

Ezra 1-6 • Chapter Study

INTRO • Review History of Israel

Let's begin with a thumbnail sketch of the history of Israel.

Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob → 12 sons = 12 tribes

Egypt: Slavery → Exodus: Moses // Covenant w/God; Law

Conquest: Joshua

Judges: Samuel

Monarchy: Saul, David, Solomon

Divided Kingdom: Israel (10 tribes), Judah (2 tribes) → Prophets, Idolatry

Exile: Israel defeated by Assyria, 722 BC // Judah defeated by Babylon, 609 BC

To control those they conquered, Assyrians & Babylonians shuffled conquered populations to new lands.

The idea was, they'd be so busy starting new lives they have time to rebel.

So Assyria deported the 10 tribes of Israel, scattering them in several provinces.

But they didn't want to lose the resources & income of the *land* of Israeli so they transplanted others they conquered there.

The capital of Israel was Samaria. So the region & people were *Samaritans*.

They were a mixture of Syrians & Mesopotamians who over time mixed with the few Jews who'd been left behind by the Assyrians.

Their religion was a mish-mash of Judaism & pagan-idolatry.

A century later, when Babylon defeated & deported Judah from the southern kingdom, they relocated them in Babylon itself.

They didn't resettled anyone in the land. They left it to a remnant of the desperate and poor.

So the land fell to disrepair & ruin.

It was a wilderness where nomadic tribes would grazed their flocks & herds.

During the last days of Judah, the prophet Jeremiah foretold the kingdom's defeat & exile.

Because Israel failed to keep the sabbath year for 490 yrs, the land was owed 70 years of rest.

That's how long Judah would be in exile in Babylon,

But at the end of that time, he said, they'd return to resettle & rebuild.

Ezra, author of this book, also wrote 1 & 2 Chronicles.

Let's read the closing vs of 2 Chr as they form a bridge to Ezra.

2 Chr 36:22-23 - ²² Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also *put it in writing*, saying, ²³ Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is among you of all His people? May the LORD his God *be* with him, and let him go up!

Those *same words* commence Ezra.

Ch1

Ezra tells us of 2 returns to rebuild Jerusalem.

The 1st in recoded in chs 1-6. It was led by Zerubbabel.

The 2nd in chs 7-10 was led by the priest & scribe, Ezra.

¹ Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying,

Vs1-8 are our text for Sunday so we'll be brief with them tonight.

The Persians brought an end to a corrupt Babylonian Empire.

Cyrus was a military and political genius with a *new vision* for empire.

Instead of brutally dominating those he conquered, he invited them to *be a vital part* of his empire.

He began by conquering, then forging and alliance with his neighbors, the Medes.

Together, they then took on and defeated the bog-boys on the block, the Babylonians.

The Medo-Persian Empire then became the *geographically largest* empire in history until the time of the Mongols.

The City of Babylon was legendary. So Cyrus made it his western capital.

His "first year" v1 means as king over Babylon. It was 538 BC, 70 yrs after Babylon's *1st* conquest & deportation of Judah.

² Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which *is* in Judah. ³ Who *is* among you of all His people? May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which *is* in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel (He *is* God), which *is* in Jerusalem. ⁴ And whoever is left in any place where he dwells, let the men of his place help him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, besides the freewill offerings for the house of God which *is* in Jerusalem.

It's clear from Cyrus' proclamation someone, mostly likely the prophet Daniel who was still alive, showed him the prophecies of Jeremiah & Isaiah where he's mentioned *by name*, long before he was even born.

The prophecies so impressed Cyrus, he issued this proclamation to restore the worship of God in Jerusalem.

The **Cyrus Cylinder**, discovered in 1879 in the ruins of Babylon, records Cyrus' decree *reversing* the relocation policy of Babylon.

It's likely what moved him to issue that proclamation was his desire to see the Jews restored to their land.

But if he let one group go, others would clammer for return as well.

