Joshua the high priest, and several of “the
720 chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites.” “The
721 whole congregation together” that returned to the land of their fathers, under
722 Zerubbabel, “was forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore, beside
723 their servants and their maids, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred
724 thirty and seven: and there were among them two hundred singing men and singing
725 women. Their horses were seven hundred thirty and six; their mules, two hundred
726 forty and five; their camels, four hundred thirty and five; their asses, six thousand
727 seven hundred and twenty. {RH March 28, 1907, par. 14}

728 “And some of the chief of the fathers, when they came to the house of the Lord
729 which is at Jerusalem, offered freely for the house of God to set it up in his place:
730 they gave after their ability unto the treasure of the work threescore and one
731 thousand drams of gold, and five thousand pounds of silver, and one hundred
732 priests’ garments. So the priests, and the Levites, and some of the people, and the
733 singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, dwelt in their cities, and all Israel in
734 their cities.” {RH March 28, 1907, par. 15}

735 Soon after their return, in “the seventh month,” “the people gathered themselves
736 together as one man to Jerusalem. Then stood up Joshua the son of Josedech, and
737 his brethren, ... and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings
738 thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God. And they set the altar
739 upon his bases; for fear was upon them because of the people of those countries:
740 and they offered burnt offerings thereon unto the Lord, even burnt offerings
741 morning and evening. {RH March 28, 1907, par. 16}

742 “They kept also the feast of tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt
743 offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required;
744 and afterward offered the continual burnt offering, both of the new moons, and of
745 all the set feasts of the Lord that were reconsecrated, and of every one that
746 willingly offered a freewill offering unto the Lord. From the first day of the
747 seventh month began they to offer burnt offerings unto the Lord. {RH March 28,

748 1907, par. 17}

749 “But the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid. {RH March 28,
750 1907, par. 18}

751 “They gave money also unto the masons, and to the carpenters; and meat, and
752 drink, and oil, unto them of Zidon, and to them of Tyre, to bring cedar trees from
753 Lebanon to the sea of Joppa, according to the grant that they had of Cyrus king of
754 Persia.” {RH March 28, 1907, par. 19}

755 The faithful remnant who had returned were greatly cheered and encouraged by the
756 re-establishment of the daily burnt offerings; and they now entered heartily into the
757 preparation necessary for the rebuilding of the temple, in order that they might
758 restore all the ancient services of the house of God. {RH March 28, 1907, par. 20}

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760

761

762 Return of the Exiles—No. 4

763 “The Adversaries of Judah and Benjamin”

764 From the time the foundation-stone of the second temple was laid, Satan brought to
765 bear upon the builders many influences that greatly hindered the rapid prosecution
766 of the work. The enemy did not have far to go in order to find men through whom
767 to carry out his evil designs. Close by the Israelites, a few miles northward, dwelt
768 the Samaritans. {RH April 25, 1907, par. 1}

769 More than a century before the beginning of the Babylonish captivity, the Assyrian
770 kings had devastated Samaria and Galilee, and had taken into captivity many
771 thousands of Israelites belonging to the ten tribes. **The conquering kings**
772 **repopulated Samaria with colonies of heathen peoples from widely separated**
773 **parts of the Assyrian realm. These heathen intermarried with the Israelites**
774 **who had been allowed to remain in the land; and thus originated a mixed race**
775 **known as the Samaritans.** {RH April 25, 1907, par. 2}

776 In later years, the Samaritans claimed to worship the true God; but in heart and
777 practise they were idolaters. It is true, they held that their idols were only to remind
778 them of the living God, the ruler of the universe; nevertheless the people were led
779 to reverence their graven images. {RH April 25, 1907, par. 3}

780 These idolatrous Samaritans were “the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin.” About
781 the time of the laying of the corner-stone, they “heard that the children of the
782 captivity builded the temple unto the Lord God of Israel.” **Coming “to**
783 **Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers,” they expressed their desire to join**
784 **them in its erection. “Let us build with you,”** they proposed, “for we seek your
785 God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esar-haddon king of
786 Assur, which brought us up hither.” **This privilege was refused them. “Ye have**
787 **nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God,”** the leaders of the

788 Israelites declared; “but we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of
789 Israel, as King Cyrus of Persia hath commanded us.” {RH April 25, 1907, par. 4}
790 In the light of the circumstances surrounding the remnant people of God in the
791 days of Zerubbabel, this decision reveals the character of the leaders of Israel at
792 that time. Only a feeble remnant had chosen to return from Babylon; and now, as
793 they undertake a work seemingly beyond their strength, their nearest neighbors
794 come with an offer to help. The Samaritans refer to their worship of the true God,
795 and express a desire to share in the privileges and blessings connected with the
796 temple service. “We seek your God, as ye do,” they declared. “Let us build with
797 you.” {RH April 25, 1907, par. 5}

798 *Had the Jewish leaders accepted this offer of assistance, they would have opened*
799 *a door for the entrance of idolatry. They discerned the insincerity of the*
800 *Samaritans. They realized that all the help that could be gained through an*
801 *alliance with men, would be as nothing in comparison with the prosperity that*
802 *would accompany strict obedience to the plain commands of Jehovah.* {RH April
803 25, 1907, par. 6}

804 Regarding their relations with surrounding peoples, the Lord had declared to
805 ancient Israel through Moses: “**Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor**
806 **show mercy unto them: neither shalt thou make marriages with them; ... for**
807 **they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other**
808 **gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee**
809 **suddenly.**” {RH April 25, 1907, par. 7}

810 “Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen
811 thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of
812 the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were
813 more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because
814 the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto
815 your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you
816 out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know
817 therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth
818 covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a
819 thousand generations.... Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the
820 statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them.” {RH
821 April 25, 1907, par. 8}

822 The result that would follow a breaking of their covenant with God, and an
823 entrance into covenant relation with surrounding nations, was plainly foretold
824 through Moses: “The Lord shall scatter you among the nations,” he declared, “and
825 ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the Lord shall lead you.
826 And there ye shall serve gods, the work of men’s hands, wood and stone, which
827 neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell. But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord

828 thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy
829 soul.” Precious assurance! Then follows the promise to the penitent, that God
830 would not forsake them, nor forget the covenant that he had made with their
831 fathers. {RH April 25, 1907, par. 9}

832 **Zerubbabel and his associates were familiar with these scriptures. Their**
833 **fathers had lost sight of the sacred relationship that should ever exist between**
834 **God and his chosen people. Forgetting their solemn covenant with the Lord of**
835 **hosts, they had entered into covenant relation with heathen nations. The**
836 **prophecies of Moses were literally fulfilled. The chosen nation was scattered**
837 **among heathen nations.** And only a remnant, “few in number,” had repented and
838 turned to God. Only a few had renewed their covenant with him, and had returned
839 to restore that which had been destroyed because of the disobedience of their
840 fathers. And now, having solemnly rededicated themselves to the Lord at the
841 ancient altar set up before the ruins of his temple, should they, at the very
842 beginning of their work, enter into a covenant with a people who worshiped idols?
843 {RH April 25, 1907, par. 10}

844 “Thou shalt make no covenant with them.” **God’s servants in responsibility**
845 **realized that the line of demarcation between his people and the people of the**
846 **world is ever to be kept unmistakably distinct.** They refused to be guided by the
847 counsel of those who for years had known the requirements of God’s law, but who
848 had refused to yield to its claims. {RH April 25, 1907, par. 11}

849 The principles set forth in Deuteronomy for the instruction of Israel, are to be
850 followed by God’s people to the end of time. ***Our prosperity is dependent on the***
851 ***continuance of our covenant relationship with God. In no instance can we***
852 ***afford to compromise principle by entering into covenant with those who fear not***
853 ***God.*** {RH April 25, 1907, par. 12}

854 ***There is constant danger that professed Christians will come to think that in order***
855 ***to have influence with worldlings, they must conform to the world to a certain***
856 ***extent. But although the propositions of Satan may appear to afford great***
857 ***advantages, as did the offer of the Samaritans to assist in the construction of the***
858 ***temple, they always end in spiritual ruin.*** God’s people must guard against every
859 subtle influence that is seeking entrance by means of flattering inducements from
860 the enemies of his truth. {RH April 25, 1907, par. 13}

861 We are pilgrims and strangers in this world, traveling a path beset with dangers
862 from those who have rejected the only One who can save them. Ingenious
863 subterfuges and scientific problems will be held out before us, to tempt us to
864 swerve from our allegiance, but we are not to heed them. Every one must seek God
865 for himself. {RH April 25, 1907, par. 14}

866 It is not always open and avowed enemies that are most to be feared. We shall have
867 enemies who come, like “the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin,” with smooth

868 words and fair speeches, and who would deceive if possible the very elect. It is
869 thus that Satan often works; and again, when it suits his purpose, he goes about as
870 a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. {RH April 25, 1907, par. 15}

871 Let every soul be on the alert. The adversary is on your track. Vigilantly watch lest
872 some carefully concealed and masterly snare take you unawares. Let the careless
873 and indifferent beware lest the day of the Lord come upon them as a thief in the
874 night. Many will wander from the path of humility, and, casting aside the yoke of
875 Christ, will walk in strange paths. Blinded and bewildered, they will leave the
876 narrow path that leads to the city of God. {RH April 25, 1907, par. 16}

877 *A man can not be a happy Christian unless he is a watchful Christian. He who*
878 *overcomes must watch; for with worldly entanglements, error, and superstition,*
879 *Satan strives to win Christ's followers from him.* It is not enough that we avoid
880 glaring errors and perilous, inconsistent moves. We are to keep close to the side of
881 Christ, walking in the path of self-denial and sacrifice. We are in an enemy's
882 country. He who was cast out of heaven has come down with great power. With
883 every conceivable artifice and device he is seeking to take souls captive. Unless we
884 are constantly on guard, we shall fall an easy prey to his deceptions. {RH April 25,
885 1907, par. 17}

886 **In the closing scenes of this earth's history, when intensity is taking possession**
887 **of every earthly element, the Lord requires of us a vigilance that knows no**
888 **relaxation. But we are not left to struggle alone. Amid the dangers increasing**
889 **on every hand, those who walk humbly before God, distrustful of their own**
890 **wisdom, will have angels as their helpers and protectors.** In times of special
891 peril they will know the power of God's keeping care. Those who do not realize
892 their danger because they do not watch, will pay, with the loss of their souls, the
893 penalty of their presumption and their wilful ignorance of Satan's devices. {RH
894 April 25, 1907, par. 18}

895 **Let us trust fully, humbly, unselfishly, in God.** We are his children, and he deals
896 with us as such. When we draw near to him, and renew our covenant with him, he
897 mercifully preserves us from the assaults of the enemy. *Never will he betray one*
898 *who trusts in him as a child trusts in its parents. He sees the humble, trusting*
899 *souls drawing near to him, and in pity and love he draws near to them, and lifts*
900 *up for them a standard against the enemy.* Touch them not, he says; for they are
901 mine. I have graven them upon the palms of my hands. He teaches them to exercise
902 unquestioning faith in his power to work in their behalf. With assurance they say,
903 "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." {RH April 25,
904 1907, par. 19}

905

906

907

908 The Return of the Exiles—No. 5

909 Loss Through Delay

910 **During the earlier years of the restoration of the Jews from Babylon, the**
911 **Samaritans were untiring in their opposition. They “weakened the hands of**
912 **the people in Judah, and troubled them in building, and hired counselors**
913 **against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia,**
914 **even until the reign of Darius.”** By their false reports they aroused suspicions in
915 minds easily led to suspect. At times, the rulers in authority seemed to be
916 influenced to work against the purposes of God. But for many years the influences
917 for evil were held in check, and the people of God had liberty to continue their
918 work. {RH December 5, 1907, par. 1}

919 **Throughout these years, Satan was striving to influence the highest powers of**
920 **the kingdom of Medo-Persia to show disfavor to God’s people.** It was Satan
921 who prompted the Samaritans to persevere in their opposition. **But angels of God**
922 **were working in behalf of the returned exiles, and all heaven was intensely**
923 **interested in the controversy.** In the tenth chapter of Daniel is given a glimpse of
924 this mighty struggle waged for many years between the forces for good and the
925 forces for evil. {RH December 5, 1907, par. 2}

926 In this vision of the prophet, the angel Gabriel declared: “The prince of the
927 kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the
928 chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.” For
929 three weeks Gabriel had been wrestling with the powers of darkness, and seeking
930 to counteract the influences at work on the mind of King Cyrus. *Before the contest*
931 *closed, Christ himself came to Gabriel’s help. All that heaven could do in behalf*
932 *of the people of God, was done. The victory was finally gained, and the forces of*
933 *the enemy were held in check all the days of Cyrus, who reigned for seven years,*
934 *and all the days of his son Cambyses, who reigned about seven years and a half.*
935 {RH December 5, 1907, par. 3}

936 **This was a period of wonderful opportunity for the Jews. While the highest**
937 **agencies of heaven were working on the hearts of kings, the people of God**
938 **might have been most active in carrying out the decree of Cyrus to restore the**
939 **temple and its services, and in re-establishing themselves in their Judean**
940 **homes. But many failed of co-operating with God. In the day of his power, they**
941 **proved unwilling.** {RH December 5, 1907, par. 4}

942 The opposition of the enemies of God’s truth was strong and determined.
943 Gradually the builders lost heart. Some could not forget the scene at the laying of
944 the corner-stone, when “many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers,
945 who were ancient men,” and who had seen the temple that Solomon built, gave
946 expression to their lack of faith in the enterprise by lamenting because of the
947 seeming inferiority of the plans for this second temple. And as the Samaritans grew

