



Ezra 4-6

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Tape #7146
By Chuck Smith

In our last study, at the end of chapter three, they had just laid the foundation for the new temple with the mixed emotions. The young people shouting for joy and excitement over the fact that they were rebuilding now the temple. The older people who remembered the glory of Solomon's temple, they were weeping. So much noise was going up, you couldn't tell the difference between the noise of those that were rejoicing and shouting for joy and those that were weeping over the contrast of the pitiful beginnings compared with the tremendous glory that was Solomon's temple. The noise was heard afar off.

Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the LORD God of Israel; Then they came to Zerubbabel, (4:1-2).

Who was the governor that was placed by the Persian king over Judah.

and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither (4:2).

When the Northern Kingdom of Israel was captured and destroyed by the Assyrians, the Assyrians repopulated the populations in other areas. They brought foreigners in to live in the cities of Samaria. However, the wild animals went on the rampage and many of the people were destroyed by the wild animals and so they sent to the king of Assyria and said, "look, we don't know the customs of the gods of this land, we need some people who have lived here and knew the customs of the gods. That we might worship those gods so we won't be attacked by the animals".

So the Assyrians sent back some of the priests and some of the people of Israel, back into the land in order to teach the people the customs of the Lord and the worship of the Lord. These people then sort of amalgamated their worship with the worship of the Lord. Tried to combine their pagan forms of worship with the worship of God. These people were later known to be Samaritans; they were a mixture, not true and full Jews. They were a mixture of the other races and they were rejected by those Jews that returned from captivity.

As a result, a tremendous animosity developed between the Samaritans and the Jews. Remember that during the times of Christ that animosity existed. That Jesus would rarely pass through the country of the Samaritans. Coming from Galilee to Jerusalem, would usually come down the Jordan Valley to Jericho and up from Jericho because they didn't like to pass through the land of Samaria because of the strife and the friction that existed. When Jesus did pass through the land of Samaria, you remember when he asked the woman for a drink of water. She questioned and challenged him and said, "Why do you ask me for a drink? You're a Jew, I'm a Samaritan, we don't deal with each other". Later on, however, Philip went to Samaria and preached the gospel of Christ unto them and there was a tremendous revival; many believed and were baptized at the preaching of Philip.

Today, there still exists, in the area around Nablus, Samaritans. Their ranks have diminished, there's only about two hundred and ten or eleven Samaritans left in the world today. They are looked upon as an off-brand religious sect. They still, interestingly enough, on Passover offer a Passover lamb on Mount Gerizim. They still have animal sacrifices on Passover there on Mount Gerizim. You remember the woman

that questioned Jesus said, "Our fathers say we're to worship God in this mountain, you say in Jerusalem". On Mount Gerizim they still worship God. However, because they are so small now and they will not marry outside of the Samaritan group or culture, most of the Samaritans today are sort of idiots because of the inbreeding. So they are mentally deficient, they are rather weird and odd and they feel that this will probably be the last generation of Samaritans because of the difficulty the inbreeding has created. They expect the Samaritans to die out within the next generation.

This was really the beginning of the animosity. They came and offered their help to Zerubbabel but Zerubbabel rejected their offer for help. They said, "we seek your God as you do," (4:2). Not fully, they sought Jehovah but as it says, "they offered sacrifices unto Jehovah but they served their other gods". They were not sole in their worship for service for God. They honored God, they respected God, they acknowledged the God of Israel, YAWEH, but still they served their other gods.

There are people today who acknowledge Jesus Christ, they believe in Jesus Christ. They believe that he was the Son of God, that he died for their sins and yet they serve, when it comes to the actual service, their other gods. Jesus said, "You can't serve two masters," and yet how many people are endeavoring to do that today as they pay lip Amish to Jesus Christ. Really, if you look at their lives, it isn't a life of real total commitment to Jesus Christ. They serve their other gods; they serve Asherum, Baal, Molech or Mammon, though yet honoring Jesus.

Samaritans and Zerubbabel wanted nothing to do with a watering down or a weakening of the worship of the Lord. It is true that they were offering the sacrifices but still, they were also worshiping their other gods.

But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the LORD God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us (4:3).

