

10/20/19

Ezra 3-4

The faithful remnant of about 50,000 have returned to their native cities and tribes by the decree of Cyrus and now they are going to congregate at Jerusalem to build the temple.

3:1-13 **The arrival at Jerusalem to build the Temple.**

3:1-6 The worship restored in Jerusalem.

3:1-3 The worship of the people at the altar.

- 1) The people were back in the land. vs. 1
 - a) The date is given, “And when the seventh month had come.” vs. 1a
 - 1)) The seventh month in the Jewish religious calendar, Tishri, Sept.-Oct. of 536 B.C.
 - 2)) The month is considered the holiest month because of the three feast, New moons, Yon Kippur and Tabernacles.
 - b) The place of their residence is also stated, “and the children of Israel were in the cities.” vs. 1b
 - 1)) Their place of origin according to their tribes.
 - 2) The people knew their genealogies that were taken to Babylon, as some

were disqualified from serving, not being able to provide their genealogy.

- c) The unity of the people is indicated, “the people gathered together as one man to Jerusalem.” vs. 1c
 - 1)) The people were back in the land.
 - 2)) But the people needed to get back with the Lord.
- 2) The priest of God were eager to officiate their office. vs. 2
 - a) The name of these priests are listed, “Then Jeshua the son of Jozadak and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and his brethren.” vs. 2a-b
 - 1)) Jeshua “Yeshuwa”, he is saved.
 - 2)) Zerubbabel was a priest, but function as governor.
 - b) The priority of the priests was the altar, “arose and built the altar of the God of Israel.” vs. 2c
 - 1)) The brass altar was the place of atonement from sin, brass, representing judgment.
 - 2)) On the old foundational stones of the Temple of Solomon.
 - c) The priest needed to consecrate themselves to God, “to offer burnt offerings on it.” vs. 2d
 - 1)) The burnt offering was for dedication and consecration to God.

- 2)) Completely consumed on the altar.
- d) The standard, “as it is written in the Law of Moses the man of God.” vs. 2e
 - 1)) The priests had not officiated their duties in captivity, this was the first.
 - 2)) The reason is there was no temple.
- 3) The priests and people were fearful due to the surrounding enemies, “Though fear had come upon them because of the people of those countries.” vs. 3a
 - * The word fear “eymah”, means to be in terror or dread, due to the enemy.
- 4) The priests and people responded properly to their fear, they turned to the God of heaven, “they set the altar on its bases; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD, both the morning and evening burnt offerings.” vs. 3b-c
 - a) They stepped out in faith having returned looking to God, trusting His faithfulness.
 - b) Their faith being challenge by the danger of the circumstance could only be resolved by turning to God.
 - c) Living by faith does not mean things won’t be difficult or dangerous, but faith in the midst of fear makes us corrageous in Christ.

3:4-6 The observance of the Feasts.

- 1) The priests and people celebrated the feast of ingathering, “They also kept the Feast of Tabernacles, as it is written.” vs. 4a
 - a) The Feast of Tabernacle was celebrated Oct. 15-22, the ingathering of harvest.
 - * The actual date will fluctuate based on the Jewish religious calendar based on the moon, 360-day year, not 365.
 - b) The people build booths in the open air and live in them for seven days .
 - * They remember the faithfulness of God to bring them into the promise land. Ex. 23:16; Lev. 23:34-36
- 2) The priests scricified unto God, “and offered the daily burnt offerings in the number required by ordinance for each day.” vs. 4b
 - * The burnt offering represented total dedication and consecration every day. Lev. 23:36
- 3) The priests and people celebrated the holy month of the seventh month. vs. 5
 - a) The month began on October 1st of the the feast of Trumpets, new moon, “Afterwards they offered the regular burnt offering, and those for New Moons .” vs. 5a-b
 - b) The next celebration was Yon Kipor, the Day of Atonement for the nation’s sins, “and for all the appointed feasts of the LORD that were consecrated.” vs. 5b

- 1)) The sins of the nation would be offered, two goats would be chosen, one would be offered to the LORD and the other was the scapegoat.
- 2)) The scapegoat would be released in the wilderness and men would be placed at different intervals.
- 3)) When the last man could no longer see the goat the announcement of joy would be rallied back till it reached the camp declaring the sins of the nation were atone for. Lev. 16
- c) It included all by their offering, “and those of everyone who willingly offered a freewill offering to the LORD.” vs. 5c
 - 1)) The key is a heart of true repentance.
 - 2)) The offering being of one’s own free-will, not religious duty or ritual.
- 4) The summary statement regarding the Holy month. vs. 6
 - a) The starting day, “From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD.” vs. 6a
 - b) The commentary about the temple, “although the foundation of the temple of the LORD had not been laid.” vs. 6b

3:7-9 The building the temple overween by the Levites.