948 more and more bold, many of the Jews began to question whether, after all, the
949 time had come for rebuilding. This feeling soon became widespread. Many of the
950 workmen, disheartened and discouraged, returned to their homes, and engaged in
951 the ordinary pursuits of life,—in sowing and reaping, and in building and
952 beautifying houses for themselves. {RH December 5, 1907, par. 5}
953 During the reign of Cambyses, the work on the temple progressed very slowly.
954 Finally, in the brief reign of the false Smerdis (named Artaxerxes in Ezra 4:7), the
955 Samaritans induced the unscrupulous impostor to issue a decree forbidding the
956 Jews to rebuild their temple and city. {RH December 5, 1907, par. 6}
957 For over a year the temple was neglected,—well-nigh forsaken,—while the people
958 dwelt in their homes, and labored to attain temporal prosperity; but their situation
959 was deplorable. Work as they might, they could not prosper. The very elements of
960 nature seemed to conspire against them. A drought prevailed, and the harvests were
961 meager. {RH December 5, 1907, par. 7}
962 These were the conditions existing during the early part of the reign of Darius
963 Hystaspes, king of Medo-Persia. Spiritually as well as temporally, the Israelites
964 were in a pitiable state. So long had they murmured and doubted; so long had they
965 chosen to make their personal interests first, while they viewed with apathy the
966 Lord’s temple in ruins, that many had lost sight of God’s purpose in restoring them
967 to Judea. {RH December 5, 1907, par. 8}
968 For a time, the forces of evil seemed to triumph. But even this dark hour in the
969 history of God’s people was not without hope for those whose trust was in the Lord
970 God of Israel. {RH December 5, 1907, par. 9}
971 In tender compassion, the Lord wrought in a marked manner to save his chosen
972 people from utter spiritual ruin. ***The prophets Haggai and Zechariah were raised***
973 ***up to meet the crisis. In stirring testimonies these appointed messengers of God***
974 ***revealed to the people the cause of their troubles. Their lack of temporal prosperity***
975 ***was the result of their neglect to consider God’s interests first.*** By honoring God
976 and by showing him due respect and courtesy, through the building of his house,
977 they would have invited his presence and blessing. {RH December 5, 1907, par.
978 10}
979 “In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the
980 month, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son
981 of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest,
982 saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not
983 come, the time that the Lord’s house should be built.” {RH December 5, 1907, par.
984 11}
985 The expression, “This people say,” is significant. In the hour of their opportunity,
986 the Israelites had not shown themselves willing. Prompt obedience is expected of
987 those whom the Lord chooses and leads. Pleas for delay are a dishonor to God.

988 And yet those who choose to follow their own way, often frame ingenious excuses
989 in self-justification. Thus the Israelites declared that they had begun to rebuild, but
990 that they were broken off in their work because of the hindrances devised by their
991 enemies. These hindrances, they reasoned, were an indication that it was not the
992 proper time to rebuild. They declared that the Lord had interposed difficulties to
993 reprove their hot haste. This is why, in a communication through his prophet, he
994 referred to them not as “my people,” but as “this people.” {RH December 5, 1907,
995 par. 12}

996 ***The Israelites had no real excuse for leaving their work on the temple. The time***
997 ***when the most serious objections were raised, was the time for them to persevere***
998 ***in building.*** But they were actuated by a selfish dislike to encounter danger by
999 arousing the opposition of their enemies. They did not possess the faith that is the
1000 substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. They hesitated to
1001 move forward by faith in the opening providences of God, because they could not
1002 see the end from the beginning. When difficulties arose, they were easily turned
1003 from the work. {RH December 5, 1907, par. 13}

1004 This history will be repeated. There will be religious failures because men do not
1005 have faith. When they look at the things that are seen, impossibilities appear; but
1006 God can lead them step by step in the course he desires them to take. His work
1007 **will advance only as his servants move forward by faith. While they may be**
1008 **called upon to pass through trying times, yet they should ever remember that**
1009 **they are contending with a weakened, beaten foe.** God’s people will finally
1010 triumph over every power of darkness. {RH December 5, 1907, par. 14}

1011 “Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you,
1012 O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste? Now therefore thus
1013 saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways.” Why have you been so passive? Why
1014 have you done so little? Why do you feel concern for your own buildings, and
1015 unconcern for the Lord’s building? Why have you lost the burning zeal you once
1016 manifested in behalf of the restoration of the Lord’s house? What have you gained
1017 by serving self at the sacrifice of the best interests of God’s cause? The desire to
1018 escape poverty has led you to neglect the temple; but this very neglect has brought
1019 upon you that which you feared. Nothing has prospered. “Ye have sown much, and
1020 bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with
1021 drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth
1022 wages to put it into a bag with holes.” {RH December 5, 1907, par. 15}

1023 The Lord calls upon them to consider the situation carefully. “Consider your
1024 ways,” he repeats. “Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house;
1025 and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord.” He gives the
1026 reason for their having been brought to actual want: “Ye looked for much, and, lo,
1027 it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the

1028 Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his
1029 own house. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is
1030 stayed from her fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the
1031 mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon
1032 that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all
1033 the labor of the hands.” {RH December 5, 1907, par. 16}

1034 **How striking is the contrast between the prompt obedience of the things of**
1035 **nature, and the slothful disobedience of men, those for whom Christ has died!**

1036 The Lord calls upon the dew and the rain and the varied agencies of nature, and
1037 they obey his call, to be used either in blessings or in judgments. **Inanimate**
1038 **nature is represented as being shocked at man’s disregard for God’s word.**
1039 **God calls for famine and plague and pestilence, for calamities by sea and by**
1040 **land, to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity. In response to**
1041 **the call of God, the things of nature spring to do his bidding, either in wasting**
1042 **and destruction or in mercies and blessings.** {RH December 5, 1907, par. 17}

1043 **Because the Israelites let God’s house lie waste, the Lord sent upon all their**
1044 **substance a wasting drought. This judgment affected not only all the fruits of**
1045 **the ground, but the living creatures as well. The cattle must suffer because of**
1046 **the sins of men.** God has bestowed on his remnant people the fruits of field and
1047 garden, the corn and the wine and the oil, as a token of his favor. It was because of
1048 the sins of Israel, the Lord declared through Haggai his messenger,—because the
1049 people had used all these bountiful gifts so selfishly,—that the blessings were
1050 removed. {RH December 5, 1907, par. 18}

1051 The messages of counsel and reproof given through Haggai were taken to heart by
1052 the leaders of Israel and “all the remnant of the people.” Roused by these warnings,
1053 “Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest,
1054 with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and the
1055 words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him, and the people
1056 did fear before the Lord.” {RH December 5, 1907, par. 19}

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1061 December 12, 1907

1062 The Return of the Exiles—No. 6

1063 “I Am with You, Saith the Lord”

1064 **The messages of Haggai led the people to feel that the Lord was in earnest**

1065 **with them. They dared not disregard repeated instruction that their**

1066 **prosperity, both temporal and spiritual, was dependent on faithful obedience**

1067 **to the commands of the God of heaven.** As soon as they decided to obey “the

1068 voice of the Lord their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their
1069 God had sent him,” the messages of reproof that had been given were followed by
1070 words of encouragement. {RH December 12, 1907, par. 1}

1071 “Then spake Haggai the Lord’s messenger in the Lord’s message unto the people,
1072 saying, I am with you, saith the Lord.” {RH December 12, 1907, par. 2}

1073 How comforting are these words! **The Lord God omnipotent, who reigneth in**
1074 **the heavens, declares, “I am with you.” He assures his people that those who**
1075 **are obedient are in a position where he can bless them, to the glory of his**
1076 **name. And if God’s people today choose to rely on him, and believe in him, he**
1077 **will bless them.** He will be a present help to all who serve him in preference to
1078 serving self. **When the Lord sees that his people have a heart to do his will, he**
1079 **will cause them to know of the doctrine. He will be with them.** {RH December
1080 12, 1907, par. 3}

1081 **The presence of God includes every other blessing.** He who abides under the
1082 shadow of the Almighty can well say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my
1083 fortress: my God; in him will I trust;” for of every such an one the Lord declares:
1084 “Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him
1085 on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer
1086 him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honor him. With long life
1087 will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation.” {RH December 12, 1907, par. 4}
1088 Having assured the Israelites of his presence, “the Lord stirred up the spirit of
1089 Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son
1090 of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they
1091 came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts, their God, in the four and
1092 twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.” {RH
1093 December 12, 1907, par. 5}

1094 **In less than a month after the work on the temple was resumed, the Lord in**
1095 **mercy sent to the builders another comforting message regarding his presence**
1096 **with them. He inspired Haggai to explain to them wherein the glory of the**
1097 **house they were now building was to exceed the glory and magnificence of the**
1098 **former house. It was because of the promised presence of him who is the**
1099 **Desire of nations.** {RH December 12, 1907, par. 6}

1100 “In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the word
1101 of the Lord by the prophet Haggai, saying, Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of
1102 Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and
1103 to the residue of the people, saying, **Who is left among you that saw this house**
1104 **in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in**
1105 **comparison of it as nothing?** Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord;
1106 and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye
1107 people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of

1108 hosts: according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of
1109 Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not.” {RH December 12, 1907,
1110 par. 7}

1111 In this comforting message, the prophet refers to the promise of God given through
1112 Moses while the Israelites were encamped before Mount Sinai, when he declared:
1113 “I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall
1114 know that I am the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the land of
1115 Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the Lord their God.” Throughout the
1116 wilderness-wandering the Lord had revealed “great goodness toward the house of
1117 Israel,” which he “bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the
1118 multitude of his loving-kindnesses. For he said, *Surely they are my people,*
1119 *children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour. In all their affliction he was*
1120 *afflicted, and the Angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he*
1121 *redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.”* {RH
1122 December 12, 1907, par. 8}

1123 And now, notwithstanding the fact that repeatedly they have “rebelled, and
1124 vexed his Holy Spirit,” God again in his infinite mercy stretches out his hand
1125 to save and to restore. As a recognition of their co-operation with his
1126 purposes, he renews his covenant with them that his Spirit shall remain
1127 among them; and he bids them, “Fear not.” To his children today, as in days of
1128 old, he says” “Be strong, ... and work: for I am with you.” What an assurance!
1129 What an incentive to faithful service! {RH December 12, 1907, par. 9}

1130 Haggai now prophesies regarding the first advent of Christ, to which event the
1131 Israelites were looking forward with longing expectancy: “Thus saith the Lord of
1132 hosts; yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and
1133 the sea, and the dry land; *and I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all*
1134 *nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory,* saith the Lord of hosts.
1135 The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. *The glory of this*
1136 *latter house shall be greater than of the former,* saith the Lord of hosts: and in
1137 this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.” {RH December 12, 1907, par.
1138 10}

1139 The outward glory of the temple was not the glory of the Lord. Instruction was
1140 given as to what constituted the blessing that was to rest upon the temple. Its
1141 restoration in a plainer style than that of the first temple, was to place before the
1142 people in a proper *light their past error in depending upon the pomp and splendor*
1143 *of outward form and ceremony.* The temple was to be erected at this time, also, to
1144 remove the reproach of their disloyalty to God. **Haggai instructed the people that**
1145 **by heartfelt repentance and by a speedy completion of the temple, they were**
1146 **to seek to be cleansed from the sin of disobedience that had led away from**
1147 **God and had delayed the carrying out of the command to arise and build.**

1148 {RH December 12, 1907, par. 11}

1149 During the time of delay, the people had not been spiritually sharp-sighted. They
1150 had seen many things that they desired to do for themselves, to advance personal
1151 interests. Many had spent much time and had put forth laborious effort in
1152 beautifying their own homes while taking but little thought for the house of God.

