

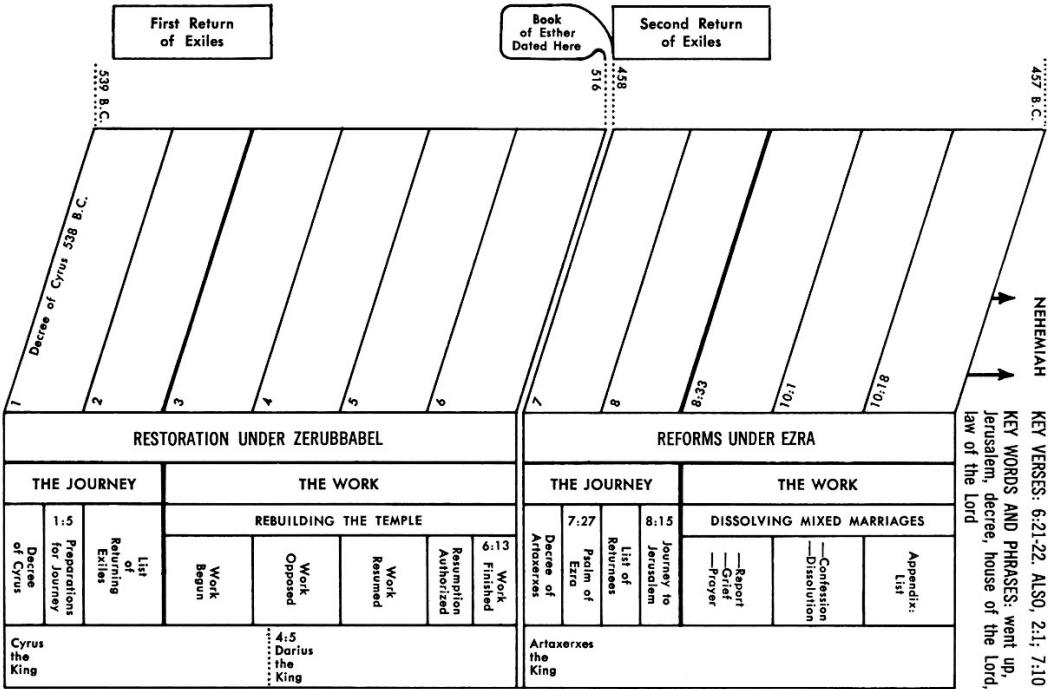
Ezra 6 Commentary

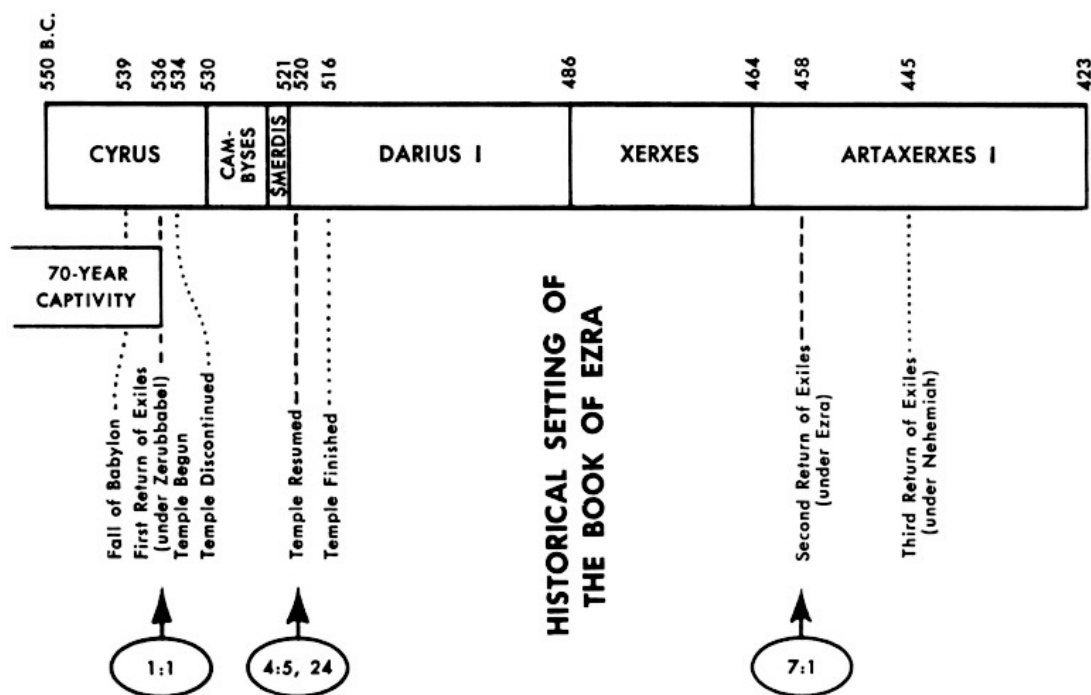
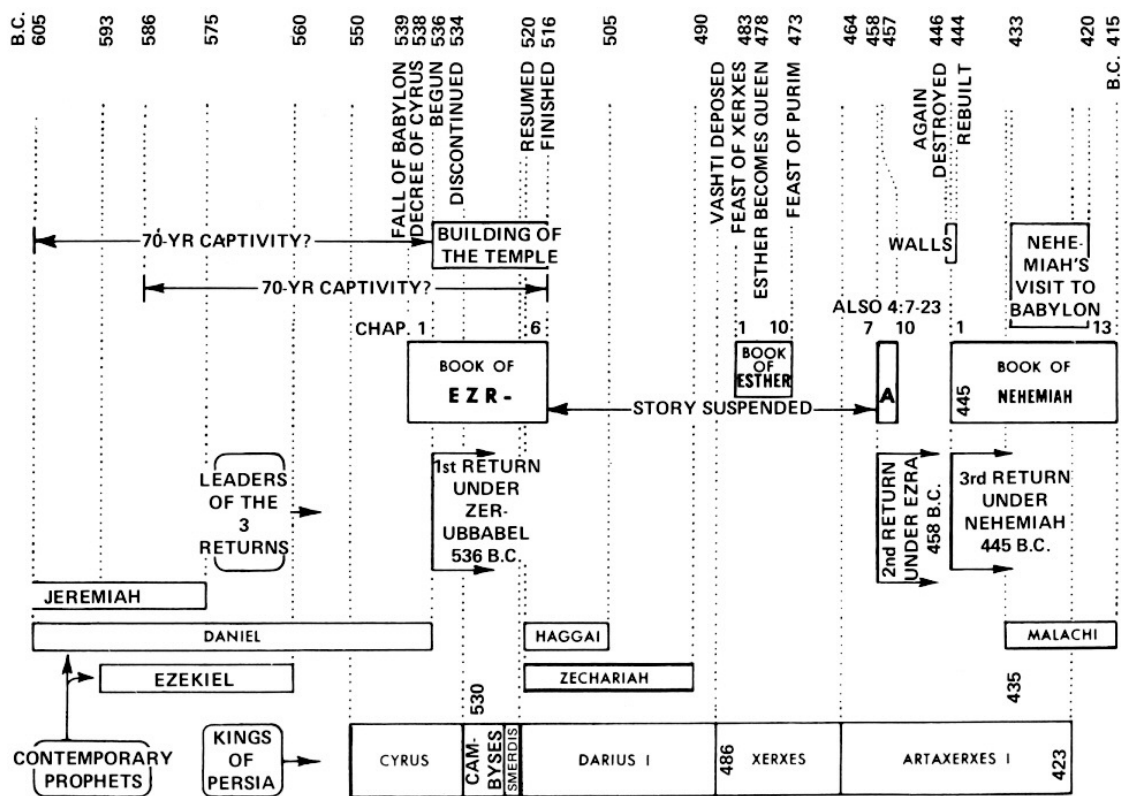
PREVIOUS

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Source: [ESV Maps](#)

EZRA UNDER CONSTRUCTION
JUST A FEW NOTES NOW
WILL FINISH IF THE LORD WILLS

Ezra 6:1 Then King Darius issued a decree, and search was made in the archives, where the treasures were stored in

Babylon.

- and search (KJV): Ezr 4:15,19 5:17 Job 29:16 Pr 25:2
- rolls (KJV): Chal, books, Ps 40:7 Jer 36:2-4,20-23,29,32 Eze 2:9 3:1 Rev 5:1
- laid up (KJV): Chal, made to descend

Then King Darius issued a decree, and search was made in the archives, where the treasures were stored in Babylon.

Bob Utley - King Darius" This Persian ruler reigned from 522 to 486 B.C. He was a very strong and effective ruler. [Kings of Persia](#) ■ **"archives"** This is literally "house of texts." At this point in time, they would include cuneiforms, tablets, and papyrus and/or leather scrolls (cf Ezra 6:2). These special buildings (temples) were usually the storage places of treasures as well as official documents.

Believer's Study Bible - (vv. 1,2) The "archives" is the royal library or record building, in which valuable documents and treasures were stored. Achmetha is probably Ecbatana, the capital of Media. The decree of Cyrus was there, no doubt written primarily in the Persian language, though a Chaldean transcript may have accompanied the document (v. 2). The contents of the discovered document follow (vv. 3-5).