So why not make a policy allowing any displaced people to return if they want?

⁵ Then the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, with all whose spirits God had moved, arose to go up and build the house of the LORD which *is* in Jerusalem. ⁶ And all those who *were* around them encouraged them with articles of silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with precious things, besides all *that* was willingly offered.

Around 50,000 Jews made this first return.

Many more remained in Babylon where after 70 yrs they'd settled down and were doing well.

Those who stayed made a large contribution for those returning to make a fresh start.

⁷ King Cyrus also brought out the articles of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Jerusalem and put in the temple of his gods; ⁸ and Cyrus king of Persia brought them out by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah.

This was the sacred furniture & utensils used in the Jerusalem Temple before it was destroyed.

They were entrusted to Sheshbazzar, the Babylonian name for **Zerubbabel**, royal heir to David's throne.

He led this 1st return, not as king of the Jews but as a governor appointed by Cyrus.

⁹This is the number of them: 30 gold platters, 1,000 silver platters, 29 knives, ¹⁰30 gold basins, 410 silver basins of a similar kind, and 1,000 other articles. ¹¹All the articles of gold and silver were 5,400. All these Sheshbazzar took with the captives who were brought from Babylon to Jerusalem.

This was the treasure the Babylonians had looted in their conquest of Jerusalem 70 yrs before.

It's unlikely Cyrus restored the treasures of all the conquered people he allowed to return to their native lands.

If he had, it would have wiped out his treasury.

He does it for the Jewish exiles because of the prophecies saying he'd permit them to return and rebuild and renew the worship of Yahweh.

Ch2

¹Now these are the people of the province who came back from the captivity, of those who had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away to Babylon, and who returned to Jerusalem and Judah, everyone to his own city. ²Those who came with Zerubbabel were Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Re-elaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, and Ba-anah. The number of the men of the people of Israel:

Vs3-35 is a count of people by cities // V36 = numbering of priests // Vs40-58 = the Levites.

⁵⁹And these were the ones who came up from Tel Melah, Tel Harsha, Cherub, Addan, and Immer; but they could not identify their father's house or their genealogy, whether they were of Israel: ⁶⁰the sons of Delaiah, the sons of Tobiah, and the sons of Nekoda, 652; ⁶¹and of the sons of the priests: the sons of Habaiah, the sons of Koz, and the sons of Barzillai, who took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called by their name. ⁶²These sought their listing among those who were registered by genealogy, but they were not found; therefore they were excluded from the priesthood as defiled.

These groups claimed to be Jews & made the return, but couldn't prove their genealogy.

Because their ancestry was in doubt, they were allowed to make the return, but they weren't allowed to serve in the temple.

⁶³And the governor said to them that they should not eat of the most holy things till a priest could consult with the Urim and Thummim.

Without documentation of their genealogy, claimants to the priesthood had to wait till they were back in Jerusalem with the worship of God restored & the high priest able to use the Urim & Thummim to sort out the legitimacy of their claim. → [Briefly explain Urim & Thummim]

⁶⁴The whole assembly together was 42,360, ⁶⁵besides their male and female servants, of whom there were 7,337; and they had 200 men and women singers.

Right around 50,000.

Now; if you total up the numbers given in ch2, it comes up 12,000 short of what we find here.

In the previous count, Ezra only numbers those from the tribes of Judah & Benjamin.

He doesn't list those from the other 10 tribes who also made the trip.

He includes them here in the total.

Vs66&67 is a count of the beasts used in transporting them and their goods.

⁶⁸Some of the heads of the fathers' houses, when they came to the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem,

There was no temple when they arrived. Ezra means the *location* of the temple -

offered freely for the house of God, to erect it in its place:

These elders made an large contribution so the reconstruction could begin.

⁶⁹ According to their ability, they gave to the treasury for the work 61,000 gold drachmas, 5,000 minas of silver, and 100 priestly garments.

