

Ezra 5:1–5

¹ Then the prophet Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophets, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them.

² So Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak rose up and began to build the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them, helping them.

³ At the same time Tattenai the governor of the region beyond the River and Shethar-Boznai and their companions came to them and spoke thus to them: “Who has commanded you to build this temple and finish this wall?”

⁴ Then, accordingly, we told them the names of the men who were constructing this building.

⁵ But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, so that they could not make them cease till a report could go to Darius. Then a written answer was returned concerning this matter.

The Temple Completed *Ezra 5-6*

INTRO:

When we come to Ezra 5, Israel has been back to the land a long time. Cyrus the king of Persia sent them back to the land. About two years later they began building the altar and then they laid the foundation for the temple. Trouble came in the form of those who had come to the land during the Assyrian captivity of the northern kingdom of Israel. These folks forced the work on the Temple to cease for fifteen years. Now God’s timing was perfect, God sent two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah to stir the people to return to building the Temple.

Although it was God’s time, the building was not without opposition. They take up the work and the local officials take notice and harass the workers and leaders of the work. In our fly over of these two chapters we will discover three events.

- I. The building of the Temple Begins Again (5:1-5)*
- II. The LORD’s Providence (5:6-6:12)*
- III. The Temple Completed (6:13-18)*

I. The Building of the Temple Begins Again (5:1-5)

Ezra 5:1–2 *“Then the prophet Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophets, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them. So Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak rose up and began to build the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them, helping them.”*

A. For fifteen long years the work on Yahweh’s Temple ceased. Then in the fullness of time, God sent two prophets to get Israel motivated to build His House. Haggai and Zechariah began to preach and God spoke to His people through their words to get them to arise and build the house of God. The time had come to build.

B. While the people of God were busy about the work of God, God’s enemies were not silent.

vs.3-4 *“At the same time Tattenai the governor of the region beyond the River and Shethar-Boznai and their companions came to them and spoke thus to them: ‘Who has commanded you to build this temple and finish this wall?’ Then, accordingly, we told them the names of the men who were constructing this building.”*

This doesn’t appear to be a non-hostile visit. We learn from the letter that is sent to the king that the reason they asked for the names was so they knew who the leaders were. The implication was that in this way they could not only stop the work, but punish those who led it.

C. However, God was in the work and the author could see Him at work in what these officials did.

Ezra 5:5 *“But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, so that they could not make them cease till a report could go to Darius. Then a written answer was returned concerning this matter.”*

When the officials could have put things on hold until the administrative steps were taken, they did not do that. Because the LORD was looking out for His people, the work went forward rapidly while the wheels of the government moved slowly. We must also be careful to see God’s hand at work in our lives and the life of His church here.

II. The LORD’s Providence (5:6-6:12)

A. This very long section contains two letters. The first is the letter from Tattenai and his buddies eager to find out if the Jews were telling the truth. The second letter is the response from Darius.

B. Many commentators try to suggest what these officials anticipated from this search. Whatever we might think, I doubt if the result of the search was what they were anticipating. Darius did indeed find a copy of the first decree from Cyrus.

1. Darius' Decree is revealing. First, they are not to hinder the workers in any way.

vs.6-7 *“Now therefore, Tattenai, governor of the region beyond the River, and Shethar-Boznai, and your companions the Persians who are beyond the River, keep yourselves far from there. Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God on its site.”*

Stay away from them and let them complete the work.

2. If this first instruction to stay away made the local rulers angry the second had to completely infuriate them.

vs.8-9 *“Moreover I issue a decree as to what you shall do for the elders of these Jews, for the building of this house of God: Let the cost be paid at the king's expense from taxes on the region beyond the River; this is to be given immediately to these men, so that they are not hindered. And whatever they need—young bulls, rams, and lambs for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the request of the priests who are in Jerusalem—let it be given them day by day without fail.”*

Not only do you not hinder them, you pay for their construction work with the taxes you collect in your province there. If you think you might fudge on this request, I king Darius will have those who do not do this impaled on a plank from their own houses.

III. The Temple Completed (6:13-18)

Ezra 6:13-16 *“Then Tattenai, governor of the region beyond the River, Shethar-Boznai, and their companions diligently did according to what King Darius had sent. So the elders of the Jews built, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they built and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the command of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia. Now the temple was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius. Then the children of Israel, the priests and the Levites and the rest of the descendants of the captivity, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy.”*

A. The Temple is finished. It was started with great fanfare twenty years before and now finally the task was done. Let me take a diversion to **Zechariah 4:6-10**. Here is a prophecy that the LORD gave to Zerubbabel and the people through Zechariah.

“So [the angel] answered and said to me (Zechariah): ‘This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ Says the LORD of hosts. ‘Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone with shouts of ‘Grace, grace to it!’ Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying: ‘The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; His hands shall also finish it. Then you will know That the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you. For who has

despised the day of small things? For these seven rejoice to see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. They are the eyes of the LORD, Which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth.”

1. How would Zechariah accomplish God’s will?

v.6 **“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ Says the LORD of hosts.”**

These pilgrims had to supply the work. The Lord supplied the rest.

2. What would happen to the impossible obstacles they had to overcome?

v.7 **”Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain!”**

The Lord Himself would take them away.

3. Who would finish the work of building the Temple? Who would be vindicated?

vs.7-10 **“And he shall bring forth the capstone With shouts of ‘Grace, grace to it!’ Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying: ‘The hands of Zerubbabel Have laid the foundation of this temple; His hands shall also finish it. Then you will know That the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you. For who has despised the day of small things? For these seven rejoice to see The plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. They are the eyes of the LORD, Which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth”**

This is how God works to glorify Himself. He said He would do it and He did.

Can you imagine what it was like to Noah when the day came for God to close his family in the ark? Can you imagine what it was like to see the walls of Jericho come down when Israel blew their horns and shouted? Can you feel the energy in the words later in **Nehemiah 6:15?**
“So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of Elul, in fifty-two days.”

Do you think about what it will be like when Jesus Comes? What will it be like when we see
“The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”
(1 Thessalonians 4:16–17).

Until then we go on walking with Christ, serving Christ and growing up into Him who is the head.

Hymn #237 *We Shall Behold Him*