

16 July 23

## **Dedication of the Temple**

Lesson Text: **Ezra 6:13-22**  
Bible Background: **Ezra 6**  
Devotional Reading: **Ezra 5:1-5**

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**Keep in Mind:** *“Then the children of Israel, the priests and the Levites and the rest of the descendants of the captivity, celebrated the dedication of this [f]house of God with joy.” (Ezra 6:16 NKJV)*

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### **Aim for Change**

“By the end of the lesson, we will: **UNDERSTAND** that we should celebrate with joy what God has done in our lives; **DESIRE** to celebrate God’s blessings with joy; and **CELEBRATE** God’s blessings with joy.”

### **In Focus**

*In today’s lesson, we will study how the Children of Israel celebrated the successful rebuilding and dedication of God’s Temple just in time for Passover.*

### **Lesson Text**

#### **Ezra 6:13-22~NKJV**

**13** Then Tatnai, governor on this side the river, Shetharboznai, and their companions, according to that which Darius the king had sent, so they did speedily.

**14** And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.

**15** And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.

**16** And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy.

**17** And offered at the dedication of this house of God an hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and for a sin offering for all Israel, twelve he goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel.

**18 And they set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God, which is at Jerusalem; as it is written in the book of Moses.**

**19 And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month.**

**20 For the priests and the Levites were purified together, all of them were pure, and killed the passover for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves.**

**21 And the children of Israel, which were come again out of captivity, and all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the Lord God of Israel, did eat,**

**22 And kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the Lord had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.**

### **The Lesson**

#### **The People, Places and Times**

**Darius the Great.** Darius the Great reigned from about 522 to 485 B.C. He was one of the most competent Persian kings and is also known as Darius Hystaspes, or Darius, son of Hystaspes. Darius continued Cyrus' great policy of restoring the Jewish people to their homeland. In 520 B.C., Darius' second year as king, the Jews resumed work on the still-unfinished Temple in Jerusalem. Darius assisted with the project by ordering it to continue and even sending a generous funding to help restore worship in the Temple. The Temple was completed in 515 B.C. in the sixth year of Darius' reign.

**Sin Offering.** Also known as the guilt offering, was most holy sacrifice presented for intentional and unintentional sins of individuals as well as the priest and whole congregation (Leviticus 4–5). On the Day of Atonement, it was made with special solemnity as the priests made atonement for their sins and the sins of the people (Leviticus 16:3–11). The sin offering was representative of repentance and the appeal for divine forgiveness, and its acceptance marked continued fellowship and relationship with God.”

#### **Background:**

After release from captivity in Babylon for 70 years, King Cyrus issued a decree in 538 B.C., giving clearance for the Children of Israel to rebuild the Temple (Ezra 1:1–4). The work was under way when the contingency was met with resistance from neighboring provinces. The foundation of the rebuilding of the Temple was laid, but the work was halted under Artaxerxes's reign between 537 to 520 B.C. (Ezra 4).

Within the second year of the reign of King Darius, he reviewed the documents issued by King Cyrus and reversed the previous ruling by King Artaxerxes (Ezra 4:24). King Darius issued a decree (Ezra 6:8, NIV): *“Moreover, I hereby decree what you are to do for these elders of the Jews in the construction of this house of God.”*

These men were to be fully paid out of the royal treasury. God’s justice prevailed; He not only provided favor with the king to complete the work, but made sure they had more than enough to do it at someone else’s expense. As we embark on today’s lesson, we will study the celebration of the completed work and how the Children of Israel “memorialized this God-given victory.”

## **I. In Depth**

**1. The People Dedicate the New Temple (Ezra 6:13–16)** After years of delays and setbacks, the second Temple of God was finally completed! King Darius ordered the work not only be completed, but the neighboring provinces would provide the Children of Israel with whatever they needed. They rejoiced not because in their own strength they had accomplished something, but because of the favor of the Lord, which had been upon them as they sought to honor God by reinstating worship at the Temple. It was a time to celebrate. To start a work and see it to completion is a sign of the grace of the Most-High. How many times have we completed a task after many struggles and then got it in our heads it is by our own strength, we were able to complete the task? How wrong-headed we humans can be!