That, as I say, began the friction between the Samaritans and the Jews. That's when they said, "Hey, Jerusalem isn't the place anyhow, Mount Gerizim is the place that God placed his blessing. It was Mount Gerizim where Abraham brought Isaac and offered Isaac as the sacrifice and this is the place where we should worship God". Thus this is the beginning of that division that has continued to the present day.

Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building (4:4).

It really indicates that their hearts weren't in serving or worship God or helping them. The moment that their help is rejected, they turned against them and seek to hinder the building of the temple.

And hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia (4:5).

This Darius is not the Darius that we dealt with earlier this is a second one whose name was Darius and he came along later in history. During this period of time there was the effort to hinder. We have what is actually a misconception, I think, in that we often times believe if I'm serving the Lord and doing my best to serve the Lord, then everything ought to be easy and smooth there ought not to be any problems. You can be sure, if you're on the right track; Satan is going to try to throw the switch. If things are really going smooth and there are no problems and things are just rolling along, then you better examine the road that you're on. "They that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," I hate that promise. Nonetheless, it's a statement of the scripture.

It is not easy to live the Christian life. The Christian life is not without it's difficulties; it's not without it's hindrances. You could be sure the moment that you make a real commitment to follow Jesus Christ, there's going to be all kinds of stumbling blocks placed in the road. Satan is going to try to detour you from that commitment. He's going to try to hinder the work of God in your life or the work you seek to do for

God. “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against these spiritual entities and forces”. Satan will always seek to hinder the work of God.

So we find that the people of the land sought then to hinder the work, “they hired the counsellors to frustrate the purposes, all the days of Cyrus all the way until the reign of Darius” (4:5).

And in the reign of Ahasuerus, (4:6).

Now this is not the husband of Esther which we will get to when we study the book of Esther. This is the Cambyses of secular history. He reigned from about 529 to about 521.

And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they unto him an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem. And in the days of Artaxerxes wrote Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of their companions, unto Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the writing of the letter was written in the Syrian tongue, and interpreted in the Syrian tongue (4:6-7).

This Artaxerxes is called, in secular history, Sudo Smerdes. Sudo, because he was an usurper to the throne who followed the Cambyses and he took over the throne of Persia but reigned for only a period of ten months, very short-lived reign and was succeeded then by Darius who we will come to in chapter six.

During this time of this Artaxerxes that is not the Artaxerxes that we’ll get to when we get to the book of Nehemiah; who gave the commandment to Nehemiah to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. This is in secular history, this guy Smerdes.

During the reign of Smerdes, they wrote this letter and this basically is the essence of the letter. They said all of these groups that have inhabited this land, and we get a bunch of names here that I’m not going to try and mess with in verse nine. These were the names of the ethnic groups that dwelt in the land that had come in and populated the area at the time of the Assyrian empire and their names describe the ethnic area that they had come from and their nationalities.

And the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Asnappar brought over, and set in the cities of Samaria, and the rest that are on this side the river, and at such a time. This is the copy of the letter that they sent unto him, even unto Artaxerxes the king; Thy servants the men on this side the river, (4:10-11).

Probably meaning the river Euphrates.

and at such a time. Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came up from thee to us are come unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and the bad city, and have set up the walls thereof, and joined the foundations (4:11-12).

There is nothing that we know of from scripture to indicate that they had started work on the wall, however, it is quite possible that they did. Nehemiah was the one that was commanded to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. Zerubbabel and Jeshua came with Ezra with orders to restore the temple, to rebuild the temple. That’s what Cyrus felt that his mission was is the helping of the rebuilding of the temple. They said that they actually started to build the walls and joined together the walls.

Be it known now unto the king, that, if this city be builded, and the walls set up again, then will they not pay toll, tribute, and custom, and so thou shalt endamage the revenue of the kings (4:13).

You’re about to lose out on money that would be forthcoming.

Now because we have maintenance from the king’s palace, (4:14).

In other words, we've been set here as governors to oversee this and we are paid by the king to take care of the king's business and to protect the king's business; "we have maintenance from the king's palace" (4:14).

and it was not meet [right] for us to see the king's dishonour, therefore have we sent and certified the king; (4:14).