1153 Haggai strengthened himself in the Lord of hosts, and presented his message
1154 plainly both to the religious and to the civil authorities, as well as to the people. **He**
1155 **felt that the Lord's work must no longer be hindered, but that all must obey**
1156 **implicitly, and carry out fully the purposes of God in restoring them from**
1157 **Babylon to the promised land.** {RH December 12, 1907, par. 12}

1158 In neglecting the temple, which was the mirror of God's presence, the people had
1159 greatly dishonored God. They were now instructed to hold his house in sacred
1160 honor, not because of its magnificence, as did the Jews in the days of Christ, but
1161 because God had promised to be there. **And this second temple was to be**
1162 **superior to the first because in a special sense the Messiah would honor it with**
1163 **his personal presence.** "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver
1164 from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the
1165 people be." {RH December 12, 1907, par. 13}

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1170 December 19, 1907

1171 The Return of the Exiles—No. 7

1172 Words of Encouragement

1173 **"Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet," began to**
1174 **prophesy "in the eighth month, in the second year of Darius"—only a few**
1175 **days after the Lord had assured the Israelites through Haggai that the glory**
1176 **of the house they were building would be greater than the glory of the former**
1177 **temple built by Solomon. Zechariah's first message was an assurance that God's**
1178 **word never fails, and a promise of blessing to those who harken unto the sure**
1179 **word of prophecy.** {RH December 19, 1907, par. 1}

1180 "The Lord hath been sore displeased with your fathers," the God of Israel declared
1181 unto Zechariah: "therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Turn
1182 ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of
1183 hosts. Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying,
1184 Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil
1185 doings: but they did not hear, nor harken unto me, saith the Lord. Your fathers,
1186 where are they? and the prophets, do they live forever? But my words and my
1187 statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of

1188 your fathers? and they returned and said, Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do
1189 unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with
1190 us.” {RH December 19, 1907, par. 2}

1191 The *Israelites has resumed the work of the Lord in faith. **The difficulties under***
1192 ***which they began to labor were of a most discouraging nature. Adversity had***
1193 ***attended their efforts to attain temporal prosperity. Their fields were lying waste;***
1194 ***their scant store of provisions was rapidly failing. Yet in the face of famine, and***
1195 ***surrounded by unfriendly peoples, they moved forward in response to the call of***
1196 ***God’s messengers, and began anew to restore the ruined temple.*** Such a work

1197 required great faith, and the Lord gave them special assurances through Haggai and
1198 Zechariah that their faith would be richly rewarded, and that his word would not
1199 fail. **The builders were not left to struggle on alone; “with them were the**
1200 **prophets of God helping them;”** and the Lord of hosts himself had declared, “Be
1201 strong, ... and work: for I am with you.” {RH December 19, 1907, par. 3}

1202 ***The Lord, in mercy, warned his people against the danger of falling back into***
1203 ***their old ways of negligence and selfish indifference. He revealed to them the***
1204 ***necessity of worshiping him in the beauty of holiness.*** In former years some
1205 whose hearts were polluted with sin had sought to please him with the splendor of
1206 many rites and ceremonies in the beautiful temple built by Solomon; but their
1207 worship was not pleasing to the God of whom it is written: “Thou art of purer eyes
1208 than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.” {RH December 19, 1907, par.
1209 4}

1210 In the dark days of apostasy before the captivity, God had declared to his
1211 impenitent people: “I hate, I despise your feast days.... Though ye offer me burnt-
1212 offerings and your meat-offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the
1213 peace-offerings of your fat beasts.” “For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the
1214 knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings.” {RH December 19, 1907, par. 5}

1215 **The Israelites who were so diligently engaged in rebuilding the Lord’s house,**
1216 **needed to realize constantly that “the Most High dwelleth not in temples made**
1217 **with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my**
1218 **footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my**
1219 **rest?” “Thus saith the high and holy One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name**
1220 **is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite**
1221 **and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of**
1222 **the contrite ones.”** {RH December 19, 1907, par. 6}

1223 In order that the builders of the second temple might make no mistakes, the **Lord**
1224 **plainly instructed them, in the form of a parable, regarding the nature of**
1225 **service acceptable in his sight.** About a month after Zechariah began to prophesy,
1226 and just three months after the people had resumed work on the temple, “in the
1227 four and twentieth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, came the

1228 word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Ask
1229 now the priests concerning the law, saying, If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his
1230 garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat,
1231 shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No. {RH December 19, 1907,
1232 par. 7}

1233 “Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall
1234 it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean.” {RH
1235 December 19, 1907, par. 8}

1236 **A soul corrupted by sin is represented by the figure of a dead body in a state**
1237 **of putrefaction. All the washings and sprinklings enjoined in the ceremonial**
1238 **law were lessons in parables, teaching the necessity of a work of regeneration**
1239 **in the inward heart for the purification of the soul dead in trespasses and sins,**
1240 **and also the necessity of the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit.** {RH
1241 December 19, 1907, par. 9}

1242 “Then answered Haggai, and said, **So is this people, and so is this nation before**
1243 **me, saith the Lord; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they**
1244 **offer there is unclean.**” {RH December 19, 1907, par. 10}

1245 A mere participation in religious services and ordinances does not make a sinner a
1246 Christian. ***A wicked man does not become righteous merely by associating with***
1247 ***those who fear God. A man is made holy, and acceptable with God, only when***
1248 ***his unclean heart is made clean by the grace of Christ, through faith, and by***
1249 ***obedience to words of truth and righteousness. A work of reformation and***
1250 ***restoration must take place in every heart. Those*** who have had great light and
1251 many privileges may perform some good works, notwithstanding their impenitence
1252 and their refusal to be saved in God’s appointed way. **But these good works do**
1253 **not cleanse the soul from corruption. Only those who accept the light of God’s**
1254 **truth, choosing to obey him, will be cleansed from the defilement of sin.** {RH
1255 December 19, 1907, par. 11}

1256 Having admonished the builders not to fall into the same error that had brought
1257 their forefathers into trial and captivity, and had resulted in the destruction of the
1258 first temple, Haggai continued: {RH December 19, 1907, par. 12}

1259 “And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was
1260 laid upon a stone in the temple of the Lord: since those days were, when one came
1261 to an heap of twenty measures, there were but ten: when one came to the press-fat
1262 for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty. I smote you
1263 with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labors of your hands; yet ye
1264 turned not to me, saith the Lord. Consider now from this day and upward, from the
1265 four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of
1266 the Lord’s temple was laid, consider it. Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the
1267 vine, and the fig-tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive-tree, hath not brought

1268 forth: from this day will I bless you.” {RH December 19, 1907, par. 13}
1269 Wonderful promise! *Wonderful assurance of divine favor! Never, never, by their*
1270 *own efforts, could the Israelites have become pure and holy. But when, sinful*
1271 *and polluted as they were, the sport of their enemies, and suffering because of a*
1272 *terrible drought, they turned to the Lord in humility of heart, confessed their*
1273 *sins, and chose to obey the testimonies of his messengers, God recognized their*
1274 *effort to carry out his instruction, and he accepted them as his obedient children.*
1275 *He accepted them not because of their zeal and good works, but because of their*
1276 *faith in the power of the coming Saviour to cleanse from sin.* {RH December 19,
1277 1907, par. 14}

1278 On the day when rich blessings were promised the Israelites because of their faith
1279 and their willing obedience, a message was given to Zerubbabel, their leader. “The
1280 word of the Lord came unto Haggai, ... saying, Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of
1281 Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; and I will overthrow the
1282 throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen;
1283 and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and
1284 their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. In that day,
1285 saith the Lord of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of
1286 Shealtiel, saith the Lord, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee,
1287 saith the Lord of hosts.” {RH December 19, 1907, par. 15}

1288 **This personal testimony to Zerubbabel has been left on record for our special**
1289 **encouragement in time of trial. Zerubbabel had been sorely tried through all**
1290 **the years since he had led the Israelites forth from Babylon.** God has a purpose
1291 in sending trial to his children. He never leads them otherwise than they would
1292 choose to be led if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory
1293 of the purpose which they are fulfilling. **He subjects them to discipline to**
1294 **humble them,—to lead them, through trial and affliction, to see their**
1295 **weakness and to draw near unto him. As they cry to him for help, he**
1296 **responds, saying, “Here am I.”** {RH December 19, 1907, par. 16}

1297 *Christians are Christ’s jewels. They are to shine brightly for him, shedding forth*
1298 *the light of his loveliness. Their luster depends on the polishing they receive.*
1299 *They may choose to be polished or to remain unpolished. But every one who is*
1300 *pronounced worthy of a place in the Lord’s temple must submit to the polishing*
1301 *process. Without the polishing that the Lord gives they can reflect no more light*
1302 *than a common pebble.* {RH December 19, 1907, par. 17}

1303 **Christ says to man, You are mine. I have bought you. You are now only a**
1304 **rough stone, but if you will place yourself in my hands, I will polish you, and**
1305 **the luster with which you shall shine will bring honor to my name. No man**
1306 **shall pluck you out of my hand. I will make you my peculiar treasure. On my**
1307 **coronation day, you will be a jewel in my crown of rejoicing.** {RH December

1308 19, 1907, par. 18}

1309 *The divine Worker spends little time on worthless material. Only the precious*
1310 *jewels does he polish after the similitude of a palace, cutting away all the rough*
1311 *edges. This process is severe and trying; it hurts human pride. Christ cuts deep*
1312 *into the experience that man in his self-sufficiency has regarded as complete,*
1313 *and takes away self-uplifting from the character. He cuts away the surplus*
1314 *surface, and putting the stone to the polishing wheel, presses it close, that all*
1315 *roughness may be worn away.* Then, holding the jewel up to the light, the Master

1316 sees in it a reflection of himself, and he pronounces it worthy of a place in his
1317 casket. {RH December 19, 1907, par. 19}

1318 “In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, will I take thee, ... and will make thee as a
1319 signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of hosts.” Blessed be the experience,
1320 however severe, that gives new value to the stone, and causes it to shine with living
1321 brightness. {RH December 19, 1907, par. 20}

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1326 December 26, 1907

1327 The Return of the Exiles—No. 8

1328 Days of Anxiety

1329 Stirring were the times during which Israel worked by faith to restore the temple of
1330 Jerusalem. **Through the messages delivered by Haggai and Zechariah, the**
1331 **people were roused to put forth every possible effort to build. As they labored,**
1332 **they were sadly harassed by the Samaritans and others who feared not God.**

1333 {RH December 26, 1907, par. 1}

1334 The enemies of the faithful builders devised many discouraging hindrances. The
1335 provincial officers of the Medo-Persian realm visited the returned exiles, and
1336 requested them to state the name of the one who had commanded them to rebuild.

1337 **If the Jews at that time had not been trusting the Lord for guidance, this**
1338 **inquiry made by men high in authority might have resulted disastrously to the**
1339 **builders. “But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they**
1340 **could not cause them to cease, till the matter came to Darius.”** *The officers*

1341 *were answered so wisely that they decided to write a letter to Darius* Hystaspes,
1342 king of Medo-Persia, directing his attention to the original decree made by Cyrus,
1343 commanding that the house of God at Jerusalem be builded, and that the expenses
1344 for the same be paid from the king’s treasury. {RH December 26, 1907, par. 2}

1345 Darius searched for this decree, and found it, whereupon he directed those who had
1346 made inquiry, “Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the
1347 Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his place. {RH

1348 December 26, 1907, par. 3}

1349 “Moreover,” Darius declared, “I make a decree what ye shall do to the elders of
1350 these Jews for the building of this house of God: that of the king’s goods, even of
1351 the tribute beyond the river, forthwith expenses be given unto these men, that they
1352 be not hindered. And that which they have need of, both young bullocks, and rams,
1353 and lambs, for the burnt-offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil,
1354 according to the appointment of the priests which are at Jerusalem, let it be given
1355 them day by day without fail: that they may offer sacrifices of sweet savors unto
1356 the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons.” {RH

1357 December 26, 1907, par. 4}

1358 The king further decreed that most severe penalties be meted out on any who
1359 should in any wise alter the decree; and he closed with the remarkable statement:
1360 “The God that hath caused his name to dwell there destroy all kings and people,
1361 that shall put to their hand to alter and to destroy this house of God which is at
1362 Jerusalem. I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with speed.” {RH December
1363 26, 1907, par. 5}

1364 **Thus the Lord, in his providence, prepared the way for an early completion of**
1365 **the temple. But for months before this decree was made, the Israelites had**
1366 **kept on working by faith, “the prophets of God helping them.”** {RH December
1367 26, 1907, par. 6}

1368 Just two months after Haggai’s last recorded message was delivered, **Zechariah**
1369 **had a most encouraging series of visions regarding the work of God in the**
1370 **earth. These messages, written out in the first six chapters of the book of**
1371 **Zechariah, were given in the form of parables and symbols. They came at a**
1372 **time of great uncertainty and anxiety, when it seemed as if the permission**
1373 **granted the Jews to rebuild was to be withdrawn. The future appeared very**
1374 **dark. God saw that his people were in need of being sustained and cheered by**
1375 **a revelation of his infinite compassion and love.** His testimonies at this time
1376 were of peculiar significance to the men who were advancing in the name of the
1377 God of Israel. {RH December 26, 1907, par. 7}

1378 After an introductory view of the nations having universal dominion in the earth,
1379 Zechariah hears “the angel of the Lord” inquiring, “O Lord of hosts, how long wilt
1380 thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou
1381 hast had indignation these threescore and ten years? And the Lord answered the
1382 angel that talked with me,” Zechariah declares, “with good words and comfortable
1383 words. {RH December 26, 1907, par. 8}

1384 “So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith
1385 the Lord of hosts: I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy.
1386 And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a
1387 little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction. {RH December 26, 1907,

1388 par. 9}

1389 “Therefore thus saith the Lord: **I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my**
1390 **house shall be built in it, saith the Lord of hosts, and a line shall be stretched**
1391 **forth upon Jerusalem.**” {RH December 26, 1907, par. 10}

1392 The prophet is now directed to cry out saying, “Thus saith the Lord of hosts: My
1393 cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the Lord shall yet comfort
1394 Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.” {RH December 26, 1907, par. 11}

1395 Next the prophet sees the powers that had “scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem,”
1396 symbolized by “four horns.” Immediately afterward he sees “**four carpenters,**”
1397 **representing the agencies used by the Lord in restoring his people and the**
1398 **house of his worship,** as decreed by Cyrus and his successors, as well as by God
1399 himself. {RH December 26, 1907, par. 12}

1400 “I lifted up mine eyes again,” says Zechariah, “and looked, and behold a man with
1401 a measuring line in his hand. Then said I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto
1402 me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the
1403 length thereof. And, behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another
1404 angel went out to meet him, and said unto him, Run, speak to this young man,
1405 saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of
1406 men and cattle therein: for I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire around
1407 about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.” {RH December 26, 1907, par. 13}
1408 **God had commanded that Jerusalem be rebuilt, and the measuring of the city**
1409 **was a symbol that he would give comfort and strength to his afflicted ones. His**
1410 protecting care, they were assured, would be like “a wall of fire round about.” O,
1411 how compassionate is our Heavenly Father! What comfort and hope there are in
1412 his promises! {RH December 26, 1907, par. 14}

1413 The prophet is now inspired with an earnest message to the children of Israel who
1414 are still in Babylon, the land of their captivity. At the time the decree of Cyrus was
1415 given, nearly a score of years before, only a comparatively small number, a mere
1416 “remnant,” had returned to Judea. By far the greater portion had failed of
1417 discerning the opening providence of God, as revealed in the decree of King Cyrus.
1418 They had chosen to remain behind, in a heathen land, rather than to return to
1419 Jerusalem. {RH December 26, 1907, par. 15}

