

Ezra 6:1-15

The temple in Jerusalem was a symbol of the presence of God dwelling among his people but when the reality is present, the signpost is no longer necessary (**Rev. 21:22**). The second temple was completed on the third day of the month of Adar, 516 BC (**Ezra 6:15**), just over seventy years after the destruction of Solomon's temple. It was the place where the complex worship liturgy prescribed by the Levitical law could once again be performed but it was also the place where God was pleased to manifest Himself and dwell (See **Hag. 1:2, 4, 8, 9**) though He, himself, has no need of an earthly physical temple in which to live (**Acts 7:49–50; Isa. 66:1–2**). Yet God did “dwell” in the temple. The temple is his “house” or “home” (**6:3**). In this way, the Lord prefigures the incarnation in which the second person of the Trinity comes into the world (**Gal. 4:4; Jn 1:1–3, 14**). The physical temple in Jerusalem would also give way to God's dwelling in the hearts of believers (**1 Cor. 6:19**). The Bible views the church and her individual members as a temple for God (**1 Cor. 3:16**).

Summary

Ezra 6:1-15 records events associated with the completion of the temple and reflects on their significance.

1. Abundant Riches vv. 1-15

Ezra begins by highlighting God's abundant provision in the completion of the temple. First, he refers to the original decree of King Cyrus that had granted the Jews the right to return and rebuild the temple in Jerusalem (**Ezra 6:2**). Also, whilst the search for the official decree took place, the Jews were allowed to continue the building work unhindered by Governor Tattenai and his officials. Having been notified that the decree had been given by King Cyrus, Tattenai was ordered to “keep away” and allow the work to continue without interference (**Ezra 6:6**). In addition, any overruns in the cost of temple construction must be funded from the general treasury budget of the Persian satrapy Beyond the River (c.f. **Hag. 2:7; Ezra 7:11–26**). Ezra is writing to an audience in the days of Artaxerxes, saying that this kind of support has been evidenced now for more than seventy years! God is “able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think” (**Eph. 3:20**). It is a truth that we tend to forget, especially when it comes to the “governing authorities” God may bring good from the most surprising quarters (c.f. **Rom. 13:1**).

2. Divine and Human Decrees vv. 1-15

From one point of view, the rebuilding of the temple was in accord with the plans and decisions and efforts of men: “the elders of the Jews built” according to the “decree of Cyrus.” From another perspective, it was “the decree of God.”

How this is so is somewhat of a mystery to our finite human minds. (see **2LBC 3.1**). God makes his will of events come to pass in such a way that humans and the cosmos act in accord with their natures (**2LBC 3.1**). God works through human decision-making.

3. Crowned King/Priest

In Zechariah 6, the prophet depicts the coming of men from Babylon, Jews who had not returned with the others in 538/7 B.C. They bring with them gold and silver, which is fashioned into a crown fit for a king to wear. Joshua, the high priest, receives the crown instead of Zerubbabel, the civil leader. The crown was then placed in the completed temple as though waiting for the true King-Priest to appear. Joshua could not have fulfilled, however, all that was contained in the prophecy of **Zech. 6:12–13**. What is in view here is the coming of Jesus Christ, who alone is the true King-Priest. In that case, the temple—the second temple—stood as a sign of the coming of the Branch-Messiah, who would build the true temple of God.

What all the prophets both pre and post exilic were saying was that a day was coming when the kingdom of God would consist of men and women from all the nations of the world (E.g. **Isa. 2:2-4**). Like Solomon's temple, Israel's second temple did not fulfill anything like what Isaiah prophesied. Rather, it foresaw another temple, a future temple just like what Ezekiel described in (**Ezek. Chapters 40–48**).

Jesus pointed to this temple; this second temple and prophesied that it would be destroyed and rebuilt again in three days (**Matt. 26:61**). In speaking of “three days,” he was referring to Himself. They would kill him, but he would rise again on the third day. He is the temple/tabernacle who dwells among his people (**John 1:14; 14:17; 1 Cor. 6:19**).

In the book of The Revelation, John sees a new city and a new Eden and a restored world but something is conspicuous by its absence (**Rev. 21:22**). There is no temple in the New Jerusalem because when the reality has come (the presence of God), there is no more need for the signpost.

The “house was finished” (**Ezra 6:15**) in 516 B.C., but in another sense, the work had hardly begun. A new day was coming, a day of the Lord's power and might.

A day when type and shadow would give way to reality and substance.

As they stood before that completed temple, perhaps men such as Haggai and Zechariah could imagine a day when the temple of God would be filled with men and women from every tribe and nation and people and tongue, a Pentecost-like vision of the new heavens and the new earth and of the presence of God among his people. As they saw it by faith, they began to worship the God of such extraordinary grace that promised so much to so rebellious and ungrateful a people.