They sent this message to certify to the king the things that are going on. They come off as men who are concerned for the king's welfare. We're hired by you and paid by you so we felt it was necessary to write to you and warn you about these things because we see a danger developing if they build the walls, they're going to rebel and it's going to be bad news.

[We suggest] That search may be made in the book of the records of thy fathers: so shalt thou find in the book of the records, and know that this city is a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces, and that they have moved sedition within the same of old time: for which cause was this city destroyed (4:15).

True if he searches the records he'll find that after Nebuchadnezzar conquered the city of Jerusalem, three different times they rebelled against the Babylonians until Nebuchadnezzar finally in the last siege of Jerusalem destroyed the city and the temple and broke down the walls of the city and broke down the houses; just left the city a rubble. The first two times he just took captives and he took treasures but the last time, because they continued to rebel, he destroyed the place. So if he searches the history books, he's going to find that they are correct in this assertion.

We certify the king that, if this city be builded again, and the walls thereof set up, by this means thou shalt have no portion on this side the river (4:16).

These guys are gonna lead a rebellion and you're gonna lose this big chunk of your province.

Then sent the king an answer unto Rehum the chancellor, and to Shimshai the scribe, (4:17).

The word chancellor there is the governor. Rehum was the one who sent the letter.

and to the rest of their companions that dwell in Samaria, and unto the rest beyond the river, Peace, and at such a time. The letter which ye sent unto us hath been plainly read before me. And I commanded, and search hath been made, and it is found that this city of old time hath made insurrection against kings, and that rebellion and sedition have been made therein. There have been mighty kings also over Jerusalem, (4:17-20).

Probably as a reference to David and Solomon's reigns.

which have ruled over all countries beyond the river; (4:20).

That is on that side of the Euphrates and both under David and Solomon's reign, the extension of the kingdom was all the way to the river Euphrates and the people paid their tolls and tribute unto David and Solomon.

and toll, tribute, and custom, was paid unto them. Give ye now commandment to cause these men to cease, and that this city be not builded, until another commandment shall be given from me (4:20-21).

Don't let them do anything until you hear from me.

Take heed now that ye fail not to do this: why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings? (4:22).

So this fellow Smerdes sent a cease and desist order; they put up a red tag and ordered the building of the city to cease. Notice it was the city ceased building the city.

Now when the copy of king Artaxerxes letter was read before Rehum, and Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews, and made them to cease by force and power. Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia (4:23-24).

As I said, Smerdes only reigned for ten months and then he was deposed and Darius became the king over Persia. In the second year of the reign of Darius we find a change of decree and so the work only ceased for a little over a year.

Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them (5:10).

As I said last week, it would be to your benefit in conjunction with the reading of the book of Ezra, you'll be helped immensely if you'll read the book of Haggai, which is only two chapters, and also the book of Zechariah. They were prophets at the same period of history and their prophecies relate to these things. They are mentioned here that "Haggai and Zechariah prophesied to the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of God,"

In the first chapter of Haggai it says, "Is it time for you O Israel to dwell in your sealed houses and the house of the Lord lays desolate". Take a look and what's going on; you're planting a lot of seed but your reaping small crops. There's a drought that's going on. God is seeking to get your attention. You are trying to gather money but you put it into your purse but the purse has holes in it. Your money isn't going anywhere and you're having a lot of problems. Haggai said, the reason is you have turned from the work of building the house of the Lord and you're thinking of yourself first rather than God first. Putting yourself first above God and your personal needs above the Lord, God's just let you experience a real spiritual drought in your own lives. So you gather in a lot but you really have nothing, you're short. Haggai was encouraging the people to get back and finish building of the house of God.

We find that the same thing is true in the prophecies of Zechariah as he was encouraging Zerubbabel and Jeshua, the leaders of the building. He gives the vision that he has of this period of time. So if you'll read those books, they'll dovetail right here in the fifth chapter as it tells us that Haggai and Zechariah were prophesying at this particular time.

Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem: and with them were the prophets of God helping them (5:2).

So this group of fellas, they weren't just prophesying, they got in and started doing the work; I like that.