The drachma was a Persian coin. 61,000 = ~1,100 lbs. of gold → \$32½ million
5,000 minas of silver = \$2½ million → \$35 million

⁷⁰ So the priests and the Levites, *some* of the people, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the Nethinim, dwelt in their cities, and all Israel in their cities.

Geographically, the province of Judah was greatly diminished at this time.

It was nowhere near the territory it had been during the days of the kings.

It was about 25 miles N to S // 32 miles E to W.

800 sq. miles, a third of which wasn't even arable.

Ch3

¹ And when the 7th month had come, and the children of Israel *were* in the cities, the people gathered together as one man to Jerusalem.

It's 538 BC.

Those who've returned have set up only rudimentary housekeeping in the cities & towns of Judah.

Their first priority was to re-establish the worship of Yahweh.

So they gathered at Jrz in the 7th mn, when they celebrate the You Kippur, the Feast of Trumpets & Tabernacles.

² Then Jeshua the son of Jozadak and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and his brethren, arose and built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it, as *it is* written in the Law of Moses the man of God.

There was no temple yet but that didn't mean they couldn't build an altar & commence worship.

Noah built an altar. Abraham built altars long before there as a temple.

They see a need to worship, thanking God for allowing them to return.

And dedicating all that would follow to His glory and name.

³ Though fear *had come* upon them because of the people of those countries, they set the altar on its bases; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD, *both* the morning and evening burnt offerings.

We'll learn more about this fear of their neighbors later.

⁴ They also kept the Feast of Tabernacles, as *it is* written, and *offered* the daily burnt offerings in the number required by ordinance for each day. ⁵ Afterwards *they offered* the regular burnt offering, and *those* for New Moons and for all the appointed feasts of the LORD that were consecrated, and *those* of everyone who willingly offered a freewill offering to the LORD.

Daily sacrifices was renewed for the first time in decades.

⁶ From the 1st day of the 7th month they began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD, although the foundation of the temple of the LORD had not been laid. ⁷ They also gave money to the masons and the carpenters, and food, drink,

and oil to the people of Sidon and Tyre to bring cedar logs from Lebanon to the sea, to Joppa, according to the permission which they had from Cyrus king of Persia.

Much *implied* in these vs about life in Judah.

They needed cedar to rebuild the temple.

Cedar trees grow in up by Tyre & Sidon, present day Lebanon.

They're cut, hauled to the coast, made into huge rafts, and ferried S along the coast to the port of Joppa, then hauled p to Jrz.

The Jews bartered for then with the commodities of food, drink, and olive oil.

Which means the economic engine of Judah was restored.

Don't think all 50K of the returning exiles, moved to JRz and settled in among the ruins.

Many of them, likely *most* of them, settled in the Shephelah were crops thrive.

⁸ Now in the 2nd month of the 2nd year of their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the rest of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all those who had come out of the captivity to Jerusalem, began *work* and appointed the Levites from 20 years old and above to oversee the work of the house of the LORD. ⁹ Then Jeshua *with* his sons and brothers, Kadmiel *with* his sons, and the sons of Judah, arose as one to oversee those working on the house of God: the sons of Henadad *with* their sons and their brethren the Levites. ¹⁰ When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests stood in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the LORD, according to the ordinance of David king of Israel. ¹¹ And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD: →

“For He is good, For His mercy endures forever toward Israel.”

Then all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

Imagine how moving this was – to see the foundation of the temple laid.

It was prophecy fulfilled before their eyes!

Sadly, not everyone was stoked.

¹² 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.

Those who'd seen Solomon's magnificent temple looked with disappointment at this new work.

Memory overlaid the pathetic scene before them with white limestone blocks and dazzling gold furnishings of the previous temple.

Now they watch as rough, discolored stones are laid for a wall that mocks what used to stand there.

Where before the ground was paved with clean unbroken stone, now it's cracked with weeds sprouting up.

The glorious columns that adorned the courtyard lie shattered & scattered.