1420 **And now, many years later, the Lord was preparing the way for these**
1421 **thousands who had lingered, to return. A chain of circumstances was rapidly**
1422 **leading to the confirmation of the decree of Cyrus and the issuance of a**
1423 **second decree by Darius Hystaspes.** The Lord foresaw the troublous times that
1424 would soon follow in the reign of Xerxes—the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther.
1425 And so, in a time of special favor and opportunity, the message was given through
1426 Zechariah: {RH December 26, 1907, par. 16}

1427 “Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the Lord: for I have

1428 spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the Lord. Deliver thyself,
1429 O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon. For thus saith the Lord of
1430 hosts: After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he
1431 that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye. For, behold I will shake mine hand
1432 upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants: and ye shall know that the
1433 Lord of hosts hath sent me.” {RH December 26, 1907, par. 17}

1434 **How sad it is to contemplate that this touching appeal met with so little**
1435 **response! Had this entreaty to flee from Babylon been heeded, how different**
1436 **might have been the condition of the Jews in the trying times of Mordecai and**
1437 **Esther!** {RH December 26, 1907, par. 18}

1438 The Lord’s purposes for his people have ever been the same. He desires to bestow
1439 on the children of men the riches of an eternal inheritance. His kingdom is an
1440 everlasting kingdom. When those who choose to become obedient subjects of the
1441 Most High are finally saved in the kingdom of glory, God’s purpose for mankind
1442 will have been fulfilled. {RH December 26, 1907, par. 19}

1443 To us who are praying and longing for the coming of this most glorious kingdom,
1444 as well as to the children of Israel in the days of Zechariah, are spoken the words:
1445 “Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst
1446 of thee, saith the Lord. And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day,
1447 and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know
1448 that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto thee. And the Lord shall inherit Judah his
1449 portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again. Be silent, O all flesh,
1450 before the Lord: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation.” {RH December 26,
1451 1907, par. 20}

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1458 January 2, 1908

1459 The Return of the Exiles—No. 9

1460 Joshua and the Angel

1461 Satan and his army were greatly discomfited and alarmed by the steady
1462 advancement made by the builders of the temple. The **hosts of evil determined to**
1463 **put forth untiring effort to weaken and depress God’s people by holding**
1464 **before them their imperfections of character.** Satan well knew that the Lord, in
1465 infinite pity, strengthened his chosen people “with good words and comfortable
1466 words.” In this crisis, he gave to his people a most forcible and impressive
1467 illustration of the work of Satan and the work of Christ, and the power of our

1468 Mediator to vanquish the accuser of his people. This is recorded in the third
1469 chapter of the prophecy of Zechariah. {RH January 2, 1908, par. 1}

1470 In holy vision the prophet beholds Joshua the high priest, “clothed with filthy
1471 garments,” standing before the Angel of the Lord, entreating the mercy of God in
1472 behalf of his people who are in deep affliction. Satan stands at his right hand to
1473 resist him. Because Israel had been chosen to preserve the knowledge of God in the
1474 earth, they had been, from their first existence as a nation, the special objects of
1475 Satan’s enmity, and he had determined to cause their destruction. He could do
1476 them no harm while they were obedient to God; therefore he had bent all his power
1477 and cunning to enticing them into sin. Ensnared by his temptations, they had
1478 transgressed the law of God, and thus separated from the Source of their strength,
1479 and had been left to become the prey of their heathen enemies. They were carried
1480 into captivity to Babylon, and there remained for many years. Yet **they were not**
1481 **forsaken of the Lord. His prophets were sent to them with reproofs and**
1482 **warnings. The people were awakened to see their guilt; they humbled**
1483 **themselves before God, and returned to him with true repentance. Then the**
1484 **Lord sent them messages of encouragement, declaring that he would deliver**
1485 **them from their captivity, and restore them to his favor. It was this that Satan**
1486 **was determined to prevent.** A remnant of Israel had already returned to their own
1487 land, and Satan was seeking to move upon the heathen nations, who were his
1488 agents, to destroy them utterly. {RH January 2, 1908, par. 2}

1489 As Joshua humbly pleads for the fulfilment of God’s promises, Satan stands up
1490 boldly to resist him. He points to the transgressions of Israel as a reason why that
1491 people should not be restored to the favor of God. He claims them as his prey, and
1492 demands that they be given into his hands to be destroyed. {RH January 2, 1908,
1493 par. 3}

1494 **The high priest can not defend himself or his people from Satan’s accusations.**
1495 **He does not claim that Israel are free from fault. In his filthy garments,**
1496 **symbolizing the sins of the people, which he bears as their representative, he**
1497 **stands before the Angel, confessing their guilt,** yet pointing to their repentance
1498 and humiliation, relying upon the mercy of a sin-pardoning Redeemer, and in faith
1499 claiming the promises of God. {RH January 2, 1908, par. 4}

1500 **Then the Angel, who is Christ himself, the Saviour of sinners, put to silence**
1501 **the accuser of his people, declaring, “The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the**
1502 **Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out**
1503 **of the fire?”** Israel had long remained in the furnace of affliction. Because of their
1504 sins they had been well-nigh consumed in the flame kindled by Satan and his
1505 agents for their destruction; but God had now set his hand to bring them forth. In
1506 their penitence and humiliation the compassionate Saviour will not leave his
1507 people to the cruel power of the heathen. “A bruised reed shall he not break, and

1508 the smoking flax shall he not quench.” {RH January 2, 1908, par. 5}
1509 As the intercession of Joshua is accepted, the command is given, “Take away the
1510 filthy garments from him,” and to Joshua the Angel declares, “Behold, I have
1511 caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of
1512 raiment.” “So they set a fair miter upon his head, and clothed him with garments.”
1513 **His own sins and those of his people were pardoned. Israel were clothed with**
1514 **“change of raiment,”—the righteousness of Christ imputed to them.** The miter
1515 placed upon Joshua’s head was such as was worn by the priests, and bore the
1516 inscription, **“Holiness to the Lord,” signifying that notwithstanding his former**
1517 **transgressions, he was now qualified to minister before God in his sanctuary.**
1518 {RH January 2, 1908, par. 6}
1519 After thus solemnly investing him with the dignity of the priesthood, the Angel
1520 declared, “Thus saith the Lord of hosts: If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou
1521 wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my
1522 courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by.” He would be
1523 honored as the judge or ruler over the temple and all its services; he should walk
1524 among attending angels, even in this life, and should at last join the glorified
1525 throng around the throne of God. {RH January 2, 1908, par. 7}
1526 “Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for
1527 they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the Branch.”
1528 Here is revealed the hope of Israel. **It was by faith in the coming Saviour that**
1529 **Joshua and his people received pardon. Through faith in Christ they were**
1530 **restored to God’s favor. By virtue of his merits, if they walked in his ways and**
1531 **kept his statutes, they would be “men wondered at,” honored as the chosen of**
1532 **Heaven among the nations of the earth.** Christ was their hope, their defense,
1533 their justification and redemption, as he is the hope of his church today. {RH
1534 January 2, 1908, par. 8}
1535 **As Satan accused Joshua and his people, so in all ages he accuses those who**
1536 **are seeking the mercy and favor of God. In the Revelation he is declared to be**
1537 **“the accuser of our brethren,” “which accused them before our God day and**
1538 **night.”** The controversy is repeated over every soul that is rescued from the power
1539 of evil, and whose name is registered in the Lamb’s book of life. **Never is one**
1540 **received from the family of Satan into the family of God without exciting the**
1541 **determined resistance of the wicked one. Satan’s accusations against those**
1542 **who seek the Lord are not prompted by displeasure at their sins. He exults in**
1543 **their defective characters. *Only through their transgression of God’s law can he***
1544 ***obtain power over them.* His accusations arise solely from his enmity to Christ.**
1545 Through the plan of salvation, Jesus is breaking Satan’s hold upon the human
1546 family, and rescuing souls from his power. All the hatred and malignity of the
1547 arch-rebel is stirred as he beholds the evidence of Christ’s supremacy, and with

1548 fiendish power and cunning he works to wrest from him the remnant of the
1549 children of men who have accepted his salvation. {RH January 2, 1908, par. 9}

1550 **He leads men into skepticism, causing them to lose confidence in God and to**
1551 **separate from his love; he tempts them to break his law, and then he claims**
1552 **them as his captives, and contests the right of Christ to take them from him.**
1553 **He knows that those who seek God earnestly for pardon and grace will obtain**
1554 **it; therefore he presents their sins before them to discourage them. He is**
1555 **constantly seeking occasion against those who are trying to obey God. Even**
1556 **their best and most acceptable services he seeks to make appear corrupt.** By
1557 countless devices, the most subtle and the most cruel, he endeavors to secure their
1558 condemnation. Man can not meet these charges himself. **In his sin-stained**
1559 **garments, confessing his guilt, he stands before God. But Jesus our Advocate**
1560 **presents an effectual plea in behalf of all who by repentance and faith have**
1561 **committed the keeping of their souls to him. He pleads their cause, and**
1562 **vanquishes their accuser by the mighty arguments of Calvary.** His perfect
1563 obedience to God's law, even unto the death of the cross, has given him all power
1564 in heaven and in earth, and he claims of his Father mercy and reconciliation for
1565 guilty man. To the accuser of his people he declares, "The Lord rebuke thee, O
1566 Satan." These are the purchase of my blood, brands plucked from the burning.
1567 Those who rely upon him in faith receive the comforting assurance, "Behold, I
1568 have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of
1569 raiment." *All that have put on the robe of Christ's righteousness will stand before*
1570 *him as chosen and faithful and true. Satan has no power to pluck them out of*
1571 *the hand of Christ. Not one soul that in penitence and faith has claimed his*
1572 *protection, will Christ permit to pass under the enemy's power.* His word is
1573 pledged: "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and
1574 he shall make peace with me." **The promise given to Joshua is made to all: "If**
1575 **thou wilt keep my charge, ... I will give thee places to walk among these that**
1576 **stand by."** Angels of God will walk on either side of them, even in this world, and
1577 they will stand at last among the angels that surround the throne of God. {RH
1578 January 2, 1908, par. 10}

1579 **The fact that the acknowledged people of God are represented as standing**
1580 **before the Lord in filthy garments should lead to humility and deep searching**
1581 **of heart on the part of all who profess his name. *Those who are indeed***
1582 ***purifying their souls by obeying the truth will have a most humble opinion of***
1583 ***themselves. The more closely they view the spotless character of Christ, the***
1584 ***stronger will be their desire to be conformed to his image, and the less will they***
1585 ***see of purity or holiness in themselves.*** But while we should realize our sinful
1586 condition, we are to rely upon Christ as our righteousness, our sanctification, and
1587 our redemption. We can not answer the charges of Satan against us. Christ alone

1588 can make an effectual plea in our behalf. He is able to silence the accuser with
1589 arguments founded not upon our merits, but on his own. {RH January 2, 1908, par.
1590 11}

1591 **Yet we should never be content with a sinful life. It is a thought that should**
1592 **arouse Christians to greater zeal and earnestness in overcoming evil, that every**
1593 **defect in character, every point in which they fail to meet the divine standard, is an**
1594 **open door by which Satan can enter to tempt and destroy them;** and, furthermore,
1595 that every failure and defect on their part gives occasion to the tempter and his
1596 agents to reproach Christ. We are to exert every energy of the soul in the work of
1597 overcoming, and to look to Jesus for strength to do what we can not do of
1598 ourselves. No sin can be tolerated in those who shall walk with Christ in white.
1599 *The filthy garments are to be removed, and Christ's robe of righteousness is to*
1600 *be placed upon us. By repentance and faith we are enabled to render obedience*
1601 *to all the commandments of God,* and are found without blame before him. Those
1602 who shall meet the approval of God are now afflicting their souls, confessing their
1603 sins, and earnestly pleading for pardon through Jesus their Advocate. Their
1604 attention is fixed on him, and when the command is given, "Take away the filthy
1605 garments," and clothe him with "change of raiment," and "set a fair miter upon his
1606 head," they are prepared to give him all the glory of their salvation. {RH January 2,
1607 1908, par. 12}
1608 (To be concluded.)