I don't have much confidence in a person who just tells me what I ought to be doing if he isn't willing to get in and do it himself. Tell me that I ought to be sacrificing but they're not willing to sacrifice themselves. Sort of troubles me when Oral Roberts asked me to go to the bank and borrow money so I could send it to him when he has an eight thousand dollar winter home in Palm Springs. I wrote him and said, "You sell your home and I'll go to the bank and borrow money". There's always those guys who tell you what you ought to be doing but, unless they're willing to get in and get their hands dirty and do some of the work themselves, it doesn't really go very far in my book.

Zerubbabel and Jeshua were working together and the other prophets of God were helping them.

At the same time came to them Tatnai, governor on this side the river, and Shetharboznai, and their companions, and said thus unto them, Who hath commanded you to build this house, and to make up this wall? (5:3).

That would be the wall of the temple.

Then said we unto them after this manner, What are the names of the men that make this building? (5:4).

They were trying now by intimidation; “all right fellows, what’s your names? Who gave you the authority? Who commanded you to do this? Give us the names”. They were seeking by intimidation to discourage them and to cause them to quit.

But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they could not cause them to cease, till the matter came to Darius: and then they returned answer by letter concerning this matter. The copy of the letter that Tatnai, governor on this side the river, and Shetharboznai, and his companions the Apharsachites, which were on this side the river, sent unto Darius the king: (5:5-6).

This is basically what they wrote.

They sent a letter unto him, wherein was written thus; Unto Darius the king, all peace. Be it known unto the king, that we went into the province of Judeah, to the house of the great God, which is builded with great stones, (5:7-8).

An interesting thing this word “great stones” in the Chaldean language is “rolling stones”. It is long been a mystery how in the world they were able to move such great stones that they used in building the wall and in building the temple. In the wall, the Western wall of the temple mount, there are stones that are eight feet thick, five feet high and up to forty-five feet long and estimated to weigh over a hundred tons. The mystery is how in the world they ever lifted such stones in the place on the wall or how they ever moved them. Can you imagine how many men it would take? It’s been a mystery for a long time. Here was suggested perhaps how they did it. It is interesting as they have been excavating in what is known as the rabbi’s tunnel, which by the time we go to Israel next year will be open to the public. We will be able to go into the Western Wall and in the rabbi’s tunnel, we’ll be able to go all the way up to the Antonio Fortress and see these excavations that have been going on for years. When you do, I’ve been up there, you will see this one stone of forty-five feet long, five feet high and eight feet thick.

Also, in this excavation of this tunnel, they found a stone that was half rounded and the other sides were squared off and they’ve come to the conclusion that the ingenious way by which they got these stones from the quarry to the building sight was that when they first quarried these stones, they quarried them round and they rolled them. Now of course you can understand the ease of rolling a stone, trying to lift the stone like that or use pry bars and to scoot it, it would almost be an impossibility. By first of all quarrying it as a round stone, it can be rolled into the sight and then they feel that, at the sight, they flattened off the one side and then they rolled the stone into position so that the flat side came down; flat side met flat side and then when in position, they then chipped it off and quarried it while it was in position. So here, as it says, “great stone” (5:8), the word great there is rolling.

and timber is laid in the walls, and this work goeth fast on, and prospereth in their hands. Then asked we those elders, and said unto them thus, Who commanded you to build this house, and to make up these walls? We asked their names also, to certify thee, that we might write the names of the men that were the chief of them. And thus they returned us answer, saying, We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and build the house that was builded these many years ago, which a great king of Israel builded and set up (5:8-11).

So they didn’t tell us their names, they just said that they were “servants of God of heaven and earth, and just rebuilding this temple that had once existed, built by a great king of Israel” (5:11).

But after that our fathers had provoked the God of heaven unto wrath, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house,

and carried the people away into Babylon. But in the first year of Cyrus the king of Babylon the same king Cyrus made a decree to build this house of God (5:12-13).

So they're claiming that some guy by the name of Cyrus, this is back in the year 536 and now we are some sixteen years later, 520. So they had come pretty far along in the building of the house and they said Cyrus the king of Babylon.

Cyrus was called the king of Babylon, as was Darius, after the great city of Babylon was conquered by Persia; he was also called the king of Babylon because he conquered Babylon. So don't let that throw you, Cyrus the king of Babylon, he was the king of Persia but having conquered Babylon he also took the title king of Babylon. Other of the kings did that. You'll find that the Persian kings were often called the king of Babylon.