Yet many [of the younger generation] shouted aloud for joy, ¹³ so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people, for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the sound was heard afar off.

While the seniors wept in lament, the younger folk celebrated a glorious new day.

How many times has that same scenario been repeated among God's people?

The older generation looks at the joy of youth & finds nothing to get excited about.

They lament that *today* doesn't come up to the thrill of their Golden Age.

When we're young and begin our walk with God, *everything* is new & exciting // It's so powerful & real.

Because that's the way God worked in **our** lives, we assume that's the way He works in others.

When they share how God revealed Himself to them, if it differs from **our** experience, we may doubt it.

Especially if we put a tight circle around what God can & can't do.

Jesus told the parable of the wineskins to confront his critics with their rejection of the Truth He brought.

He used an analogy from everyday life → You don't put new wine in an old wineskin.

As it ferments it'll burst the skin which has already been stretched to its maximum elasticity.

You put new wine in a new skin so that as it ferments the bag stretches to accommodate it.

The key in both cases is that it's wine // Not wine & cola, or coffee.

Some like *old* wine, others prefer *new* → It's all wine // Which is **better** is just a matter of taste.

Whether it was Solomon's temple or this new one, it was all about worshipping God.

The seniors found the new form exceedingly disappointing because they compared it to what had been before.

The younger generation had nothing to compare the new temple to.

All they saw was what the new thing meant – a chance to worship God.

The seniors looked *back*. The youngsters looked *forward*.

With whom do you think God is more pleased?

I want to say a word to my brothers and sisters in Christ who came to faith during the halcyon days of the Jesus People movement.

Maybe you attended CCCM in the 70's & 80's.

You remember Love Song, Gentle Faith, Sweet Comfort Band, and Daniel Amos.

You went to the Saturday Night Concerts.

You adored worshipping God with 3-chord praise choruses from Maranatha Music.

But you find it difficult to worship today. Something seems missing.

Please understand it's just that the **form's** changed. It's a different wineskin.

You like the old wine better & don't understand how anyone could like the new.

Hear this: Many do. **THEY** are experiencing **EXACTLY** what you did in the 70's & 80's.

Back then, those in traditional churches looked at YOU and *wept* that you could find God in praise choruses led by guitars & drums instead of organ-led hymns.

Praise God for all those marvelous senior saints back then, who instead of lamenting the new wineskins, learned to enjoy the new wine.

Ch4

¹ 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, ² they came to Zerubbabel and the heads of the fathers' houses, and said to them, "Let us build with you, for we seek your God as you do; and we have sacrificed to Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here."

As soon as the returned exiles commenced the work of rebuilding the temple, the Samaritans living to the N asked if they could help.

We know that's who's in view here because they say they'd been moved there during the time of the Assyrian king Esarhaddon.

2 Kings 17 gives us more detail.

There we learn the people the Assyrians moved into the land of Israel came from Syria & Mesopotamia.

Life proved inordinately difficult with some really odd things happening to them.

They quickly deduced that a supernatural agent was at work cursing them.

So they asked the Assyrians for Jewish priests to be **returned** to teach them **how** to worship Yahweh.

Priests were brought who taught them the basics about God.

These settlers didn't turn from their gods TO the Lord.

They just added some ideas about Him to the worship of their idols.

A couple times in 2Kings17 it says **they feared Yahweh but worshipped their gods.**

So, the religion of these Samaritans was a mish-mash of pagan idolatry and Judaism.

By calling them **adversaries** in v1, Ezra clues us into the fact they didn't really want to help rebuild the temple.

Prior to the Jews' return, they'd been in control over this area & didn't want to lose their influence.

So they offered help but really wanted control.

The Jewish leaders were hip to their plan.

³ 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; but we alone will build to the LORD God of Israel, as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us."

These leaders knew the Samaritans had ulterior motives & wise refused the offer of assistance.