- 1) They hire men to work on the temple, “also gave money to the masons and the carpenters.” vs. 7a
 - a) The men were paid their prize for hire.
 - 1)) The destroyed condition and ruins of the city and Temple were great.
 - 2)) The work would not be easy or quick.
 - b) The masons “chatsab”, means to dig, cleave, divide or hew.
 - 1)) These men would clear the ground and prepare the ground site.
 - 2)) They would cut stone and timber.
 - b) The carpenters “charash”, refer to the skilled artisans, engravers and craftsmen.
 - 1)) They were of quality refined abilities.
 - 2)) They were finish carpenters and those having detailed artistic abilities.
- 2) The priests bartered for the lumber. vs. 7b-c
 - a) The Jews paid in comodeties, “and food, drink, and oil to the people of Sidon and Tyre .” vs. 7b-d
 - 1)) The people of Sidon and Tyre were the Phoenicians and were mariners.
 - 2)) The location of Sidon is 28 miles south of Beirut, modern-day Lebanon.
 - b) The Jews stipulated the location for the delivery of the trees, “to bring cedar logs from Lebanon to the sea, to Joppa.” vs. 7d-e
 - 1)) The cedars of Lebanon were 120 feet high with a girth of 30-40 feet.

- 2)) Very impermeable to rot and insects.
- 3)) Joppa was the same port Solomon had Hiram float the cedars down the Mediterranean for the temple and Peter's vision to go to the house of Cornelius. 1Kings 5:7-12; Acts 10
- 3) The entire plan to build the temple was by authority of Cyrus, "according to the permission which they had from Cyrus king of Persia." vs. 7f
 - a) Cyrus made the decree in 536 B.C.
 - b) Cyrus reigned from 536- 530 B.C.
 - c) The Persian empire from 536-330 B.C.
- 3) The second date is given, "Now in the second month of the second year of their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem,." vs. 8a
 - a) The second month of the second year from a specific event, their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem is May of 535 B.C., the same month Solomon started the temple. 1Kings 6:1
 - * Some will say 536 B.C. because they place the decree of Cyrus at 538 B.C.
 - b) They had been at Jerusalem for one year and five month, in view of the first date of the 7th month, Sept.-Oct. Ezra 3:1
- 4) The individuals are listed for us. vs. 8b
 - a) The governor, "Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel." vs. 8b

- b) The high priest, "Jeshua the son of Jozadak." vs. 8c
- c) The other priests, "and the rest of their brethren the priests and the Levites." vs. 8d
- d) The Jew that returned, "and all those who had come out of the captivity to Jerusalem." vs. 8e
- 5) The purpose to indicate the start of the work by assigning overseers for the work, "began work and appointed the Levites from twenty years old and above to oversee the work of the house of the LORD." vs. 8f
 - a) The Levites in the days of Moses began their apprenticeship at 25, then entered their ministry at 30 and retired at 50. Num. 4:1-3; 8:24-25
 - b) The age after the Babylonian captivity was lowered to 20 years. 1Chron. 23:24
- 6) The particular Levites to oversee the work of the temple, vs. 9
 - a) The word "then" indicates there was no procrastination or delay.
 - b) The High Priest is listed first, "Then Jeshua with his sons and brothers." vs. 9a
 - c) The next group, "Kadmiel with his sons, and the sons of Judah, arose as one to oversee those working on the house of God." vs. 9b

- d) The last group, “the sons of Henadad with their sons and their brethren the Levites.” vs. 9c

3:10-13 The mixed response over foundation of the temple.