Matthew Henry - The decree for completing the temple- Ezra 6:1-12. When God's time is come for fulfilling his gracious purposes concerning his church, he will raise up instruments to do it, from whom such good service was not expected. While our thoughts are directed to this event, we are led by Zechariah to fix our regard on a nobler, a spiritual building. The Lord Jesus Christ continues to lay one stone upon another: let us assist the great design. Difficulties delay the progress of this sacred edifice. Yet let not opposition discourage us, for in due season it will be completed to his abundant praise. He shall bring forth the head-stone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it.

Steven Cole - God, the Cause of Our Joy (Ezra 6:1-22)

How high is the pursuit of joy on your priority list? Do you view it as something that is not only nice to pursue, but absolutely necessary? Many Christians view the Christian life primarily in terms of duty and obedience, and those are not minor themes in the Bible. But how many Christians view the pursuit of joy, gladness, and delight in God as a prime duty?

All too often, we view God as a stern, cosmic killjoy, who doesn't want anyone to get too carried away with having a good time in life. The Puritans are often falsely caricatured as being against joy and pleasure. Someone lampooned a Puritan as a person who suffers from an overwhelming dread that somewhere, sometime, somehow, someone may be enjoying himself. That's a false view. It was the Puritans who said, "The chief end of man is to glorify God and *enjoy* Him forever."

John Piper has helpfully modified that classic sentence: "The chief end of man is to glorify God *by* enjoying Him forever" (SEE [Desiring God](#) [Multnomah Books], 10th Anniversary Edition, p. 15). He also rightly says, "*God is most glorified in me when I am most satisfied in him*" (*ibid.*, p. 9, italics his). Thus if glorifying God is our highest aim, then finding joy and satisfaction in God must be our deliberate, lifelong, consuming pursuit. To the degree that we fall short of fullness of joy in God, we fail to glorify Him as He deserves.

The joy that God imparts to His people is the theme of Ezra 6. The chapter begins with the outcome in question. The work on rebuilding the temple had stopped for 16 years due to opposition from the people in the land. Then, under the ministries of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, the work resumed. But they barely got started again when Tattenai, the governor of the province that included Israel, confronted the Jews with whether they had proper permission to rebuild the temple. They told him about Cyrus' decree. Because God's eye was upon them, Tattenai permitted them to continue construction until word got back from the current king, Darius, as to what to do (Ezra 5:3-5).

In Ezra 6, Darius makes a search and eventually finds the decree of Cyrus in the government archives. He respects that decree and sends back a ruling that not only should the work go on, but also it ought to be supported by government funds. Thus the temple was completed on March 12, 515 B.C. The Lord's people gathered to celebrate the dedication of this temple with joy (Ezra 6:16). This was followed by a celebration of the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread "with joy." Ezra explains the source of that joy: "for the Lord had caused them to rejoice, and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward them to encourage them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel" (Ezra 6:22). We learn:

God's aim is to give us great joy in Him and His sovereign ways.

Joy and gladness in the Lord are not minor themes in the Bible. Moses told Israel that they should seek the Lord at the place He would choose, and that there they shall "rejoice in all [their] undertakings in which the Lord [their] God has blessed [them]" (Deut.

12:5, 7). Later he warned them, “Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joy and a glad heart, ... therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the Lord will send against you” (Deut. 28:47-48).

The Psalms are full of joy and gladness. God is the psalmist’s “exceeding joy” (Ps. 43:4). We are commanded, “Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness; come before Him with joyful singing” (Ps. 100:1-2). “Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous ones; and shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart” (Ps. 32:11). “But let all who take refuge in You be glad, let them ever sing for joy; and may You shelter them, that those who love Your name may exult in You” (Ps. 5:11). “In Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever” (Ps. 16:11).

Jesus told the disciples to “rejoice that [their] names are recorded in heaven.” Then He “rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit” at the thought of God’s sovereign ways in salvation (Luke 10:20-21). “For the joy set before Him,” He endured the cross (Heb. 12:2). He told the disciples that He had spoken to them so that His joy may be in them, and that their joy may be made full (John 15:11). The reason that they were to ask in His name and receive was that their joy may be made full (John 16:24). He promised that on judgment day, those who serve Him faithfully will be told, “Enter into the joy of your master” (Matt. 25:21).

The apostle Paul commands us, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, Rejoice!” (Phil. 4:4). He told the Corinthians (2 Cor. 1:24) and the Philippians 1:25 that he was working with them for their joy. He listed joy as the second fruit that the Spirit produces in believers (Gal. 5:22).

The apostle Peter reported how those who believe in Jesus “greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory” (1 Pet. 1:8). To a suffering church he wrote, “But to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation” (1 Pet. 4:13). John’s Revelation 19:6-7 pictures the saints rejoicing throughout eternity: “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.”