That refusal revealed the Samaritans' true colors >>

⁴ Then the people of the land tried to discourage the people of Judah. They troubled them in building, ⁵ 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.

There are some great lessons about spiritual warfare we'll look more closely at when we get to Nehemiah.

For now, take note how the enemy resisted what God was doing in His people.

First, he tried to get them off track by **offering assistance** that would have moved them away from a **dependence on God.**

The Samaritans had personnel & resources that would have helped get the project done.

But the Samaritans would have laid claim to the temple & turned it to the worship of their own gods.

What's begun by the Spirit cannot be assisted or completed by the flesh.

It's happened before that genuine revival was killed by those who think to "help" it by organizing & packaging it.

Second, when the enemy's "assistance" was rejected, he moved to *discourage* the people of God.

Consider the word = **Dis-courage**; to *remove* courage.

The Jews began the work with courage because their eyes & hearts were fixed on God.

After a while, the daily challenge of survival in a hard land with a huge task began to intrude on their vision.

Eventually, their view of God was **eclipsed** by the immensity of the undertaking & courage dimmed.

Like Peter walking on water, as long as his gaze was fixed on Jesus, he did what seemed impossible.

But the moment he took his eyes off the God of the Impossible & put them on his circumstances, courage fled & he sank.

That's what the enemy does with us; he tries to get our eyes off God & onto our circumstances.

Third, the enemy *troubled* them as they worked.

The Samaritans interfered with the supplies & processes needed to rebuild.

They tried to make the project so difficult that the Jews would quit.

They didn't. They kept working & eventually the temple was rebuilt.

Fourth, the enemy sent a *steady stream of clever people* who used all kinds of arguments on why the temple ought not be built.

This is one of the most difficult forms of opposition the devil uses.

If you *listen* to the nay-sayers, they often seem to present a sound case for why the way of God isn't practical or has changed, so that what used to be true is different now.

Letters

In vs6-16 we learn of a couple letters the Samaritans sent the Persian kings, claiming the Jews rebuilt Jrz as a fortress so they could stage a rebellion.

In vs17-24 the Persians order an immediately halt to the construction.

Ch5

¹Then 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. ²So 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.

We have the Books of both Haggai & Zechariah & know what they prophesied.

Haggai rebuked the people for halting the work while Zechariah encouraged them with a promise of blessing for carrying on.

Haggai showed them were they'd gotten off track & Zechariah showed them how to get back on it.

This passage is enlightening in view of current events.

Cyrus gave permission by a royal decree to rebuild the temple.

A later order came to halt it. >> But that order was based on bogus information.

And according to the law of the Persians, Cyrus' decree was inviolable.

It superseded the later, lesser order.

All the prophets did was remind the civil leaders of their duty to obey God rather than man.

Work halted because word came from the **government** to stop.

Haggai & Zechariah showed up & asked, "Why have you stopped?"

People = "The **king** told us to."

Prophets = "Yeah, but **God** told you to rebuild."

People = "But the **king** told us to halt & the Samaritans said they'd enforce it."

Prophets = "Who should you listen to; a king or God? Who do you fear; Samaritans or the Lord?"

Phrased that way, the Jewish leaders realized they'd been fooled by their enemy & got back to work.

As we follow Christ in a fallen world at odds with God, there are going to be times when obeying Him means disobeying man.

Sometimes following Christ means **not** following society's rules or even keeping the civil law.

In Acts 4&5; the Apostles were arrested for preaching the Gospel.

They were hauled before the Jewish high council & commanded **not** to preach, then thrown in jail.

An angel busted them out & told them to go back into the temple & keep preaching.

The Sanhedrin was furious & again & demanded they stop preaching in Jesus' name.

Peter respectfully but boldly replied, "You tell us >> Should we obey God or you?"

Who do we obey, God or man? God or govt?

During the days of the Early Church, the Romans began a policy of requiring subjects of the Empire to make an oath of loyalty.