- 1) The occasion was their first goal, “When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD.” vs. 10a
 - a) They had made that long journey of four months, travelling 900 miles.
 - b) They witnessed the first tangible evidence of the temple.
- 2) The priests initiated the worship, “the priests stood in their apparel with trumpets.” vs. 10b
 - a) They sounded the trumpets as a call to joyous celebration.
 - b) Standing in reverence and honor to God.
- 3) The second group followed, “And the Levites the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the LORD.” vs. 10c-e
 - a) The Levites singers of the sons of Asaph accompanied the priests with cymbals.
 - b) In order to sing to Yahweh praises.
- 4) The manner is stated, “according to the ordinance of David king of Israel.” vs. 10f
 - a) According to their order and arrangements.
 - b) As list in Chronicles. 2Chron. 8

- 5) The description of their worship is state, “And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD.” vs. 11a-b
 - a) The word responsively “anah” meaning in course, which is described next.
 - b) Praising, giving the credit and glory to God with gratitude for His faithfulness and enabling.
- 6) The words are recorded, “For He is good, For His mercy endures forever toward Israel.” vs. 11c-d
 - a) The song is antiphonal.
 - b) One group sang, “For He is good” and the next group would respond, “For His mercy endures forever towards Israel.”
- 7) The joining in of the people followed, “Then all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD.” vs. 11e-f
 - a) The number was “all”, not some.
 - b) Their praises were sung in a loud shouted to be heard by all.
- 8) The reason for the praise and thanksgiving is stated, “because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.” vs. 12g
 - a) It is a repetition of verse 10a.
 - b) This was both the occasion and reason for the praise and thanksgiving to God!
- 9) There were those that wept at the sight of the laid foundation, “But many of the priests and Levites and heads of the fathers’ houses, old men who had seen the first temple, wept

with a loud voice when the foundation of this temple was laid before their eyes.” vs. 12a

- a) The word “but” marks the great contrast,
 - * The “many” that wept were the old men, priests, Levites and heads of the fathers’ houses.
- b) The reason they wept was they had seen the temple of Solomon prior to being taken captive to Babylon.
 - 1)) They remembered the magnificence of the beauty and splendor of the building, plus the Shekinah glory.
 - 2)) They wept over the unattractive and simple foundation laid for the temple.
- 10) There were those that were joyous, “Yet many shouted aloud for joy.” vs. 12b
 - a) These individuals “many” were thrilled with joy shouting over the accomplished work, as the start of the temple.
 - 1)) They were looking forwards to what God would do.
 - 2)) They considered it a privilege.
 - 3)) The old men were a discouragement to the younger ones.
 - b) The younger men had nothing to compare, but rejoiced in the faithful new work of the temple God had called them to be part of.
 - 1)) This was all they knew.

- 2)) They were content and excited about what God was going to do.
- 11) The mixture of two opposite emotions were blended as one. vs. 13
 - a) The difference was hard to distinguish, “so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people.” vs. 13a
 - 1)) The word discern “nakar” means they could not recognize the weeping as a disappointment.
 - 2)) The crying and shouting were both thought to be for joy.
 - b) The two groups were filled with high emotions that affected them deeply, “for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the sound was heard afar off.” vs. 13
 - 1)) They sense of having accomplished the will of God was satisfying.
 - 2)) The understanding that they had been used by God to participate in the construction of the second temple was a joyous excitement.

4:1-23 The opposition to building the Temple.

4:1-5 The adversaries desired to join the work of the Temple.

4:1-3 The adversaries help to build was denied.

- 1) The news of the arrival of the Jews and the building reached the ears of their enemies, “Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the descendants of the captivity were building the temple of the LORD God of Israel.” vs. 1
 - a) The word adversaries “”tsar”, means their enemy or foe, those who are against them.
 - b) Judah and Benjamin indicate those from the southern kingdom.
 - c) The temple was a rival to the one of the Samaritans in Garizm.
- 2) The seeming kind proposal was declared, “they came to Zerubbabel and the heads of the fathers’ houses, and said to them, “Let us build with you.” vs. 2a-c
 - a) The adversaries confronted the leader. Zerubbabel, the govrennor appointed by Cyrus and heads of families.
 - b) They wanted to partner in the work.
- 3) Their seeming oneness with the Jews. vs. 2
 - a) That they had the same God, “for we seek your God as you do.” vs. 2a
 - 1)) These were Samaritans, a mixed people of Jewish descent and gentiles that were the result of the Assyrian Captivity in 722 B.C.
 - 2)) Their worship was full of idolatrous syncretism and could not be unequally yoked. 2Cor. 5:14

