

Restoration of Exiles: A Study of Ezra Chapter 6

Review and Timeline

538 BC—Cyrus issues a decree allowing the Jews to return to Judah and rebuild the Temple

537 BC (approx.)—Jews return, rebuild the altar, start on foundation of temple

536-520 BC—No work done on the Temple

520 BC—At the urging of Haggai and Zechariah, work on the temple resumes

516 BC—Work on the Temple is completed

The Jews faced opposition to their work at more than one time. Ezra 5 describes a Governor in their region named Tattenai and others questioning whether the Jews had the right to rebuild. The Jews claimed they did, but Tattenai wrote a letter to King Darius in Persia asking whether there was a document that gave them permission.

Exercises

Read Ezra 6:1-12 and notice that Darius ordered a search, the document was found that gave the Jews permission to rebuild, the cost was to be paid from the royal treasury, and the vessels that were taken from Jerusalem to Babylon were to be sent back. So Darius instructs Tattenai to let them work, pay the cost, and provide whatever the Jews needed. He also added a severe punishment for anyone who altered his edict.

1. Do you think God had anything to do with the way King Darius replied to Tattenai?
2. How do you think the opponents of the Jews felt when they received the reply? How do you think the Jews felt?

Read Ezra 6:13-15 and notice that the opponents obeyed the decree, the building continued, and the Temple was completed (in 516 BC).

3. Check the timeline at the top and determine about how many years of *actual work* it took to rebuild the Temple and also *how many years it took altogether*, from the start date to the completion date. Based on

this and your personal experience, how would you state how long it takes to get a project of the Lord's work done?

4. Read v. 14 again carefully. By whose decree was the temple rebuilt. Can you explain this?

Read Ezra 6:16-18 and notice that the Jews dedicated the new temple to God with joy, offered a lot of free will offerings plus some sin offerings.

5. What word in v. 16 describes how they felt?
6. How would you apply to yourself the fact that they offered both freewill offerings and sin offerings?
7. V. 18 appears to describe where the priests and Levites either lived or were stationed, relative to the temple. What do you learn from the last phrase in this verse?

Read Ezra 6:19-22.

8. What two festivals did they celebrate? (20, 22). It's not stated, but what do you think led them to celebrate these?
9. Read v. 21 carefully and notice there were two groups of people who participated in the Passover. One was the exiles who had returned. Where do you think the second group was from? What do you learn from this? Why was this second group allowed to join in? (contrast 4:2-3).
10. What two similar words are used in v. 22 to describe how the people felt during the Feast of Unleavened bread? Where did their joy come from? How does that work today?
11. What light does v. 22 shed on question #1 above? ("Assyria" in v. 22 probably refers to the region where Babylon and Persia were). Do you think God turns the hearts of secular leaders the way he wants them to go still today? What would be a situation in which he might do this?
12. Write a single sentence to describe what we might learn about God's work getting done that includes all the key points in this chapter.