



# EZRA

## ▶▶ THE RETURN

## EZRA | THE RETURN

### Ezra 6: “Becoming a Finisher”

Wrestling season...→**How can i become a finisher?**→Ezra 6:1-22

- *“Its not in how you start, but in how you finish that counts.”* - EVERYONE
- **“Finishing** is better than starting. Patience is better than pride.” - Ecclesiastes 7:8

A sports season→college / university→a goal or life objective→a career→a life...George O. Wood

Zeigarnik effect - our brains are obsessed with unfinished business...waiters remember orders until after delivered...

**1-12**→**Nothing gets done w/out DILIGENCE!**→ *“Get ‘er done!”* - Larry the Cable Guy→Tara

- 1-3: Cyrus Decree→4/5, 8-10: Provision→6-7, 11-12: Help & Protection→12: Obey w/DILIGENCE!
- DILIGENCE: careful and persistent work or effort→University, developing career, raising kids, & church building.
- Obstacle to diligence? Apathy, laziness, fear, insecurity, distraction, temptation, & disobedience...
- We don't always FEEL like obeying & being diligent.
- Diligence has less to do with inspiration as it has to do with perspiration.→Learn to love doing hard things.
- Where is God asking me to be more DILIGENT?→MAKE YOUR BED Quote→Maybe start w/making our beds...

**13-18**→**When it's done...dedicate it.**→They took time to celebrate this great victory bc they understood it had been a spiritual battle of fighting off apathy, hardship,& persecution. After exile...they had rebuilt God's house.

- Celebration & dedication remind us of God's role in our lives.→HIGHLIGHT VIDEO→This is why we give, serve...
  - Look what God has done...is doing...will do. Past. Present. FUTURE.
  - This is what dedication is all about...last week→Marriage→My kids being dedicated.
- The Israelites had failed, been exiled, but God was giving them a NEW START to experience relationship with him.
- Dedications are new starting points.→New starting points require new sacrifice.
- What can we celebrate and dedicate to God?→What new starting point is God putting before us?

**19-22**→**Recognize my limits.**→The Israelites celebrated the Passover Meal→“It is Finished”

- **Passover Meal/Lamb & Festival of Unleavened Bread**→“It is finished.”
- **Moses/Joshua**→Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Haggai, Zechariah, people, Cyrus, Darius, & Artaxerxes→Jn. 4
- There are some things in life only God can finish.: This is not a cop out...its just true.
- God's story is NEVER finished until God finishes it.→Jn.
- Nightbird.→Is God asking me to leave something UNFINISHED?

→**Finish what God is calling you to finish & trust God to finish you can't.**→**PRAYER:Father, help...!**

**TALK ABOUT IT** - Questions to GROW through with family, friends, & myself.

1. Who is the most diligent person I know?
2. Where is God asking me to be more diligent?
3. What new starting point is God putting before me?
4. Is God asking me to leave something “unfinished?”
5. **PRAYER:** “Father, help me to become the finisher you are calling me to be.”

## Chronology of Ezra

Event	Year	Reference
Cyrus king of Persia captures Babylon	539 B.C.	<a href="#">Dan. 5:30-31</a>
First year of King Cyrus; issues proclamation freeing Jewish exiles to return	538- 537	<a href="#">Ezra 1:1-4</a>
Jewish exiles, led by Sheshbazzar, return from Babylon to Jerusalem	537?	<a href="#">Ezra 1:11</a>
Altar rebuilt	537	<a href="#">Ezra 3:1-2</a>
Temple rebuilding begins	536	<a href="#">Ezra 3:8</a>
Adversaries oppose the rebuilding	536- 530	<a href="#">Ezra 4:1-5</a>
Temple rebuilding ceases	530- 520	<a href="#">Ezra 4:24</a>
Temple rebuilding resumes (2nd year of Darius)	520	<a href="#">Ezra 5:2</a> ; compare <a href="#">Hag. 1:14</a>
Temple construction completed (6th year of Darius)	516	<a href="#">Ezra 6:15</a>
Ezra departs from Babylon to Jerusalem (arrives in 7th year of Artaxerxes)	458	<a href="#">Ezra 7:6-9</a>
Men of Judah and Benjamin assemble at Jerusalem	458	<a href="#">Ezra 10:9</a>
Officials conduct three-month investigation	458- 457	<a href="#">Ezra 10:16-17</a>

