

Lesson 11 The Temple is Completed Part 1

Key Themes in the Book of Ezra

- Yahweh's covenantal faithfulness and man's covenantal unfaithfulness
- Yahweh sovereignly and providentially works out his redemptive purpose in history despite human evil.
- Yahweh's intention for Israel for purity in worship and obedience to the law
- Yahweh's grace and mercy exceed his anger
- Sinful man's need for a changed heart

Background:

King Darius ruled Persia from 521-486 BC

Ecbatana was located in the Zagros Mountains and was the summer residence of the Persian kings. It was about 265 miles away from Babylon. During the reign of Darius Babylon was the capital of Trans-Euphrates, the province where Judah was located. The royal archives were in Babylon and they contained the records of the various Persian kings decrees and actions.

The phrase "praying for the well being of the king" may have been included in Darius' decree as a safeguard against rebellion. It would prevent the worshipers from praying for the overthrow or cursing of the king.

punishment for disobedience: It was common for royal treaties or decrees to end with a clause or a curse threatening punishment for disobedience to the stipulations of the document. Impalement was the practice of placing an executed victim's corpse on a stake and displaying it public view. The body was left there to be consumed by birds and insects. Thus the victim was denied a proper burial which was considered highly dishonorable.

Key Words and Phrases:

finished: Strong's H3635 "kelal" to complete or finish

Time line for the Rebuilding of God's Temple

536 BCTemple Begun

534 BC.....Work on Temple stopped

520 BC.....Work on Temple resumed

515 BC.....Temple completed

Read Ezra 6:1-16

In the last lesson we learned that "the eye of their God" was on the elders of the Jews" (Ezra 5:5). They were allowed to continue the construction of the temple while Tattenai, the governor of the province, awaited a response from the current Persian King Darius. Tattenai had inquired of Darius about the existence of a decree from King Cyrus, a previous king, authorizing the construction of the temple. No doubt Tattenai was hoping that King Darius would stop the construction.

1. "The eye of their God" continued to be on the obedient Jews. Record all the ways you see God's providential hand and provision at work in both the obtaining of the original decree issued by Cyrus (Ezra 6:1-2) and in the response of Darius to Tattenai. (Ezra 6:3-12). Have you seen God's providential hand at work in your own life or ministry? If you answered yes, please give a few recent examples.

2. According to Ezra 6:13-14 who or what contributed to the successful building of the temple? List all those who are mentioned in these verses and describe how each of them uniquely contributed to the completion of the Temple. Who do you think was ultimately in control? Why? Do you believe that God still exercises His Sovereignty and control in our world today? If yes, what does that look like in practical terms? What have you learned about God as a result of seeing Him at work in your life and the world? Do you honestly trust Him more because of what you have seen?

3. We see in Ezra 6:14-15 that despite significant opposition and setbacks the temple rebuild was finally complete and God's purposes had been accomplished. According to Ezra 6:16 what did the Jews do? What emotion summarized and described their dedication experience?

4. Read through Haggai 2:1-9. What questions did Haggai ask in 2:3? What promises had God given to the Jews in Haggai 2:4-9 that encouraged them to persevere in the construction and feel joy now at its completion? Both Haggai and Zechariah prophesied that the temple, which is an institution and not simply a building, is predestined in spite of its present lack of splendor for what? How and why is that possible? See Revelation 21:22-23.