And the vessels also of gold and silver of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple that was in Jerusalem, and brought them into the temple of Babylon, those did Cyrus the king take out of the temple of Babylon, and they were delivered unto one, whose name was Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor; And said unto him, Take these vessels, go, carry them into the temple that is in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be builded in his place (5:14-15).

His other name is Zerubbabel and that's the name by which we know him. It is easier than Sheshbazzar, so I suggest you use Zerubbabel. Many of them had two names. You notice we said that Artaxerxes was actually the Smerdes of secular history. You remember when Daniel was taken captive unto Babylon, that they gave him a Babylonian name, Belteshazzar. His friends, Azariah and Hananiah, were given Babylonian names, Shadrach and Meshach. Often you'll find two different names; Babylonian name and the name in Hebrew or the name in Chaldean and the name in the Persian language.

Then came the same Sheshbazzar, and laid the foundation of the house of God which is in Jerusalem: and since that time even until now hath it been in building, and yet it is not finished (5:16).

These guys have been going for sixteen years, they're not through yet.

Now therefore, if it seem good to the king, let there be search made in the king's treasure house, [library] which is there at Babylon, whether it be so, that a decree was made of Cyrus the king to build this house of God at Jerusalem, and let the king send his pleasure to us concerning this matter (5:17).

Now these men, again, are suggesting search the records. Let's find out if these guys are telling us the truth or not, we want to know.

Then Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in the house of the rolls, [books] where the treasures were laid up in Babylon. And there was found at Achmetha, in the palace that is in the province of the Medes, a roll, and therein was a record thus written: In the first year of Cyrus the king the same Cyrus the king made a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, Let the house be builded, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid; the height thereof threescore cubits [ninety feet] and the breadth thereof threescore cubits [ninety feet]; With three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber: and let the expenses be given out of the king's house: And also let the golden and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took forth out of the temple which is at Jerusalem, and brought unto Babylon, be restored, and brought again unto the temple which is at Jerusalem, every one to his place, and place them in the house of God. Now therefore, Tatnai, governor beyond the river, Shetharboznai and your companions the Apharsachites, which are beyond the river, be ye far from thence: Let the

work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his place (6:1-7).

Now, I love it how the Lord so often turns the table. You remember of course with the story of Joseph and his brethren? Jealous of their younger brother, they decided to kill him. Then they opted to sell him as a slave to traders going to Egypt. They sold their brother. Hard hearted, they would not listen to his cries as he was carried off to Egypt, weeping and crying and asking them to have mercy. They were so callous and jealous of him that they did not respond to his cries. Later on, when God exalted Joseph in Egypt and his brothers had to come down and live under the rule of this brother who they have despised and so mistreated. When their father Jacob died, they came trembling before Joseph feeling that “hey, now that dad is dead, he’s gonna just wipe us all out, he’s going to get even with us now”.

In those days, you remember earlier with Jacob and Esau, Esau said, “As soon as dad dies, I’m going to kill you”. The reason why he wouldn’t kill him while his dad was still alive was he was afraid his dad would curse him for killing his brother; “I don’t want a curse of my father on me, so as soon as dad is dead, you’ve had it, you’re finished”. So often they would wait until the death of the father to take it out on their brothers so that their father wouldn’t curse them. They didn’t want the curse of the father lying on them.

Now when Jacob died, that thought, man we had it now. Joseph’s gonna get even with us, he’s gonna wipe us out. So they came trembling to Joseph and said, “seek mercy,” but they did not show mercy to Joseph earlier. But as they came to Joseph he said unto them, “I know that what you did, you intended for evil. You have evil intends but God meant it for good. God had a purpose that was greater than you realized. Though your hearts were evil and you had evil intends, God has meant this whole thing for good, that he might preserve the family”. Joseph said, “God and live with your families and don’t worry, I’m not after blood or to destroy you because God has intended good on me”.

So many times God has taken the evil intentions of man and turned them around for good. In a few weeks, we’re gonna get to one of my favorite stories in the Bible; the story of Esther. There is a classic example of how God took the evil intentions of Amos and turned the tables on the guy. Here God does the same thing, these guys are thinking they’re going to shut down this project.