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1611

1612 The Return of the Exiles—No. 10

1613 "Not by Might, Nor by Power"

1614 Intimately associated with Joshua, the high priest, was Zerubbabel, governor of
1615 Judea. **It was under the leadership of these two men that the remnant of Israel**
1616 **returned at the close of the seventy years' captivity. They also led out in the**
1617 **re-establishment of the ancient worship at Jerusalem. In the second year of**
1618 **Cyrus, Zerubbabel laid the corner-stone of the temple.** It was Zerubbabel and
1619 Joshua who, in response to the messages of the Lord through Haggai and
1620 Zechariah, "rose up," with courage renewed, and once more "began to build the
1621 house of God which is at Jerusalem." *These men were true leaders, and "the spirit*
1622 *of all the remnant of the people" was largely influenced by the cheerful*
1623 *willingness with which they carried out the Lord's commands.* {RH January 16,
1624 1908, par. 1}

1625 Immediately after Zechariah's vision of Joshua and **the angel, given to the high**
1626 **priest as a personal testimony for his own encouragement and the**
1627 **encouragement of all the people of God, the prophet received a personal**

1628 **testimony regarding the work of Zerubbabel.** “The angel that talked with me,”
1629 Zechariah declares, “came again, and waked me, as a man that is waked out of his
1630 sleep, and said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a
1631 candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon,
1632 and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof: and two olive
1633 trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side
1634 thereof. {RH January 16, 1908, par. 2}

1635 “So I answered and spake to the Angel that talked with me, saying, What are these,
1636 my Lord? ...Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the
1637 Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, **Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit,**
1638 **saith the Lord of hosts....** {RH January 16, 1908, par. 3}

1639 “Then answered I, and said unto him, What are these two olive trees upon the right
1640 side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof? And I answered again, and
1641 said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the two golden
1642 pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves? ... Then said he, These are the two
1643 anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.” {RH January 16, 1908,
1644 par. 4}

1645 **From the two olive trees the golden oil was emptied through the golden pipes**
1646 **into the bowl of the candlestick, and thence into the golden lamps that gave**
1647 **light to the sanctuary. So from the holy ones that stand in God’s presence his**
1648 **Spirit is imparted to the human instrumentalities who are consecrated to his**
1649 **service. The mission of the two anointed ones is to communicate to God’s**
1650 **people that heavenly grace which alone can make his Word a lamp to the feet**
1651 **and a light to the path.** {RH January 16, 1908, par. 5}

1652 **In rebuilding the house of the Lord, Zerubbabel had been encompassed with**
1653 **manifold difficulties.** In former years, adversaries had “weakened the hands of the
1654 people of Judah, and troubled them in building,” “and made them to cease by force
1655 and power.” **But the Lord interposed in behalf of the faithful builders,** and now
1656 he speaks through his prophet, Zechariah, to Zerubbabel, saying, “Not by might,
1657 nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. **Who art thou, O great**
1658 **mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring**
1659 **forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it.”** {RH
1660 January 16, 1908, par. 6}

1661 *Throughout the history of God’s people, great mountains of difficulty,*
1662 *apparently insurmountable, have loomed up before those who were advancing in*
1663 *the opening providences of God. Such obstacles to progress are permitted by the*
1664 *Lord as a test of faith. When hedged about on every side, this is the time above*
1665 *all others to trust in God and in the power of his Holy Spirit. We are not to walk*
1666 *in our own strength, but in the strength of the Lord God of Israel. It is folly to*
1667 *trust in man or to make flesh our arm.* We must trust in Jehovah; for in him is

1668 everlasting strength. **The One who, in response to words and deeds of faith,**
1669 **made the way plain before his servant Zerubbabel, is able to clear away every**
1670 **obstacle devised by Satan to hinder the progress of his cause.** Through the
1671 exercise of persevering faith, every mountain of difficulty may be removed. {RH
1672 January 16, 1908, par. 7}

1673 *Sometimes God trains his workers by bringing to them disappointment and*
1674 *apparent failure. It is his purpose that they shall learn to master difficulty. He*
1675 *seeks to inspire them with a determination to make every apparent failure prove*
1676 *a success.* {RH January 16, 1908, par. 8}

1677 Oftentimes men pray and weep because of the perplexities and obstacles that
1678 confront them. But if they will hold the beginning of their confidence steadfast
1679 unto the end, God will make their way clear. Success will come to them as they
1680 struggle against apparently insurmountable difficulties; and with success will come
1681 the greatest joy. {RH January 16, 1908, par. 9}

1682 This was true of Zerubbabel; and for his encouragement he was given, through
1683 Zechariah, the assurance: “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of
1684 this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts
1685 hath sent me unto you. For who hath despised the day of small things? for they
1686 shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel, with those
1687 seven; they are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth.”
1688 {RH January 16, 1908, par. 10}

1689 The promise, “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his
1690 hands shall also finish it,” was literally fulfilled. “The elders of the Jews builded,
1691 and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah
1692 the son of Iddo. And they builded, and finished it, according to the commandment
1693 of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and
1694 Artaxerxes king of Persia. And this house was finished on the third day of the
1695 month Adar [the twelfth month], which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius
1696 the king.” {RH January 16, 1908, par. 11}

1697 Shortly afterward, the restored temple was dedicated. “The children of Israel, the
1698 priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the
1699 dedication of this house of God with joy, and offered at the dedication of this house
1700 of God an hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs, and for a sin-
1701 offering for all Israel, twelve he-goats, according to the number of the tribes of
1702 Israel.” {RH January 16, 1908, par. 12}

1703 **This second temple did not equal the first in magnificence, nor was it hallowed**
1704 **by those visible tokens of the divine presence which pertained to the first**
1705 **temple. There was no manifestation of supernatural power to mark its**
1706 **dedication. No cloud of glory was seen to fill the newly erected sanctuary. No**
1707 **fire from heaven descended to consume the sacrifice upon its altar. The**

1708 shekinah no longer abode between the cherubim in the most holy place; the ark, the
1709 mercy-seat, and the tables of the testimony were not to be found therein. No voice
1710 sounded from heaven to make known to the inquiring priest the will of Jehovah.

1711 {RH January 16, 1908, par. 13}

1712 **And yet this was the building concerning which the Lord had declared by the**
1713 **prophet Haggai, “The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the**
1714 **former.”** “I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I
1715 will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.” *For centuries afterward the*
1716 *Jews vainly endeavored to show wherein the promise of God, given by Haggai,*
1717 *had been fulfilled; yet eventually, when the Desire of all nations actually*
1718 *appeared and hallowed the precincts of the temple by his personal presence,*
1719 *pride and unbelief had blinded their minds to the true meaning of the prophet’s*
1720 *words.* The second temple was honored, not with the cloud of Jehovah’s glory, but
1721 with the living presence of One in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead
1722 bodily,—God himself manifest in the flesh. The “Desire of all nations” had indeed
1723 come to his temple, when the Man of Nazareth taught and healed in the sacred
1724 courts. **In the personal presence of Christ during his earthly ministry, and in**
1725 **this only, did the second temple exceed the first in glory.** {RH January 16, 1908,
1726 par. 14}

1727 Following the dedication of the house of God, the Israelites “set the priests in their
1728 divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God, which is at
1729 Jerusalem; as it is written in the book of Moses. And the children of the captivity
1730 kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month. For the priests and the
1731 Levites were purified together, all of them were pure, and killed the passover for
1732 all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for
1733 themselves. And the children of Israel, which were come again out of captivity,
1734 and all such as had separated themselves unto them from all the filthiness of the
1735 heathen of the land, to seek the Lord God of Israel, did eat, and kept the feast of
1736 unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the Lord had made them joyful, and
1737 turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the
1738 work of the house of God, the God of Israel.” {RH January 16, 1908, par. 15}

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1741

1742 The Return of the Exiles—No. 11

1743 In the Days of Queen Esther

1744 The seventy years’ captivity dated from the time when the Babylonian kings began
1745 to hold universal sway. God gave Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, much
1746 “majesty, and glory, and honor.” “All people, nations, and languages, trembled and
1747 feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and

1748 whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down.” {RH January 23,
1749 1908, par. 1}

1750 **This same universal sway was exercised by Nebuchadnezzar’s descendants**
1751 **until, nearly seventy years later, in the days of Belshazzar, because of the**
1752 **wickedness of the nation, the kingdom was “divided, and given to the Medes**
1753 **and Persians.”** Thus arose the second universal monarchy, Medo-Persia. {RH
1754 January 23, 1908, par. 2}

1755 **It was only about two years afterward that Cyrus, king of Medo-Persia, issued**
1756 **the remarkable decree providing for the restoration of all the Israelites, “the**
1757 **children of the captivity,” to their home in the land of Canaan.** {RH January
1758 23, 1908, par. 3}

1759 **Nearly fifty thousand, under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua, took**
1760 **advantage of this providential opportunity to return.** These were, however,
1761 comparatively speaking, only a few, a mere “remnant,” of all the Israelites
1762 scattered throughout the provinces of Medo-Persia. **Many chose to remain in the**
1763 **land of their captivity, rather than to accompany their brethren, and to assist**
1764 **in restoring the temple services.** {RH January 23, 1908, par. 4}

1765 Nearly twenty years passed by. **Many of the remnant who returned to Judea,**
1766 **had fallen into a backslidden condition, and were doing no more to restore the**
1767 **house of God than were their brethren living elsewhere in the Medo-Persian**
1768 **realm. But as the result of the appeals of Haggai and Zechariah, the returned**
1769 **exiles repented before God, and labored diligently to complete the temple.** The
1770 Lord blessed them, and they were greatly prospered. *Their efforts were brought to*
1771 *the notice of Darius Hystaspes, who was the monarch ruling at that time; and he*
1772 *was impressed to issue a second decree, fully as favorable as the one issued by*
1773 *Cyrus over twenty years before.* {RH January 23, 1908, par. 5}

1774 Thus did God, in mercy, provide another wonderful opportunity for the Jews in the
1775 Medo-Persian capital, and throughout the provinces, to return to the land whence
1776 they had been carried captive. And the Lord not only wrought a change of feeling
1777 in the hearts of men in authority, so that they favored the Jews in their realm; but
1778 **he also inspired Zechariah, his prophetic messenger, to plead with them most**
1779 **earnestly to flee from their Babylonian surroundings, and return to**
1780 **Jerusalem.** {RH January 23, 1908, par. 6}

1781 “Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the Lord: for I have
1782 spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the Lord. Deliver thyself,
1783 O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon!” {RH January 23, 1908, par.
1784 7}

1785 How amazing is God’s love, how infinite his compassion! He pleads with the
1786 wayward to return unto him. “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous
1787 man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon

1788 him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” {RH January 23, 1908, par.
1789 8}

1790 *The Lord desired that those who had once named his name, but who now dwelt*
1791 *in Babylon, should become a praise in the earth, to the glory of his name.* Nearly
1792 **a century had passed by since, because of their sins, he had been compelled to**
1793 **allow them to be taken captive to Babylon. And yet their affliction was to be a**
1794 **means of salvation. Through the prophet Ezekiel, the Lord revealed his desire**
1795 **to save the transgressor, even by means of calamity.** “I will bring him to
1796 Babylon,” the Lord declared, “and will plead with him there for his trespass that he
1797 hath trespassed against me.” In tender pity the Lord continued to plead with every
1798 suffering captive. Some chose to listen and to learn; these found salvation in the
1799 midst of affliction. {RH January 23, 1908, par. 9}

1800 Those who listened to the pleadings of heavenly agencies, and repented with full
1801 purpose of heart, are likened by the prophet Ezekiel to “the highest branch of the
1802 high cedar,” which was to be planted “upon an high mountain and eminent: in the
1803 mountain of the height of Israel.” A remnant would return; and God gave every
1804 captive Israelite in Babylon an opportunity to form a part of this remnant. {RH
1805 January 23, 1908, par. 10}

1806 It was those “whose spirit God had raised,” who returned under the decree of
1807 Cyrus. But **God ceased not to plead with the ones who voluntarily remained in**
1808 **the land of their exile; and, through manifold agencies, he made it possible for**
1809 **them also to return. But the vast number who failed to respond at the time of**
1810 **the decree of Cyrus, remained unimpressible to later influences working in**
1811 **their behalf. When Zechariah, in unmistakable language, warned them to flee**
1812 **from Babylon without delay, they heeded not the gracious invitation.** {RH
1813 January 23, 1908, par. 11}

1814 Conditions in the Medo-Persian realm rapidly changed. Darius Hystaspes, under
1815 whose reign the Jews were shown marked favor, was **succeeded by Xerxes the**
1816 **Great, the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther. It was during his reign that the**
1817 **Jews of Medo-Persia, those who had failed of heeding God’s warning message**
1818 **to flee for their lives, were called to face a terrible crisis.** A few years before,
1819 God had provided a way of escape; but this had been passed by, and now all the
1820 Jews were brought face to face with death. {RH January 23, 1908, par. 12}

1821 Haman the Agagite, an unscrupulous man high in authority in the Medo-Persian
1822 realm, was the one through whom Satan sought at this time to counterwork the
1823 purposes of God. Haman cherished bitter malice against Mordecai the Jew, a godly
1824 man who had done Haman no harm, but had simply refused to show him the
1825 reverence that belongs to God alone. Scorning “to lay hands on Mordecai alone,”
1826 Haman plotted “to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of
1827 Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai.” {RH January 23, 1908, par. 13}

1828 Misled by the false statements of Haman, Xerxes the Great was induced to issue an
1829 edict providing for the massacre of all the Jews “scattered abroad and dispersed
1830 among the people in all the provinces” of the Medo-Persian kingdom. A certain
1831 day was appointed on which the Jews were to be destroyed and their property
1832 confiscated. Little did the king realize the far-reaching results that would have
1833 accompanied the complete carrying out of this decree. Satan himself, the hidden
1834 instigator of the scheme, was planning to rid the earth of those who preserved the
1835 knowledge of the true God. {RH January 23, 1908, par. 14}

1836 “In every province, whithersoever the king’s commandment and his decree came,
1837 there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing;
1838 and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.” The decrees of the Medes and Persians
1839 could not be revoked; apparently there was no hope; all the Israelites were doomed
1840 to destruction. {RH January 23, 1908, par. 15}

1841 But the plots of the enemy were defeated by a Power that reigns among the
1842 children of men. In the providence of God, Esther, a Jewess who feared the Most
1843 High, had been made queen of the Medo-Persian kingdom. Mordecai was a near
1844 relative of hers. **In their extremity, they decided to appeal to King Xerxes in**
1845 **behalf of their people. Esther was to venture into his presence as an**
1846 **intercessor.** “Who knoweth,” said Mordecai, “whether thou art come to the
1847 kingdom for such a time as this?” {RH January 23, 1908, par. 16}

