

EZRA 6

THE COMPLETION OF THE TEMPLE

The last chapter concluded with Tatnai and his friends requesting King Darius Hystaspes to search the Persian records and see if Cyrus had really made a decree for the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem. Tatnai and his friends probably hoped that this decree of Cyrus would not be found, and then the Jews' plea for their Temple-construction would be overruled and stopped. Darius commanded a search to be made for Cyrus' edict among the Persian records, but it was not found in Babylon. At length, however, the decree was discovered at Achmetha, in the province of the Medes. Perhaps someone who disliked the edict, but dared not destroy it, hid it there out of ill-will to the Jews, so that they might lose the benefit of it. But the Lord's Providence ordained for it to come to light.

Hereupon, in favor to the Jews, Darius confirmed Cyrus' decree and re-enforced it with one of his own. He forbade his officers to do anything in opposition to the building of the Temple, and he ordered the governors to assist the Jewish builders with money out of his own revenue. He gave a commandment that they should be supplied with everything they needed for offerings, and that it should be paid every day without fail, so that they might offer sacrifices and prayers for the happiness and prosperity of the king and his sons. Darius enforced his decree with a death penalty, and he also entailed a Divine curse upon any king or people who had any hand in the destruction of the Temple. From all this, we are reminded that the hearts of kings and rulers are in the hand of God, and He turns them – as the King of kings – whichever way He pleases. Also, when God's time has come for the accomplishing of His gracious purposes for His people, He will raise up instruments – sometimes even unlikely ones – to fulfill them! His Providence has often caused those things which have been intended for the Church's destruction to become beneficial to them (Phil. 1:12).

When the Jews' enemies received these orders from the king, they came with as much haste to encourage and assist the work, as their predecessors had done to put a stop to it (chapter 4:23) – even though the king's commandment was contrary to their own inclinations. And so the building of the Temple was carried on and finished in the year 515 BC. The elders of the Jews built with cheerfulness – being encouraged by the orders of the heathen kings, Cyrus and Darius. Could they be remiss in this good work when these foreign princes were so warm to support it? The elders also found themselves encouraged in the work by the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah, who certainly would have shown them the wonderful goodness of God in inclining the heart of the king of Persia to favor them. And now the work went on so prosperously that it was brought

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ Darius finds Cyrus' edict concerning the Temple, and re-enforces it – verses 1-12
- ❖ Construction on the Temple is finished – verses 13-15
- ❖ The Temple is solemnly dedicated, and the Passover is celebrated – verses 16-22

to perfection in four years' time! Christ's Church may take a long time to be built, but it will be finished at last. Every believer is also a living Temple; and much opposition is given to its building, by Satan and our own corruptions. We proceed in it with many stops and pauses, but He Who has begun the good work will see it performed!

When the Temple was finished, the Jews dedicated it with solemnity – publicly declaring the separation of it from common uses; and the surrender of it to the honor of God, to be used for His worship. The sacrifices that were offered upon this occasion were bullocks, rams, and lambs for burnt-offerings and peace-offerings; and twelve goats for sin-offerings – one for every tribe of Israel. This service was performed with great joy; for the people were glad to see the Temple built, and its affairs in such good order.

The Jews celebrated the Passover in the newly-built Temple. Now that they had recently been delivered out of their slavery in Babylon, it was proper to commemorate their deliverance out of their state of oppression in Egypt. Fresh mercies should put us in mind of former blessings. Mention is made here of the proselytes (heathen converts to the Jewish religion) who joined with them in this ordinance. All those who had separated themselves from the idolatries of their country, and resolved to seek Jehovah as their God, celebrated the Passover. Those who are foreigners to the Lord are welcome to renounce their sins, believe on the Lord Jesus, and partake of the Gospel-feast with the family of God.

We are also told of the great pleasure and satisfaction with which the people kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread, immediately following the Passover. Indeed, the Lord had given them reasons to rejoice. He is the Fountain from which all the streams of our joy flow; and He has promised to all those who take hold of His covenant, that He will make them joyful in His house of prayer. The particular reason that these people had for joy at this time was that God had turned the heart of the king to favor them and support their work. If those whom we feared would be against us actually prove to be on our side, then we may rejoice in it as a token for good, showing that our ways please the Lord (Prov. 16:7) – and He alone must have the glory of it!

Lord, we repent of the spiritual slothfulness which has prevented us from diligent laboring in the building up and strengthening of Your spiritual Temple. Thank You, though, for being faithful; for You will bring it to completion at last – despite our slowness! We give You thanks that Your Providence ordains all things for the good and well-being of Your Church and people – even causing the hearts of worldly rulers to serve Your purposes, for the advancement of Your Kingdom! Amen.