- b) That they had been worshipping Yahweh since their captivity, “and we have sacrificed to Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here.” vs. 2
 - 1)) Esarhaddon was one of the kings of Assyria responsible for their cross-populating of captives. 2Kings 17:25; 19:37
 - 2)) The Assyrian kings.
 - a) Shalmaneser V, 727-22 B.C.
 - b) Sargon II, 722-705 B.C.
 - c) Sennecherib 705-681 B.C.
 - d) Esarhaddon 681-669 B.C.
 - e) Ashurbanipal 669-626 B.C.
 - 3) The unhesitated denial to partner with them. vs. 3
 - a) The Samaritans could have nothing to do with the people of God, “But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the heads of the fathers’ houses of Israel said to them, “You may do nothing with us to build a house for our God.” vs. 3a-b
 - b) The Jews alone had been commanded by God and decreed by Cyrus, “but we alone will build to the LORD God of Israel, as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us.” vs. 3c-d
- 4:4-5** The adversaries resorted to discourag and delay the people building. Ezra 4:4-5

- 1) The plan of the enemy was enacted, “Then the people of the land tried to discourage the people of Judah. They troubled them in building.” vs. 4
 - a) To do all they could to affect their minds to think the work as not worth to accomplish.
 - b) To trouble “bahal” to disturb, terrify and be a abstacle in every way.
- 2) The manner, “and hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.” vs. 5
 - a) Counselors “ya’ ats”, means legal advisers or lawyers.
 - b) To frustrate the building of the temple.
 - c) The duration of the false alegation was from Cyrus till Durius king of Persia.
 - 1) Cyrus king was known as “Cyrus the Great” 536-30 B.C. Ezra 1:1; Hag. 1:1
 - 2) Darius (Gobryas) who was co-regent with Cyrus. Dan. 6:2, 28
 - 3) Cambyses 530-522 B.C. Ezra 4:6, 21
 - 4) Guamata (pseudo-Smerdis) Artaxerxes 522 B.C. Ezra 4:7
 - 5) **This is the Darius of our text**, Darius I (Hystaspis) 522-486 B.C. reallowed the temple. Ezra 5:6, 6:1, 3

4:6-16 The adversaries letter of accusation to cease building of the Temple.

4:6-10 The introduction to the letter.

- 1) The date and nature of the letter, “In the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.” vs. 6
 - a) Cyrus the Great 536-30 B.C. Ezra 1:1
* He began to reign in 557 B.C. over the Med- Persian empire.
 - b) Darius (Gobryas) who was co-regent with Cyrus. Dan. 6:2, 28
 - c) **Cambyses is Ahasuerus of our text**, 530-522 B.C. Ezra 4:6, 21
 - d) Guamata (pseudo-Smerdis) Artaxerxes 522 B.C. reign for only 9 months. Ezra 4:7
 - e) Darius I (Hystaspis) 522-486 B.C. reallowed the temple. Ezra 5:6, 6:1, 3
 - f) Xerxes I 486-65 B.C. is Ahasuerus of Esther. Esther 1:1
 - g) Artaxerxes I (Longimanus) 465-424 B.C. Ezra 7:1; Neh. 2:1; 5:14
 - h) Darius II (Nothus) 424-04 B.C. Neh. 12:22
 - i) Artaxerxes II (Mnemon) 404-359 B.C.
 - j) Artaxerxes III (Ochus) 359-338 B.C.
 - k) Darius III (Condomanus) 336-330 B.C.
- 2) The accusations lasted till Artaxerxes, “In the days of Artaxerxes also, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabel, and the rest of their companions wrote to Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the letter was written in Aramaic

script, and translated into the Aramaic language.” vs. 7

- a) Guamata (pseudo-Smerdis) is Artaxerxes of our text, reigned in 522 B.C. for only 9 months.
 - b) The letter was dictated in Persian to a scribe and translated into Aramaic. Ezra 4:8-6:18
- 3) The two individuals responsible for writing the letter, “Rehum the commander and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to King Artaxerxes in this fashion.” vs. 8
* These two are the main instigators.
- 4) Their official titles and group people of the region, “From Rehum the commander, Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their companions--representatives of the Dinaites, the Apharsathchites, the Tarpelites, the people of Persia and Erech and Babylon and Shushan, the Dehavites, the Elamites.” vs. 9
a) Commander “b@; el” is chancellor.
b) Scribe “capher” secretary.
- 5) They were part of the Assyrian captivity, “and the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Osnapper took captive and settled in the cities of Samaria and the remainder beyond the River--and so forth.” vs. 10
* Osnapper “horned bull”, is a reference to Ahurbanipal, one of the Assyrian kings, 669-626 B.C.