Every few years, adult men had to appear before a Roman official, pick up a little pinch of incense, drop it on some hot coals & say, "Caesar is Lord" meaning - Caesar is master.

No problem for pagans who believed in many gods. Adding one more was no problem.

Christians simply could **not** say it because they'd already had an oath of loyalty = "**Jesus** is Lord."

To attribute lordship to Caesar was a blasphemy they would not allow cross their lips.

Though Christians were the best citizens in the Empire had, because they refused the loyalty oath to Caesar, they were rounded up & used as sport in games held in the theaters, amphitheaters & coliseums; fed to wild beasts while the crowds cheered.

But as they huddled in the center of those arenas, some kneeling, others standing, the beasts circling ready to pounce, the Christians didn't face their imminent death with terror.

They didn't scream outrage at the spectators who came to watch.

They didn't hurl insults at the officials who condemned them.

They lifted their faces, eyes, & hands to heaven & sang praises to the One who now rose from His throne to welcome them home, just as He had for Stephen, the first martyr.

It was this courage & the dignity of those thousands of believers who died that way all over the empire that eventually caused those arenas to empty & the games to end.

Spectators were convicted of their spiritual emptiness by the example of the martyrs.

They realized they could not die with that kind of courage. So many of them came to faith in Christ.

Eventually, the Roman Emperor himself became a Christian, & the loyalty oath was dropped.

As we look to what God's Word says about the end times, we conclude the world will grow increasingly hostile toward God & His people.

Tonight, **80%** of the Body of Christ lives in a nation where being a follower of Jesus is either officially-illegal or culturally-opposed.

For the other 20%, it's not difficult discerning we're well on the way to it being banned.

Until a decade ago, Churches in the US have enjoyed protection under the law.

That's changed. Religious Freedom is being systematically dismantled.

An ideology of enforced conformity to the State is making a rapid advance.

Old Rome is being revived.

Who will we obey? >> As for me, my house, & my church, we will follow & serve the Lord Jesus.

So, work on the temple resumed, and the Samaritans weren't happy.

They're most likely the cause of what happened next ...

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:

Word of the renewed work reached the Persian officials in charge of the region. So they came to investigate >>

"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. ⁶ This is a copy of the letter that Tattenai sent: The governor of the region beyond the River, and Shethar-Boznai, and his companions, the Persians who were in the region beyond the River, to Darius the king. ⁷ (They sent a letter to him, in which was written thus) To Darius the king: All peace.

There there's a copy of the letter in vs8-17.

It's a report of the conversation between these Persian officials and the Jewish leaders.

The Jews say they're just doing what Cyrus commanded.

The Persians officials then ask that the records back home be checked to make sure it was all as the Jews claimed.

Ch6

Ch6 is the reply.

Sure enough, an investigation of the royal records in Persia make clear that Cyrus had given orders for the rebuilding of the temple.

Even more, he assigned resources to the project; materials the Samaritans were to contribute!

So, not only was their opposition thwarted, they ended up promoting the work of God.

In the end, the help they offered with no intention of giving, became help they didn't want to provide!

God really does cause all things to work together for good for His people; even the devil's attempts to steal, kill, & destroy.

¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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.

Vs17&18 list the sacrifices they offered.

¹⁹ And the descendants of the captivity kept the Passover on the 14th *day* of the first month. ²⁰ For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves; all of them *were ritually* clean. And they slaughtered the Passover *lambs* for all the descendants of the captivity, for their brethren the priests, and for themselves. ²¹ Then the children of Israel who had returned from the captivity ate together with all who had separated themselves from the filth of the nations of the land in order to seek the LORD God of Israel. ²² And they kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread 7 days with joy; for the LORD made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

“King of *Assyria*? I thought this was the *Persian* era.”

It is. it was the ancient custom to refer to kings by the realms they'd conquered.

So the Persian emperor was called the King of Media, Babylon, Assyria, Egypt, and a host of lesser realms.