## Chronology of Nehemiah

Event	Month/Day	Year	Reference
Hanani brings Nehemiah a report from Jerusalem (20th year of Artaxerxes I)		445- 444 B.C.	<a href="#">1:1</a>
Nehemiah before King Artaxerxes	1	445	<a href="#">2:1</a>
Nehemiah arrives to inspect Jerusalem walls		445	<a href="#">2:11</a>
Wall is finished	6/25	445	<a href="#">6:15</a>
People of Israel gather	7	445	<a href="#">7:73-8:1</a>
People of Israel celebrate Feast of Booths	7/15-22	445	<a href="#">8:14</a>
People of Israel fast and confess sins	7/24	445	<a href="#">9:1</a>
Nehemiah returns to Susa (32nd year of Artaxerxes I)		433	<a href="#">5:14</a> ; <a href="#">13:6</a>

## RESOURCES:

VIDEO: Bible Project Ezra/Nehemiah Video: <https://youtu.be/MkETkRv9tG8>

CHART: Chronology of Ezra: <https://www.esv.org/resources/esv-global-study-bible/chart-15-03/>

CHART: Chronology of Nehemiah: <https://www.esv.org/resources/esv-global-study-bible/chart-16-01/>

TRANSCRIPT: Adm. McRaven Urges Graduates to Find Courage to Change the World: <https://news.utexas.edu/2014/05/16/mcraven-urges-graduates-to-find-courage-to-change-the-world/>

VIDEO: Adm. McRaven Urges Graduates to Find Courage to Change the World: <https://youtu.be/yaQZFhrW0fU>

## QUOTES / SONGS:

*"Its not in how you start, but in how you finish that counts."* - **EVERYONE**

*"If you make your bed every morning you will have accomplished the first task of the day. It will give you a small sense of pride, and it will encourage you to do another task and another and another. By the end of the day, that one task completed will have turned into many tasks completed. Making your bed will also reinforce the fact that little things in life matter. If you can't do the little things right, you will never do the big things right. And, if by chance you have a miserable day, you will come home to a bed that is made — that you made — and a made bed gives you encouragement that tomorrow will be better. If you want to change the world, start off by making your bed."* - **Naval Adm. William H. McRaven, ninth commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, delivered a memorable speech at the University-wide Commencement on May 17**

*"Get 'er done."* - **Larry the Cable Guy**

*"I firmly believe that any man's finest hour, the greatest fulfillment of all that he holds dear, is that moment when he has worked his heart out in a good cause and lies exhausted on the field of battle — victorious."* – **Vince Lombardi**

*"Stopping at third adds no more to the score than striking out. It doesn't matter how well you start if you fail to finish."* – **Billy Sunday**

*"Yesterday's home runs don't win today's games."* – **Babe Ruth**

*"Failure is the great pre-qualifier for greater success."* - **Dr. Bill Dogterom**

*"It is finished."* - **Jesus**

## SCRIPTURES: New Living Translation unless otherwise noted.

### **Ecclesiastes 7:8**

**"Finishing** is better than starting. Patience is better than pride."

### **Ezra 6:1-22**

1 So King Darius issued orders that a search be made in the Babylonian archives, which were stored in the treasury.

2 But it was at the fortress at Ecbatana in the province of Media that a scroll was found. This is what it said:

*"Memorandum:*

3 *"In the first year of King Cyrus's reign, a decree was sent out concerning the Temple of God at Jerusalem.*