1848 **The crisis that Esther faced demanded earnest, quick action; but both she and**
1849 **Mordecai realized that unless God should work mightily in their behalf, all**
1850 **their own feeble efforts would be unavailing. So Esther took time for**
1851 **communion with God, the source of her strength,** and the One in whose hand is
1852 the heart of every earthly ruler, to turn it whithersoever he will, as he turneth the
1853 rivers of water. “Go,” Esther directed Mordecai, “gather together all the Jews that
1854 are present in Shushan, and *fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days,*
1855 *night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto*
1856 *the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish.*” {RH
1857 January 23, 1908, par. 17}

1858 The events that followed in rapid succession,—the appearance of Esther before the
1859 king, the marked favor shown her, the banquets of the king and the queen with
1860 Haman as the only guest, the troubled sleep of the king, the public honor shown
1861 Mordecai, and the humiliation and fall of Haman upon discovery of his wicked plot
1862 against the Jewish people,—all these are parts of a familiar story. **In a marvelous**
1863 **manner God wrought in behalf of his penitent people; and a counter-decree**
1864 **issued by the king, allowing them to fight for their lives,** was rapidly
1865 communicated to every part of the realm by mounted couriers who were “hasted
1866 and pressed on by the king’s commandment.” “And in every province, and in every
1867 city, whithersoever the king’s commandment and his decree came, the Jews had

1868 joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land
1869 became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.” {RH January 23, 1908, par.
1870 18}

1871 On the day appointed for their destruction, “the Jews gathered themselves together
1872 in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such
1873 as sought their hurt: and no man could withstand them; for the fear of them fell
1874 upon all people.” **Angels that excel in strength had been commissioned by God**
1875 **to protect his people while they gathered themselves together, and “stood for**
1876 **their lives.”** {RH January 23, 1908, par. 19}

1877 **The trying experiences that came to God’s people in the days of Esther, were**
1878 **not peculiar to that age alone.** The Revelator, looking down the ages to the close
1879 of time, declared by inspiration, “The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went
1880 to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God,
1881 and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” In the near future we shall see these words
1882 fulfilled, **as the Protestant churches unite with the world and with the papal**
1883 **power against commandment-keepers. The same spirit that actuated those**
1884 **who persecuted the true church in ages past, will lead Protestants to pursue a**
1885 **similar course toward those who will maintain their loyalty to God.** Church
1886 and state are now making preparations for the last great conflict. {RH January 23,
1887 1908, par. 20}

1888 The decree which is to go forth against the people of God will be very similar to
1889 that issued by Ahasuerus against the Jews in the time of Esther. **The Protestant**
1890 **world today see, in the little company keeping the Sabbath, a Mordecai in the**
1891 **gate. His character and conduct, expressing reverence for the law of God, are**
1892 **a constant rebuke to those who have cast off the fear of the Lord, and are**
1893 **trampling upon his Sabbath;** the unwelcome intruder must by some means be put
1894 out of the way. {RH January 23, 1908, par. 21}

1895 The same masterful spirit that plotted against the faithful in ages past is still
1896 seeking to rid the earth of those who fear God and obey his law. **Satan will excite**
1897 **indignation against the humble minority who conscientiously refuse to accept**
1898 **popular customs and traditions.** Men of position and reputation will join with the
1899 lawless and the vile to take counsel against the people of God. Wealth, genius,
1900 education, will combine to cover them with contempt. **Persecuting rulers,**
1901 **ministers, and church-members will conspire against them. With voice and**
1902 **pen, by boasts, threats, and ridicule, they will seek to overthrow their faith. By**
1903 **false representations and angry appeals, they will stir up the passions of the**
1904 **people.** Not having a “thus saith the Scriptures” to bring against the advocates of
1905 the Bible Sabbath, they will resort to oppressive enactments to supply the lack. **To**
1906 **secure popularity and patronage, legislators will yield to the demand for**
1907 **Sunday laws.** Those who fear God can not accept an institution that violates a

1908 precept of the decalogue. On this battle-field comes the last great conflict of the
1909 controversy between truth and error. And we are not left in doubt as to the issue.
1910 Now, as in the days of Esther and Mordecai, the Lord will vindicate his truth and
1911 his people. {RH January 23, 1908, par. 22}
1912 Mordecai was advanced to the position of honor formerly occupied by Haman. **He**
1913 **was “next unto King Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of**
1914 **the multitude of his brethren;” and he sought to promote the welfare of his**
1915 **people. Thus did God bring his chosen people once more into favor at the**
1916 **Medo-Persian court,** making possible the carrying out of his purpose to restore
1917 them to their own land. But it was **not until several years later, in the seventh**
1918 **year of Artaxerxes I, the successor of Xerxes the Great, that any considerable**
1919 **number returned to Jerusalem to assist their brethren in the restoration,**
1920 under the leadership and spiritual watch-care of Ezra. {RH January 23, 1908, par.
1921 23}

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1925 The Return of the Exiles—No. 12

1926 Ezra the Priest, the Scribe

1927 **About seventy years after the return of the first company of exiles under**
1928 **Zerubbabel and Joshua, Artaxerxes Longimanus came to the throne of Medo-**
1929 **Persia.** The name of this king is connected with sacred history by a series of
1930 remarkable providences. It was during his reign that Ezra and Nehemiah lived and
1931 labored. **Artaxerxes Longimanus is the one who issued the third and final**
1932 **decree for the restoration of Jerusalem, 457 B. C.** While on the throne, he saw
1933 **the return of a company of Jews under Ezra, the completion of the walls**
1934 **round about Jerusalem by Nehemiah and his associates, the reorganization of**
1935 **the temple services, and great religious reforms instituted by Ezra and**
1936 **Nehemiah.** During the long period when Artaxerxes held universal sway, he often
1937 **showed favor to God’s people, and recognized in his trusted and well-beloved**
1938 **Jewish friends, Ezra and Nehemiah, men of God’s appointment, raised up for**
1939 **special work.** {RH January 30, 1908, par. 1}

1940 *The experience of Ezra while living among the Jews who remained in Babylon,*
1941 *was so unusual that it attracted the favorable notice of King Artaxerxes, with*
1942 *whom Ezra freely conversed regarding the power of the God of heaven, and his*
1943 *purpose in restoring his people to Jerusalem.* Born of the sons of Aaron, Ezra, in
1944 addition to his priestly training, had acquired a familiarity with the writings
1945 of the magicians, the astrologers, and the so-called wise men of the Medo-
1946 Persian realm. *But he was not satisfied with his spiritual condition. He longed*
1947 *to be in full harmony with God: he longed for wisdom to carry out God’s will.*

1948 *And so he “prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it.”* This led
1949 him to apply himself diligently to a study of the history of God’s people, as given
1950 in the writings of Old Testament prophets and kings. **He was impressed by the**
1951 **Spirit of God to search the historical and poetical books of the Bible, to learn**
1952 **why the Lord had permitted Jerusalem to be destroyed, and his people to be**
1953 **carried captive into a heathen land.** {RH January 30, 1908, par. 2}
1954 **Ezra gave special study to the experiences of God’s chosen people, from the**
1955 **time the promise was made to Abraham, to the deliverance from Egyptian**
1956 **bondage and the exodus. He studied the instruction given them at the foot of**
1957 **Mount Sinai, and throughout the long period of the wilderness-wandering. As**
1958 **he learned more and still more concerning God’s dealings with his children,**
1959 **and began to realize how sacred was the law given at Sinai, Ezra’s heart was**
1960 **stirred as never before. He experienced a new and thorough conversion, and**
1961 **determined to master the records of Old Testament history, that he might use this**
1962 **knowledge, not for selfish purposes, but to bring blessing and light to his people.**
1963 Some of the prophecies were about to be fulfilled; he would search diligently for
1964 the light that had been obscured. {RH January 30, 1908, par. 3}
1965 *Ezra took pains with his studies. He endeavored to gain a heart-preparation for*
1966 *the work he believed was appointed him. He sought God earnestly, that he might*
1967 *be a workman of whom his Lord would not be ashamed.* He searched out the
1968 words that had been written concerning the duties of God’s denominated people;
1969 and *he found the solemn pledge made by the Israelites, that they would obey the*
1970 *words of the Lord; and the pledge that God, in return, had made, promising*
1971 *them his blessing as a reward of obedience.* {RH January 30, 1908, par. 4}
1972 With painstaking effort Ezra **sought to arrive at the true sense of the Old**
1973 **Testament scriptures, and to revive their original meaning.** He became
1974 thoroughly conversant with the writings of Moses. **His desire to please God led**
1975 **him to strive earnestly to learn the true significance of the ten**
1976 **commandments. He searched for all those statements in sacred history that**
1977 **relate to the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, and to the laws written in**
1978 **books, which the Israelites had been directed to preserve carefully as the**
1979 **commands of God.** {RH January 30, 1908, par. 5}
1980 These laws contained in books were not a new revelation, but a repetition of
1981 **the ceremonial laws given at Sinai.** Before Moses left the children of Israel, at the
1982 command of God, to die in the land of Moab, **the laws that had formerly been**
1983 **given were repeated and enlarged upon. Some methods for their enforcement**
1984 **were given; some precepts were explained, and the reasons why they had been**
1985 **given were made plain.** Upon several occasions the judgments of God had fallen
1986 upon transgressors; the commands that had been transgressed at these times were
1987 repeated. *Transgressors were to know that disobedience would surely bring the*

1988 *punishment of God.* {RH January 30, 1908, par. 6}
1989 **Ezra inquired into the oracles of God diligently, that he might exert an**
1990 **influence in accordance with the expressed will of God. He felt that, for**
1991 **himself, he must do the will of the Lord; for only as he should bring his mind**
1992 **into harmony with truth could he be taught to labor in harmony with the**
1993 **Word of God. *As he learned to yield his mind and will to the control of God,***
1994 ***there were brought into his life the principles of true sanctification,* which, in**
1995 **latter years, had a molding influence not only upon the minds of the youth**
1996 **who sought his instruction, but upon all others who associated with him.** {RH
1997 January 30, 1908, par. 7}
1998 God chose Ezra to be an instrument of good unto Israel, that the Lord might put
1999 honor upon the priesthood, the glory of which had been greatly eclipsed during the
2000 captivity. **Ezra developed into a man of extraordinary learning, and became “a**
2001 **ready scribe in the law of Moses.”** These qualifications made him an eminent
2002 man in the Medo-Persian kingdom. {RH January 30, 1908, par. 8}
2003 Ezra became a mouthpiece for God, educating those about him in the holy
2004 principles that govern in heaven. ***To live according to the commandments of***
2005 ***God,—this was the rule of his life, his purpose. He first learned, and then he***
2006 ***taught. He learned to conduct his own life in accordance with truth and***
2007 ***righteousness; then he set himself to teach Israel*** the statutes and judgments of
2008 God. **That which he learned of truth he communicated to others, in order that**
2009 **the same living influence might work in their lives.** During the remaining years
2010 of his lifetime, whether near the court of the king of Medo-Persia or at Jerusalem,
2011 his principal work was that of a teacher. With painstaking care he taught the law of
2012 the Lord, and urged the importance of obedience. His example in word and deed
2013 carried with it a weight of influence; for the Spirit of God was with him. Teaching
2014 thus, he educated his fellow men in the knowledge of truth that would live through
2015 eternal ages. {RH January 30, 1908, par. 9}
2016 (To be concluded.)

2017
2018
2019

2020 February 6, 1908

2021 The Return of the Exiles—No. 12

2022 Ezra the Priest, the Scribe

2023 (Concluded.)

2024 **The results of Ezra’s timely effort to revive an interest in the study of Holy**
2025 **Writ, were given permanency by his painstaking, life-long work of preserving**
2026 **and multiplying copies of the Old Testament Scriptures.** During the captivity,
2027 the knowledge of God’s will had to some extent been lost. **Ezra gathered all the**

2028 **copies of the law that he could find, and had many copies of these made and**
2029 **distributed.** The pure Word, thus diligently multiplied and placed in the hands of
2030 many people, **gave knowledge that was of inestimable value.** {RH February 6,
2031 1908, par. 1}

2032 **As Ezra strove to promulgate the truths he had learned, his capabilities for**
2033 **labor increased and developed. He became a man of piety and zeal, because**
2034 **the truth was a sanctifying power in his soul. *He was the Lord's witness to the***
2035 ***world of what Bible truth is when revealed in the daily life of the receiver. His***
2036 ***life, like the life of Christ, sowed the seeds of truth, by a revelation of the pure***
2037 ***principles that can save the soul.*** Far happier would professed Christians be today
2038 if they would in the same way reflect the light of heaven upon the pathway of
2039 others, teaching in the life the statutes and judgments that rule in the heavenly
2040 courts. {RH February 6, 1908, par. 2}

2041 Shall we let the example of Ezra teach us the use we should make of our
2042 knowledge of the Scriptures? **The life of this servant of God should be an**
2043 **inspiration to us to serve the Lord with heart and mind and strength.** We each
2044 have an appointed work to do, and this can be accomplished only by consecrated
2045 effort. **We need first to set ourselves to know the requirements of God, and**
2046 **then to practice them.** Then we can sow seeds of truth that will bear fruit unto
2047 eternal life. {RH February 6, 1908, par. 3}

2048 **Ezra's faith that God would do a mighty work for his people, led him to make**
2049 **known to King Artaxerxes his desire to return to Jerusalem that he might**
2050 **revive an interest in the study of God's Word, and assist his brethren in**
2051 **restoring and building up the holy city. Ezra *declared that his entire trust was***
2052 ***in the God of Israel, who was abundantly able to protect and care for his people.***
2053 ***The king was deeply impressed.*** He well understood that the Israelites who wished
2054 to return, were going to Jerusalem in order that they might serve the living God,
2055 the Creator of the heavens and the earth; yet **so great was the king's confidence**
2056 **in the integrity of Ezra, that he showed him marked favor. Artaxerxes not**
2057 **only granted him his request, but bestowed rich gifts for the temple service,**
2058 **made him a special representative of the Medo-Persian kingdom, and**
2059 **conferred on him extensive powers to carry out the purposes that were in his**
2060 **heart.** {RH February 6, 1908, par. 4}

