

Introduction: Reminder of Key Themes, Review Series so far, then introduce today's topic

Today's Text: Ezra Chapter 6

1) Darius' Answer Letter (Ezra 6:1-13)

Ezra 6:6-8, 11-12 (ESV)

[6] “Now therefore, Tattenai, governor of the province Beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai, and your associates the governors who are in the province Beyond the River, **keep away**. [7] Let the work on this house of God alone. Let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews rebuild this house of God on its site. [8]

Moreover, I make a decree regarding **what you shall do for these** elders of the Jews for the rebuilding of this house of God. The cost is to be paid to these men in full and without delay from the royal revenue, the tribute of the province from Beyond the River. . . [11] Also I make a decree that if anyone alters this edict, a beam shall be pulled out of his house, and he shall be impaled on it, and his house shall be made a dunghill. [12] May the God who has caused his name to dwell there overthrow any king or people who shall put out a hand to alter this, or to destroy this house of God that is in Jerusalem. I Darius make a decree; let it be done with all diligence.”

Note: Keep Away, Provide the Supplies, Severe Warning if orders not followed

Ezra 6:13 (ESV)

Then, according to the word sent by Darius the king, Tattenai, the governor of the province Beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai, and their associates did with all diligence what Darius the king had ordered.

Application: God's Provision & Protection are revealed as they trusted & obeyed in the face of opposition.

2) Temple Completed and Dedicated (Ezra 6:14-18)

• Temple Completed

Ezra 6:14-15 (ESV)

[14] And the elders of the Jews built and prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. They finished their building by decree of the God of Israel and by decree of Cyrus and Darius and Artaxerxes king of Persia; [15] and this house was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.

Note: Once they get back to work, they are successful and prosper through a long building project (4 years). They have successfully completed through the ups and downs of external circumstances and obstacles, by the encouragement of the Lord through his prophets.

- We have to say what the Lord would have us say. Listen, and then speak courageously the Truth in Love
- We have to do what the Lord calls us to do, and remain diligent in it with perseverance.

• Temple Dedicated

Ezra 6:16-18 (ESV)

[16] And the people of Israel, the priests and the Levites, and the rest of the returned exiles, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy. [17] They offered at the dedication of this house of God 100 bulls, 200 rams, 400 lambs, and as a sin offering for all Israel 12 male goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel. [18] And they set the priests in their divisions and the Levites in their divisions, for the service of God at Jerusalem, as it is written in the Book of Moses.

Note: The people's response - Joy, Sacrifice, and Service (aligned with God's Word).

3) Passover Celebrated

Ezra 6:19-20 (ESV)

[19] On the fourteenth day of the first month, the returned exiles kept the Passover. [20] For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves together; all of them were clean. So they slaughtered the Passover lamb for all the returned exiles, for their fellow priests, and for themselves.

Note: Temple was finished the 3rd day during month of Adar (the last month of the year), now 6 weeks later in the middle of the 1st month in the New Year, they keep the Passover.

This is the first recorded Feast in the rebuilt temple. This is also the Feast being celebrated at Jesus' death.

Now let's take note of who can partake . . .

Ezra 6:21 (ESV)

It was eaten by the people of Israel who had returned from exile, and also by every one who had joined them and separated himself from the uncleanness of the peoples of the land to worship the LORD, the God of Israel.

Note: "Everyone who joined them" - all are welcome, all are consecrated and set apart for the Lord. This is to be our position in Christ now too . . .

2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 (ESV)

[14] Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? [15] What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? [16] What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. [17] Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, [18] and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty." [7:1] Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

Note: 2 keys - One, we are to be set apart. Two, its not just that I am his temple, but we are!

When we are set apart and in His presence . . .

Ezra 6:22 (ESV)

And they kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy, for the LORD had made them joyful and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria to them, so that he aided them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

Note: They all partake of Passover, and in His Presence they worship the Lord. This produced joy!

A Psalm of David, when the Ark was returned to Israel . . .

1 Chronicles 16:27 (ESV)

Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and joy are in his place.

Note: Before Him is translated His Presence, and more accurately His Face. His Place means a spot or a room. We are invited to be in His Presence, in the Place where he meets with us. He shows up in Splendor and Majesty, and we find strength and joy there!

Conclusion: God's Presence now resides with and in us. We are His Temple. May we be dedicated to Him - cleansed, set apart, and full of joy in His Presence!

If time allows, close by reading from Psalm 118 . . .

Psalm 118 - written post Exile (sometime during the rebuilding of Altar, Foundation, and Temple)

Closing Psalm of the Hallel - often read during Feasts, especially Passover

Psalms 118:1 (ESV)

Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!

Psalm 118:5-6 (ESV)

[5] Out of my distress I called on the LORD; the LORD answered me and set me free. [6] The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?

Psalm 118:8-9 (ESV)

[8] It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man. [9] It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes.

Psalms 118:21-22 (ESV)

[21] I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. [22] The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

Psalms 118:23-24 (ESV)

[23] This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. [24] This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Psalms 118:29 (ESV)

Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!