*"Let the Temple be rebuilt on the site where Jews used to offer their sacrifices, using the original foundations. Its height will be ninety feet, and its width will be ninety feet. 4 Every three layers of specially prepared stones will be topped by a layer of timber. All expenses will be paid by the royal treasury. 5 Furthermore, the gold and silver cups, which were taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar from the Temple of God in Jerusalem, must be returned to Jerusalem and put back where they belong. Let them be taken back to the Temple of God."*

6 So King Darius sent this message:

*"Now therefore, Tattenai, governor of the province west of the Euphrates River, and Shethar-bozenai, and your colleagues and other officials west of the Euphrates River—stay away from there! 7 Do not disturb the construction of the Temple of God. Let it be rebuilt on its original site, and do not hinder the governor of Judah and the elders of the Jews in their work.*

8 *"Moreover, I hereby decree that you are to help these elders of the Jews as they rebuild this Temple of God. You must pay the full construction costs, without delay, from my taxes collected in the province west of the Euphrates River so that the work will not be interrupted.*

9 *"Give the priests in Jerusalem whatever is needed in the way of young bulls, rams, and male lambs for the burnt offerings presented to the God of heaven. And without fail, provide them with as much wheat, salt, wine, and olive oil as*

they need each day. 10 Then they will be able to offer acceptable sacrifices to the God of heaven and pray for the welfare of the king and his sons.

11 “Those who violate this decree in any way will have a beam pulled from their house. Then they will be lifted up and impaled on it, and their house will be reduced to a pile of rubble. 12 May the God who has chosen the city of Jerusalem as the place to honor his name destroy any king or nation that violates this command and destroys this Temple. “I, Darius, have issued this decree. Let it be obeyed with all diligence.”

#### *The Temple's Dedication*

13 Tattenai, governor of the province west of the Euphrates River, and Shethar-bozenai and their colleagues complied at once with the command of King Darius. 14 So the Jewish elders continued their work, and they were greatly encouraged by the preaching of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah son of Iddo. The Temple was finally finished, as had been commanded by the God of Israel and decreed by Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes, the kings of Persia. 15 The Temple was completed on March 12, during the sixth year of King Darius's reign.

16 The Temple of God was then dedicated with great joy by the people of Israel, the priests, the Levites, and the rest of the people who had returned from exile. 17 During the dedication ceremony for the Temple of God, 100 young bulls, 200 rams, and 400 male lambs were sacrificed. And 12 male goats were presented as a sin offering for the twelve tribes of Israel. 18 Then the priests and Levites were divided into their various divisions to serve at the Temple of God in Jerusalem, as prescribed in the Book of Moses.

#### *Celebration of Passover*

19 On April 21 the returned exiles celebrated Passover. 20 The priests and Levites had purified themselves and were ceremonially clean. So they slaughtered the Passover lamb for all the returned exiles, for their fellow priests, and for themselves. 21 The Passover meal was eaten by the people of Israel who had returned from exile and by the others in the land who had turned from their corrupt practices to worship the Lord, the God of Israel. 22 Then they celebrated the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days. There was great joy throughout the land because the Lord had caused the king of Assyria to be favorable to them, so that he helped them to rebuild the Temple of God, the God of Israel.

#### **John 4:34-38**

34 Then Jesus explained: “My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing his work. 35 You know the saying, ‘Four months between planting and harvest.’ But I say, wake up and look around. The fields are already ripe for harvest. 36 The harvesters are paid good wages, and the fruit they harvest is people brought to eternal life. What joy awaits both the planter and the harvester alike! 37 You know the saying, ‘One plants and another harvests.’ And it's true. 38 I sent you to harvest where you didn't plant; others had already done the work, and now you will get to gather the harvest.”

#### **John 19:30**

When Jesus had tasted it, he said, “**It is finished!**” Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

#### **Philippians 1:6**

And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work **until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.**

#### **Revelation 16:17**

Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air. And a mighty shout came from the throne in the Temple, saying, “**It is finished!**”

#### **Revelation 21:6**

And he also said, “**It is finished!** I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life.