2061 This **decree of Artaxerxes Longimanus for the restoring and building of**
2062 **Jerusalem, is the third issued since the close of the seventy years' captivity. It**
2063 **is remarkable for the expressions it contains regarding the God of heaven; for**
2064 **the recognition it gives to the attainments of Ezra; and for the liberality of the**
2065 **grants made to the remnant people of God.** Artaxerxes refers to Ezra as "the
2066 priest, the scribe, even a scribe of the words of the commandments of the Lord, and
2067 of his statutes to Israel;" "a scribe of the law of the God of heaven." The king

2068 united with his counselors in offering freely “unto the God of Israel, whose
2069 habitation is in Jerusalem;” and in addition to the bestowal of rich gifts, he made
2070 provision for meeting many heavy expenses by ordering that they be paid “out of
2071 the king’s treasure-house.” {RH February 6, 1908, par. 5}

2072 **The king’s special anxiety was to assist in carrying out the commands of the**
2073 **God of heaven.** “Thou art sent of the king, and of his seven counselors,” he
2074 declared to Ezra, “to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law
2075 of thy God which is in thine hand.” And he further decreed: “**Whatsoever is**
2076 **commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the**
2077 **God of heaven:** for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and
2078 his sons?” {RH February 6, 1908, par. 6}

2079 Artaxerxes arranged for the restoration of the members of the priesthood to their
2080 ancient rites and privileges. **In giving permission to the Israelites to return, he**
2081 **made particular mention of the priests and Levites, and he added: “We certify**
2082 **you, that, touching any of the priests and Levites, singers, porters, nethinims,**
2083 **or ministers of this house of God, it shall not be lawful to impose toll, tribute,**
2084 **or custom, upon them.**” He also arranged for the appointment of civil officers to
2085 govern the people justly, in accordance with the Jewish code of laws. “Thou, Ezra,
2086 after the wisdom of thy God that is in thine hand,” he decreed, “set magistrates and
2087 judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know
2088 the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know them not. And **whosoever will**
2089 **not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed**
2090 **speedily upon him,** whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation
2091 of goods, or to imprisonment.” {RH February 6, 1908, par. 7}

2092 Thus, “according to the good hand of his God upon him,” Ezra persuaded the king
2093 to make abundant provision for the return of all of the people of Israel, and of the
2094 priests and Levites, in the Medo-Persian realm, who were minded “of their own
2095 free will to go up to Jerusalem.” What rejoicing this decree must have brought to
2096 those who had been uniting with Ezra in a study of God’s purpose concerning his
2097 people! The sentiment of the hearts of many is expressed in the words of praise
2098 uttered by the servant of the Lord in devout thanksgiving to God for his wonderful
2099 providences. “Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers,” Ezra exclaimed, “which
2100 hath put such a thing as this in the king’s heart, to beautify the house of the Lord
2101 which is in Jerusalem; and hath extended mercy unto me before the king, and his
2102 counselors, and before all the king’s mighty princes.” {RH February 6, 1908, par.
2103 8}

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2107 The Return of the Exiles—No. 13

2108 The Journey to Jerusalem, under Ezra
2109 **The decree of Artaxerxes was made in the seventh year of his reign, B. C. 457.**
2110 **Once more the dispersed of Judah were given opportunity to work out the**
2111 **purpose of God in restoring Zion. In the raising up of Ezra as a leader, God’s**
2112 **providence was manifest.** Some discerned this, and gladly took advantage of the
2113 privilege of returning under circumstances so favorable. {RH February 13, 1908,
2114 par. 1}

2115 A general place of meeting was designated, and **at the appointed time those who**
2116 **were desirous of going to Jerusalem assembled for the long journey.** “I
2117 gathered them together to the river that runneth to Ahava,” says Ezra, “and there
2118 abode we in tents three days.” {RH February 13, 1908, par. 2}

2119 *The number who responded to the call to leave Babylon, was disappointingly*
2120 *small. Ezra had expected that a large number would return. But many of those who*
2121 *had acquired houses and lands, had no desire to sacrifice these possessions. They*
2122 *loved ease and comfort rather than hardship and privation, and were well satisfied*
2123 *to remain. Their example proved a hindrance to many who might otherwise have*
2124 *chosen to cast in their lot with God’s people, and advance by faith.* {RH February
2125 13, 1908, par. 3}

2126 As Ezra looked over the company assembled, he was surprised to find “none of the
2127 sons of Levi.” Where were the members of the tribe that had been set apart for the
2128 sacred service of the temple? To the call, “Who is on the Lord’s side?” the Levites
2129 should have been the first to respond. During the period of the captivity, and
2130 afterward, they had been granted many privileges. They had enjoyed fullest liberty
2131 to minister to the spiritual needs of their Jewish brethren in Babylon. Synagogues
2132 had been built, in which the priests conducted the worship of God, and instructed
2133 the people. The observance of the Sabbath, and the performance of sacred rights
2134 peculiar to the Jewish faith, had been freely allowed. {RH February 13, 1908, par.
2135 4}

2136 **But with the passing of the years after the close of the captivity, conditions**
2137 **changed, and many new responsibilities rested upon the leaders in Israel. The**
2138 **temple at Jerusalem had been rebuilt and dedicated, and more priests were**
2139 **needed to carry on its services. There was pressing need of men of God to act**
2140 **as teachers of the people. And besides, the Jews remaining in Babylon were in**
2141 **danger of having their religious liberty restricted. *Through the prophet***
2142 ***Zechariah, as well as by their late experience in the troublous times of Esther***
2143 ***and Mordecai, God had plainly warned his people to flee from Babylon. The time***
2144 ***had come when it was perilous to dwell longer in the midst of heathen***
2145 ***influences. In view of these changed conditions, the priests in Babylon should***
2146 ***have been quick to discern in the call, “Who is on the Lord’s side?” a special call***
2147 ***to them to return to Jerusalem.*** {RH February 13, 1908, par. 5}

2148 The king and his princes had done more than their part in opening the way for
2149 every one who feared God to return. They had provided abundant means for
2150 carrying forward the work of God; but where were the men? The sons of Levi
2151 failed at a time when their presence was greatly needed at Jerusalem, and when the
2152 influence of their decision to return would have led many others to follow their
2153 example. Their strange indifference is a sad revelation of the attitude of the
2154 Israelites in Babylon toward God's purposes for his people. {RH February 13,
2155 1908, par. 6}

2156 Once again Ezra addressed the Levites in Babylon with the words, "Who is on the
2157 Lord's side?" To emphasize the importance of quick action, he chose nine "chief
2158 men," and two "men of understanding," as special messengers to return and
2159 persuade their brethren to accompany them to Jerusalem. {RH February 13, 1908,
2160 par. 7}

2161 While the travelers tarried, these trusted messengers hastened back to "Iddo the
2162 chief," and "his brethren the nethinims," with the plea, "**Bring unto us ministers**
2163 **for the house of our God.**" **This entreaty was heeded; a few halting souls made**
2164 **final decision to return. Ezra acknowledged with gratitude that "by the good**
2165 **hand of our God," his messengers succeeded in returning to the camp quickly**
2166 **with about forty priests, and two hundred twenty nethinims,—men upon**
2167 **whom he could depend as wise ministers and good teachers and helpers.** {RH
2168 February 13, 1908, par. 8}

2169 Those who expected to return with Ezra were now ready to start. Before them was
2170 a journey that would occupy several months. The men were taking with them their
2171 wives and children, and their substance, besides large treasures for the temple and
2172 its service. Ezra was aware that enemies lay in wait by the way to attack, plunder,
2173 and destroy him and his company; yet he had asked from the king no armed force
2174 for their protection. {RH February 13, 1908, par. 9}

2175 *Before setting out on the journey, he sought the protection of the Most High.* "I
2176 proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava," says Ezra, "*that we might afflict*
2177 *ourselves before our God, to ask of him a right way for us, and for our little*
2178 *ones, and for all our substance.*" **Earnest prayer was offered to God for his**
2179 **blessing upon the undertaking.** Says Ezra: "I was ashamed to require of the king
2180 a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because
2181 we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for
2182 good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake
2183 him." {RH February 13, 1908, par. 10}

2184 *Under ordinary circumstances, it would have been wholly right and proper for*
2185 *Ezra to accept the offer of an armed escort. But in this instance, he had*
2186 *expressed himself to King Artaxerxes so freely regarding his steadfast*
2187 *confidence in the protecting care of the God of Israel, that he was ashamed to*

2188 *ask the king for protection. He believed that in view of all that had been said*
2189 *regarding the true God, the faith of the king in the power of God would be*
2190 *strengthened if the Israelites, on their part, would exercise faith.* {RH February
2191 13, 1908, par. 11}

2192 In this matter, Ezra and his companies *discerned an opportunity to magnify the*
2193 *name of God before the heathen; and so they determined to put their trust wholly*
2194 *in him. They knew that if they kept the law of the Lord continually before them,*
2195 *and practised this law, they would be protected by the breastplate of*
2196 *righteousness.* They realized that *if they wilfully chose to violate even one precept*
2197 *of the decalogue, they would be like a soldier without a breastplate,—unprotected*
2198 *from the assaults of Satan.* “So we fasted,” said Ezra, “and besought our God for
2199 this: and he was entreated of us.” {RH February 13, 1908, par. 12}

2200 *By prayer and fasting, by self-examination and confession of sin, they sought to*
2201 *come into harmony with God and his holy law. They pleaded with the Lord to*
2202 *purge them from their sins. All harshness and impatience of spirit were put*
2203 *away. Self was crucified; the Lord God was exalted, and he alone.* They knew
2204 that their strength was to be gained not in wealth, not in the power and influence of
2205 idolatrous men, but in the favor of God. **Through conformity to his will, they**
2206 **hoped for success. They could not afford to lessen their influence over men, in**
2207 **behalf of the truth, by allowing unsanctified traits of character to obtain the**
2208 **mastery. Nor could they afford to create in the minds of their heathen friends**
2209 **a single doubt as to the sincerity of the profession of faith made by God’s**
2210 **commandment-keeping people.** They well knew that *if they succeeded in their*
2211 *important mission, it would be because they had complied with the requirements*
2212 *of God, thus making it possible for his blessing to accompany them.* Under these
2213 peculiar circumstances, they asked for no guard of soldiers. The heathen must not
2214 be given occasion to ascribe to the strength of man the glory that belonged to God
2215 alone. {RH February 13, 1908, par. 13}

2216 **But the blessing of God does not take the place of prudence and forethought.**
2217 **As a special precaution in safeguarding the treasure, Ezra “separated twelve**
2218 **of the chief of the priests,”—proved men, wise men of opportunity, men of**
2219 **faithfulness and determined fidelity,—“and weighed unto them the silver, and**
2220 **the gold, and the vessels, even the offering of the house of our God, which the**
2221 **king, and his counselors, and his lords, and all Israel there present, had offered.”**
2222 ***These men were solemnly charged to act as vigilant stewards over the treasure***
2223 ***entrusted to their care. “Ye are holy unto the Lord,” Ezra declared; “the vessels***
2224 ***are holy also; and the silver and the gold are a free-will offering unto the Lord***
2225 ***God of your fathers.*** Watch ye, and keep them, until ye weigh them before the
2226 chief of the priests and the Levites, and chief of the fathers of Israel, at Jerusalem,
2227 in the chambers of the house of the Lord. {RH February 13, 1908, par. 14}

2228 “So took the priests and the Levites the weight of the silver, and the gold, and the
2229 vessels, to bring them to Jerusalem unto the house of our God.” {RH February 13,
2230 1908, par. 15}

2231 The care exercised by Ezra in providing for the transportation and safe-keeping of
2232 the Lord’s treasure, is an object-lesson worthy of thoughtful study. **Only those**
2233 **whose trustworthiness had been proved, were chosen; and they were**
2234 **instructed plainly as to their responsibility before God. In the appointment of**
2235 **faithful officers to act as treasurers of the Lord’s goods, Ezra recognized the**
2236 **necessity and value of order and organization in connection with the work of**
2237 **God.** {RH February 13, 1908, par. 16}

2238 During the few days that the Israelites had tarried to seek the Lord for protection
2239 and guidance, every provision was completed for the long journey. “We departed
2240 from the river of Ahava,” Ezra writes, “on the twelfth day of the first month, to go
2241 unto Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the
2242 hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way.” **They were on the way**
2243 **about four months, reaching Jerusalem “on the first day of the fifth month,”**
2244 in the seventh year of Artaxerxes. The multitude that accompanied Ezra—several
2245 thousand in all, including women and children—necessitated a slow journey, but
2246 all were preserved in safety. {RH February 13, 1908, par. 17}

2247 **The Lord wrought for the returning Jews. Even their enemies were restrained**
2248 **from doing them harm. None were able to intercept them, and their journey**
2249 **was a prosperous one.** {RH February 13, 1908, par. 18}

2250 This experience is a lesson to all those who have set their faces toward the New
2251 Jerusalem. **The Christian pilgrim is to *make his journey one of trust in the***
2252 ***keeping power of God.* There will always be enemies, emissaries of Satan, on**
2253 **the alert to hurt and destroy every soul who is not on guard, and who has not**
2254 **provided himself *with the Christian armor of righteousness and peace.*** {RH
2255 February 13, 1908, par. 19}