The Temple of God was completed by God’s command, not by human authority alone, as He worked through humanity. From Cyrus’s softened heart to Darius’s decision to command the completion of the work, it was all of God. We can learn from these past people of God. Having completed the building by the power of God, it was logical to dedicate the building back to God. It was God who initiated the project by His Spirit. It was God who guided their hands to its completion. The house belonged to God. All our victories, all our accomplishments, all our celebratory possibilities are because God has favored us. The Children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites were excited and filled with joy. Rebuilding the Temple was by no means a small feat. It took unity, hard work, and dedicated people to bring it to pass. God had given the word to go forth; now it was their turn to finish the work. What a great victory—now it was time to praise God!

**2. The People Offer Sacrifices to God for the New Temple (Ezra 6:17–18)** The Children of Israel brought an offering unto God as a part of the dedication ceremony of the new Temple. Reinstating worship was critical to their rededication as a nation to the ways of God. Following the model of how the first Temple of God was dedicated by Solomon, the Children of Israel were doing things in order and according to what was

written in the books of Moses. Their sacrifices were an expression of their joy and gratitude at the grace of a God who had restored them from exile and brought them back in fellowship with Him. Sacrificial offerings in the Old Testament were a means to atone for human sins and restore people back to God. The sin offering is particularly noted because everyone from the priests to the congregation at large had to confess their sins and turn away from them as the House of God was dedicated. Jesus, the perfect sacrifice, did away with all of that when He died for us once and for all on the Cross. The Children of Israel offered what is called a “sin offering. This included the blood from bullocks, rams, lambs, and goats.”

**3. The People Celebrate Passover in the New Temple (Ezra 6:19–22)** The dedication of the Temple was representative of the second exodus for the Children of Israel. Having been freed from captivity and delivered from the house of exile were causes of great celebration, and marked approximately by the Passover. The Passover as celebrated by Hebrew people is the archetype (or pattern) of divine intervention in the life of God’s people. It was the 14th day of the first month, and everyone was ceremonially clean. The Levites slaughtered the Passover lamb for all the exiles, for their brothers, the priests, and for themselves.”

After offering atonement for their sins, the Children of Israel and those converted to Judaism were commanded to consecrate themselves: that is, remove all filthiness and the “unclean practices of their Gentile neighbors in order to seek the Lord their God. This time of consecration was very important for the abiding presence of the Lord. Therefore, they had to clear their hearts and minds from anything that would be displeasing to Him as this new edifice was dedicated in honor of Him. For seven days, they celebrated with joy the Feast of Unleavened Bread because the Lord had filled them with joy by changing the attitude of the king of Assyria, so that he assisted them in the work on the House of God, the God of Israel. The Lord is the true source of all joy, and when we have His favor, He gives peace (Proverbs 16:7). When the Lord blesses us to complete a task, included in the celebration must be a rededication of our lives to God as an act of true worship.

## **II. Take Aways**

## **III. Closing Prayer**



**Our Read-Ahead for: 16 July 2023**

## **Dedication of the Temple**

**Monday:** Resistance to Rebuilding the Temple (**Ezra 4:1-5**)

**Tuesday:** Accusations of Seditious (**Ezra 4:11-6**)

**Wednesday:** Temple Construction Halted (**Ezra 4:17-24**)

**Thursday:** The Eye of God Upon Them (**Ezra 5:1-5**)

**Friday:** Who Gave You a Decree? (**Ezra 5:6-17**)

**Saturday:** The Temple's Official Endorsement (**Ezra 6:1-12**)

**Sunday:** The Temple's dedication (**Ezra 6:13-22**)