The first letter that came back from Artaxerxes was to cease building the wall, but he made a mistake, he didn’t say anything about the temple. So these guys ceased the wall and just concentrated on building the temple. Now they come back and start giving them a hard time on the temple, “who ordered you to do this and what are your names?” So they sent their letter, expecting of course Darius to send a letter saying cease and desist, to stop them. Instead, the tables are turned and listen what happens. I love the way God says things like this. Darius sent back the letter and said,

Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews but this house of God in his place. Moreover I make a decree what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews for the building of this house of God: that of the king’s goods, even of the tribute [taxes] beyond the river, forthwith expenses be given unto these men, that they be not hindered (6:7-8).

So the taxes that you are collecting, make sure that they have enough money to continue the work, that the work not be hindered.

And that which they have need of, both young bullocks, and rams, and lambs, for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the appointment of the priests which are at Jerusalem, let it be given them day by day without fail: (6:9).

Not only are you not to touch or hinder these guys, help them with the money that they need and the things for sacrifice.

That they may offer sacrifices of sweet saviors unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons (6:10).

Have them pray for me and for my family.

Also I have made a decree, that whosoever shall alter this word, let timber be pulled down from his house, and being set up, let him be hanged thereon: (6:11).

In other words, anybody tries to stop them, take down the timbers of his house and make a gallows and hang the guy.

and let his house be made a dunghill for this (6:11).

Now it interesting that the Jews to the present day sort of practice the destruction of the houses of those who create disturbances in the West Bank. If they come in your house and find dynamite or contraband, they just blow up the house. This was the decree that was made clear back in the book of Ezra.

And the God that hath caused his name to dwell there destroy all kings and people, that shall put to their hand to alter and to destroy this house of God which is at Jerusalem. I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with speed (6:12).

O man, how God turned the tables on these guys.

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 (6:13).

They were subject to this guy so they had to follow the orders.

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. 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 (6:14-15).

So it was finished in the month of March, just in time for the Passover. It is interesting how that many times when you have a building project, you set your target date to be completed on say the holidays; we want to be in by Easter or we want in to be in by Christmas. That helps spur you, you have a target date, we want to be finished by this date. So they, no doubt, had set it to be next year by the time Passover comes along, let's be through with it so we can actually have a big Passover; we can celebrate at the Passover Feast. So they finished it in the month of Adar, which on our calendar is the month of March.

in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king (6:15).

They sent the letter in the second year. They've been building for six years at that time and so it means that they were about twenty years in the rebuilding of the temple.

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 (6:16).

Dedication day, they're going to begin again.

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, (6:17).

Indicating again that there were members of all twelve tribes that had come back.

twelve he goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel. 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 (6:17-18).

The whole process of worship again was established in Jerusalem. Temple worship is restored.

And the children of captivity kept the Passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month. For the priests and the Levites were purified together, all of them were pure, (6:19).

That is from a ceremonial sense that they could offer the sacrifices.

and killed the Passover for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves. 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, 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 (6:19-22).

The glorious conclusion to the building project with the dedication and the observing again of the Passover, re-establishing of the worship and the priesthood and the choruses and the whole thing that was set up by David originally. Set up by David on paper, Solomon carried it out.

We come now to chapter seven and we will come into that in our next study. Chapter seven and eight and then we will finish Ezra with chapters nine and ten. So your next assignment is chapters seven and eight. Now in as much as I won't be here next Sunday, it gives you two weeks, which means you have to read Haggai and Zechariah in order to get the full background. So you have plenty of time to do it. So I want you to jump to Haggai and Zechariah and read these prophecies in these two weeks that we have in order that you can get a full background to this study in Ezra and Nehemiah, which we will be moving into next because they are both tied together with the two prophets.

May the Lord be with you, watch over you and keep you in his love, strengthen you by his spirit as we seek to do the Lord's work. May the Lord turn against the enemy every ploy that he might institute against your walk. May he turn it around. And though the enemy may intend it for evil, may the Lord turn it for good, that you might see the good hand of God upon your life, enabling you to be the man or to be the woman that God wants you to be; filled with his spirit, walking in the spirit, and instrument God uses to bring his love and his grace to others. In Jesus name, Amen.