2256 Fellow pilgrim, **let strict faithfulness and determined fidelity characterize your**
2257 **every act. Let every step of the journey to the New Jerusalem be taken with**
2258 **eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith. *Those who will keep the***
2259 ***way of the Lord, in strict obedience, will have the guardianship of heavenly***
2260 ***angels as they travel Zionward. All self-seeking, all dissension and strife, will be***
2261 ***put away. Unity and harmony will prevail.*** {RH February 13, 1908, par. 20}

2262 May we take these experiences in the history of Israel to heart, consecrate
2263 ourselves anew to God, and live to the honor and glory of his name. {RH February
2264 13, 1908, par. 21}

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2267

2268 The Return of the Exiles—No. 14

2269 A Revival and a Reformation

2270 The coming of Ezra and his company to Jerusalem brought courage and hope into
2271 the hearts of many who **had long labored under trying difficulties**. Since the first
2272 company of exiles had returned with Zerubbabel and Joshua, over seventy years
2273 before, much had been accomplished in the work of restoration. **The temple had**
2274 **been finished; the walls of the city had been partially repaired.** Yet much
2275 remained undone. At times, the people had become disheartened, and had well-
2276 nigh ceased all effort to restore the city. **Even during the years of comparative**
2277 **peace following the troublous times of Queen Esther,** but little was done to
2278 upbuild the wall. {RH February 20, 1908, par. 1}

2279 The indifference of many of the Israelites who had returned, is directly traceable to
2280 their violation of the plain precepts of the law given at Sinai. Some who had
2281 returned, remained faithful; but many of their children and children's children,
2282 lost sight of the law of heaven. The Mosaic code, given for the good of the people,
2283 was sadly disregarded. Sin was in the camp. Even some of the men who had been
2284 entrusted with sacred responsibilities, lived in open sin. Their course of action
2285 largely neutralized the efforts of others to advance the cause of God; for so long as
2286 flagrant violations of God's law were allowed to go on unrebuked, the blessing of
2287 heaven could not rest richly upon the people. {RH February 20, 1908, par. 2}

2288 ***In the providence of God, those who returned with Ezra had sought the Lord***
2289 ***earnestly, before undertaking their journey. They had humbled themselves***
2290 ***before God, confessing their sins, and imploring forgiveness. With agony of soul***
2291 ***they had pleaded for divine guidance and blessing. The experiences through***
2292 ***which they had just passed, led them to realize that in God alone was their***
2293 ***strength, and that sin, by separating them from the source of their power, would***
2294 ***leave them weak and defenseless. Many of them had become strong in faith; and***
2295 ***as these mingled with the discouraged and the indifferent, their influence for***
2296 ***good was a powerful factor in the work of reform instituted soon afterward by***
2297 ***Ezra.*** {RH February 20, 1908, par. 3}

2298 On the fourth day after the arrival at Jerusalem, the treasures of silver and gold,
2299 with the vessels for the service of the sanctuary, were delivered by the treasurers
2300 into the hands of the temple officers. Every article was examined “by number and
2301 by weight.” **The delivery of the treasures was made in the presence of**
2302 **witnesses, with the utmost exactitude. Nothing had been lost. The care**
2303 ***exercised in this transaction is an object-lesson of the care with which the Lord***
2304 ***would be pleased to have the affairs of his cause conducted at all times and in***
2305 ***every place.*** {RH February 20, 1908, par. 4}

2306 The children of the captivity who had returned with Ezra, “offered burnt-offerings
2307 unto the God of Israel,” for a sin-offering, and as a token of gratitude and

2308 thanksgiving for the protection of holy angels during their journey. “And they
2309 delivered, the king’s commissions unto the king’s lieutenants, and to the governors
2310 on this side the river; and they furthered the people, and the house of God.” {RH
2311 February 20, 1908, par. 5}

2312 Ezra’s arrival at Jerusalem was opportune. His brethren were in great need of the
2313 influence of his presence. Soon after his return, some of the chief men of Israel
2314 approached him with a serious complaint. Some of “the people of Israel, and the
2315 priests, and the Levites,” had so far lost sight of the holy character of the
2316 commands of Jehovah given them through Moses, that they had intermarried with
2317 the surrounding heathen peoples. “They have taken of their daughters for
2318 themselves, and for their sons,” Ezra was informed, “so that the holy seed have
2319 mingled themselves with the people” of heathen lands; “yea, the hand of the
2320 princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass.” {RH February 20, 1908, par. 6}
2321 In his study of the causes that led to the Babylonish captivity, Ezra had learned that
2322 the terrible apostasy of Israel was largely traceable to their mingling with the
2323 surrounding nations. Had they obeyed God’s command to keep separate from the
2324 heathen, they would have been spared many sad and humiliating experiences. And
2325 **so, when the servant of God was informed that notwithstanding the plain**
2326 **lessons of the past, men of prominence in Israel had dared transgress the laws**
2327 **given them as a safeguard against apostasy, his heart was made inexpressibly**
2328 **sad.** “When I heard this thing,” he says, “I rent my garment and my mantle, and
2329 plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished. {RH
2330 February 20, 1908, par. 7}

2331 “Then were assembled unto me every one that trembleth at the words of the God of
2332 Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat
2333 astonished until the evening sacrifice.” **The servant of God suffered intense agony**
2334 **of soul over the commission of sins so grievous by those who had had great**
2335 **light and privileges.** {RH February 20, 1908, par. 8}

2336 At the time of the evening sacrifice, Ezra arose, and, once more rending his
2337 garment and his mantle, he fell upon his knees, and unburdened his soul in earnest
2338 supplication to God. Spreading out his hands unto the Lord, he exclaimed, “O my
2339 God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities
2340 are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.” {RH
2341 February 20, 1908, par. 9}

2342 **Ezra remembered the goodness of God in again giving his people a foothold in**
2343 **their native land, and he was overwhelmed with righteous indignation and**
2344 **with grief at the thought of their ingratitude.** {RH February 20, 1908, par. 10}
2345 “Since the days of our fathers,” the humble suppliant continued, “have we been in
2346 a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our
2347 priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to

2348 captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as it is this day. And now for a
2349 little space grace hath been showed from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant
2350 to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our
2351 eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage. For we were bondmen; yet our
2352 God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the
2353 sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God,
2354 and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in
2355 Jerusalem. {RH February 20, 1908, par. 11}

2356 “And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy
2357 commandments, which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets.... And
2358 after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing
2359 that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given
2360 us such deliverance as this; should we again break thy commandments, and join in
2361 affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldest not thou be angry with us
2362 till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping? O
2363 Lord God of Israel, thou art righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day:
2364 behold, we are before thee in our trespasses: for we can not stand before thee
2365 because of this.” {RH February 20, 1908, par. 12}

2366 *Ezra’s language in this petition is that of true humiliation of soul, the contrition*
2367 *that prevails with God in prayer.* Only the prayer of the humble enters into the
2368 ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. “*Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto*
2369 *the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off.*” [Ps. 138:6] “*To this man will I*
2370 *look,*” saith the Lord, “*even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and*
2371 *trembleth at my word.*” [Isa. 66:2] {RH February 20, 1908, par. 13}

2372 **The sorrow of Ezra and of his associates over the evils that had insidiously**
2373 **crept into the very heart of the Lord’s work, wrought repentance. Many of**
2374 **those who had sinned, were deeply affected.** “The people wept very sore.” They
2375 had begun to realize, in a limited degree, the heinousness of sin, and the horror
2376 with which God regards it. *The sacredness of the law spoken at Sinai was*
2377 *brought clearly before their minds, and many trembled at the thought of their*
2378 *transgressions.* {RH February 20, 1908, par. 14}

2379 One of the company, Shechaniah by name, acknowledged that all the words spoken
2380 by Ezra were true. “We have trespassed against our God,” he confessed,” and have
2381 taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel
2382 concerning this thing.” **Shechaniah proposed that all who had transgressed,**
2383 **should make a covenant with God to forsake their lives of sin, and to be**
2384 **adjudged “according to the law.”** “Arise,” he bade Ezra, “for this matter
2385 belongeth unto thee: we also will be with thee: be of good courage, and do it.” {RH
2386 February 20, 1908, par. 15}

2387 “Then arose Ezra, and made the chief priests, the Levites, and all Israel, to swear

2388 that they should do according to this word.” {RH February 20, 1908, par. 16}
2389 **This was the beginning of a wonderful reformation. With infinite patience and**
2390 **tact, and with careful consideration for the rights and welfare of every**
2391 **individual concerned, Ezra and his associates labored to lead the repentant of**
2392 **Israel into a right way of living.** Above all things else, Ezra was a teacher of the
2393 law; and as *he gave personal attention to the examination of every case, he*
2394 *sought to impress upon the mind of the sinner the holiness of the law of heaven,*
2395 *and the blessings to be gained through obedience to this law.* {RH February 20,

2396 1908, par. 17}

2397 (To be concluded.)

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2400

2401 The Return of the Exiles—No. 14

2402 A Revival and a Reformation

2403 (Concluded.)

2404 *Wherever Ezra labored, there sprang up a revival in the study of the Holy*
2405 *Scriptures.* Teachers were appointed to instruct the people; the law of the Lord was
2406 exalted and made honorable. The books of the prophets were searched, and the
2407 prophecies foretelling the coming of the Messiah brought hope and comfort to
2408 many a sad and weary heart. {RH February 27, 1908, par. 1}

2409 More than two thousand years have passed by since Ezra “prepared his heart to
2410 seek the law of the Lord, and to do it;” yet this long lapse of time has not lessened
2411 the influence of his pious example. Throughout the centuries, the record of his life
2412 of consecration has been an inspiration to many who have determined to “seek the
2413 law of the Lord, and to do it.” *His steadfastness of purpose, his careful methods*
2414 *of study, his diligence in teaching the Holy Scriptures to the common people, his*
2415 *unwavering trust in God, his abhorrence of sin, his patience and kindly*
2416 *consideration in dealing with the erring,—these and other striking*
2417 *characteristics of his life have had an ennobling influence on the lives of many*
2418 *who have been impressed by the Holy Spirit to emulate his example. Ezra’s*
2419 *motives were high and holy; all that he did was actuated by an intense love for*
2420 *souls.* And to the end of time, *the compassion and tenderness that he ever*
2421 *revealed toward those who had sinned either wilfully or through ignorance,*
2422 *should be an object-lesson to all who seek to bring about reforms. God desires*
2423 *his servants to be as firm and unyielding as a rock, where right principles are*
2424 *involved; and yet, withal, they are to manifest the kindly sympathy and the*
2425 *forbearance revealed in the lives of Ezra and of Christ.* Like Ezra, they are to
2426 teach transgressors the words of life, which contain principles that are the
2427 foundation of all right-doing. {RH February 27, 1908, par. 2}

2428 In this age of the world, when Satan is seeking through manifold agencies to blind
2429 the eyes of the people against the binding claims of the law of God, **there is need**
2430 **of Ezras,—of men who can cause many to “tremble at the commandment of**
2431 **our God.” There is need of true reformers who will point transgressors to the**
2432 **great Lawgiver, and teach them that the law of the Lord is perfect, converting**
2433 **the soul. There is need of men mighty in the Scriptures; men whose every**
2434 **word and act exalts the law of Jehovah; men who, in this time of apostasy and**
2435 **unbelief, labor to strengthen the faith of their fellow men in the law and the**
2436 **prophets.** Teachers are needed, O, so much! *to inspire hearts with reverence and*
2437 *love for the Holy Scriptures*, which have been given for the admonition of us upon
2438 whom the ends of the world are come. {RH February 27, 1908, par. 3}
2439 Often has the cause of God languished because of a lack of reverence for the
2440 precepts of Holy Writ. Often has the name of God been brought into dishonor by
2441 those who, while professing to be Christians, have neglected the study of the Word,
2442 and have allowed grievous sins to come into their lives. {RH February 27, 1908,
2443 par. 4}
2444 God calls for a revival and a reformation. The words of the Bible, and the Bible
2445 alone, should be echoed from the pulpits of our land. In the sermons of many
2446 pulpits of today there is not that divine manifestation which awakens the
2447 conscience and brings life to the soul. The hearers can not say, “Did not our heart
2448 burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the
2449 Scriptures?” There are many who are crying out for the living God; many who are
2450 longing for the bread of life. Let the Word of God speak to the people. Let them
2451 hear the voice of him whose word can renew the soul unto everlasting life. {RH
2452 February 27, 1908, par. 5}
2453 God’s servants are now to proclaim faithfully his Word in all lands, to every
2454 nation, kindred, tongue, and people; for the Lord has “set his hand again the second
2455 time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and
2456 from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar,
2457 and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for
2458 the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the
2459 dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.” [Isa. 11:11] {RH February
2460 27, 1908, par. 6}
2461 Today God is sending to his people the comforting message: “Fear not; for I am
2462 with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will
2463 say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far,
2464 and my daughters from the ends of the earth; even every one that is called by my
2465 name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made
2466 him.” [Isa. 43:5-7] {RH February 27, 1908, par. 7}
2467 “There shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from

2468 Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.
2469 [Isa. 11:16] {RH February 27, 1908, par. 8}
2470 “And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry
2471 with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my
2472 salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and
2473 my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water
2474 out of the wells of salvation. [Isa. 12:1-3] {RH February 27, 1908, par. 9}
2475 “And in that day shall ye say, Praise the Lord, call upon his name, declare his
2476 doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the
2477 Lord; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth. Cry out and
2478 shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of
2479 thee.” [Isa. 12:4-6] {RH February 27, 1908, par. 10}