4:11-16 The body of the letter.

- 1) They presented themselves as the kings servants, “(This is a copy of the letter that they sent him) To King Artaxerxes from your servants, the men of the region beyond the River, and so forth.” vs. 11
* The River is the Euphrates.
- 2) The status of the building and history of the city, “Let it be known to the king that the Jews who came up from you have come to us at Jerusalem, and are building the rebellious and evil city, and are finishing its walls and repairing the foundations.” vs. 12
a) The city in the past did rebel against Nebuchadnezzar three times.
b) Nothing is said about the walls in Ezra, that was the call of Nehemiah, which he accomplished in 52 days.
- 3) The potential damage to the king. vs. 13
a) These men present themselves as being concerned about the king, but were not, “Let it now be known to the king that, if this city is built and the walls completed.” vs. 13a-b
b) The men pointed to the loss of revenue to the king, “they will not pay tax, tribute, or custom, and the king’s treasury will be diminished.” vs. 13c-e
- 4) The men declared their concern was the honor of the king, “Now because we receive support from the palace, it was not proper

for us to see the king's dishonor; therefore we have sent and informed the king." vs. 14

- a) These men were receiving money from the king and felt responsible to be loyal.
- b) This was the reason they were writing to the king, so they stated.

- 5) The request was to search the archives to confirm his report, "that search may be made in the book of the records of your fathers. And you will find in the book of the records and know that this city is a rebellious city, harmful to kings and provinces, and that they have incited sedition within the city in former times, for which cause this city was destroyed." vs. 15

* The records would certainly reveal the ongoing rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar.

- 6) The conclusion of their observations were that the king would lose all authority over the region, "We inform the king that if this city is rebuilt and its walls are completed, the result will be that you will have no dominion beyond the River." vs. 16

* The territory on the west side of the Euphrates.

4:17-24 The response of the king to the accusations to cease the building.

4:17-20 The confirmation of the accusations.

- 1) The kings greeting to the governor and scribe that wrote to him, "The king sent an answer: To Rehum the commander, to Shimshai the scribe, to the rest of their companions who dwell in Samaria, and to the remainder beyond the River: Peace, and so forth." vs. 17
- 2) The acknowledgment of having received their letter, "The letter which you sent to us has been clearly read before me." vs. 18
- 3) The confirmation of the cities past rebellions, "And I gave the command, and a search has been made, and it was found that this city in former times has revolted against kings, and rebellion and sedition have been fostered in it." vs. 19
- 4) The affirmation of the past powerful king that ruled and collected taxes beyond the Euphrates, "There have also been mighty kings over Jerusalem, who have ruled over all the region beyond the River; and tax, tribute, and custom were paid to them." vs. 20

4:21-24 The proclamation to stop the construction.

- 1) The order to stop and debase the construction, "Now give the command to make these men cease, that this city may not be built until the command is given by me." vs. 21

- 2) The urgency for them to put a stop to it,
“Take heed now that you do not fail to do
this.” vs. 22a
- 3) The reason is stated, “Why should damage
increase to the hurt of the kings?” vs. 22b
- 4) The speedy execution of stopping the
building sight, “Now when the copy of King
Artaxerxes’ letter was read before Rehum,
Shimshai the scribe, and their companions,
they went up in haste to Jerusalem against
the Jews, and by force of arms made them
cease.” vs. 23
- 5) The duration of the construction to build the
temple, “Thus the work of the house of God
which is at Jerusalem ceased, and it was
discontinued until the second year of the
reign of Darius king of Persia.” vs. 24
 - a) The second year of Darius king of Persian
was 520 B.C.
 - b) Darius I (Hystaspis) 522-486 B.C.
reallowed the temple. Ezra 5:6, 6:1, 3
 - c) The construction of the temple was
stopped for 15-16 years. Ezra 5:1; Hag.
1:1