I’ve only skimmed the surface of this theme in Scripture. But this should suffice to prove that joy in the Lord *is not* an optional or secondary matter for the believer. Rather, it is the very essence of the Christian faith, as Jonathan Edwards argues so convincingly in his “Treatise on Religious Affections” (BORROW [*The Works of Jonathan Edwards*](#) [Banner of Truth], 1:237). Or, as Alexander Maclaren comments on our text, “It is, in one aspect, the end of God’s dealings, that we should be glad in Him” (*Expositions of Holy Scripture* [Baker reprint], 3:301).

Our text unfolds five strands of the joy that God wants us to have as His people:

1. God wants us to know the joy of His providential care for us.

God’s remarkable providential care for His people underlies this entire account. Tattenai had sent his letter to Darius, expecting the king to send back orders to shut down this work at once. God’s providence is seen in the very fact of the king finding the decree of Cyrus from some 18 years before. They did not find it at Babylon, but rather in the fortress in Ecbatana, Cyrus’ summer residence.

God’s providential care is further seen in that Darius did not say, “I don’t care what my predecessor said. I command you to stop this rebellious work at once!” Rather, he not only told Tattenai to keep away from the project (Ezra 6:6), but also to fund the project out of his tax revenues (6:8-9)! And, to add some motivation, he decreed that anyone who violated his edict should be impaled on a timber drawn from his house, and the house should be made a heap of rubble! He added the wish that the God who has caused His name to dwell there would overthrow any king or people who attempted to destroy this house of God (Ezra 6:11-12).

God’s providential care is further alluded to in the mention that the building was completed according to God’s command, and also “the decree of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes” (Ezra 6:14). Why does Ezra mention Artaxerxes, who reigned about 50 years after the completion of the temple? Probably he did it for political protocol, in that Artaxerxes was the reigning king when Ezra wrote. Since he had been kind enough to issue a decree for the rebuilding of Jerusalem’s walls, Ezra wanted to give him credit in case he read this account.

God’s providential working is directly stated in Ezra 6:22, where it is stated that the Lord “had turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward” the Jews. It is unusual to refer to the Persian king as the king of Assyria. Perhaps Ezra did this to remind Israel that Assyria, Israel’s former enemy, had been conquered by the Persians whose king was friendly toward Israel (Stan Evers, *Doing a Great Work* [Evangelical Press], p. 64). Behind all these remarkable events was God’s mighty hand, turning the king’s heart like channels of water wherever He wishes (Prov. 21:1).

Do you see and rejoice in God’s providential care for you in every little as well as major thing that happens to you? Jesus told us that not one sparrow falls to the ground apart from the Father, and that He even knows the number of the hairs on our heads. Therefore, we should not fear, but should trust in God (Matt. 10:29-31). Since we are the living stones with which Jesus is now building His

temple, the church, we can rest assured that He orders all things for our ultimate good. He will not discard or forget about His chosen people.

2. God wants us to know the joy of His provision for us.

Tattenai and his colleagues did not diligently carry out the king's decree to fund the rebuilding of the temple out of his tax revenues (Ezra 6:13) because they thought it was a great idea! They did it with all diligence because they didn't care for the alternative of being impaled on a timber from their houses. God used the decree of a pagan king to provide the materials for the temple and even the animals and other items for the sacrifices (Ezra 6:9). King Darius was trying to cover all his bases by having the local people pray to their gods on behalf of him and his sons (Ezra 6:10). But God used the king's religious superstitions to provide for His people.

The Lord does not usually use pagan governments as the main source of material support for His church. But however He provides, whether through the tax breaks we receive from our government as a charitable, non-profit organization, or through the generous giving of the Lord's people, God is the one who provides for His church as we wait upon Him through faith and prayer. And when we see God's provision, we should be filled with joy. In 2 Corinthians 8 & 9 we see Paul brimming over with joy in the Lord at the generous gift of the Macedonians for the poor Christians in Jerusalem. He points out how our generous giving not only meets the needs of others, it also overflows through many thanksgivings to God, resulting in God being glorified (2 Cor. 9:12-13).

We should rejoice daily not only in how God provides for the work of His church, but also in how He provides for our personal needs. Songwriter Wendell Loveless told of a 64-year-old woman who had been confined to her bed for more than 16 years. She was in constant pain and unable to move her limbs. Yet she was one of the most thankful people Loveless had ever met.

She rejoiced that God had left her a great blessing—the use of her right thumb. Her other hand was stiff and completely useless. But with a two-pronged fork fastened to a stick, she could put on her glasses, feed herself, sip her tea through a tube, and turn the pages of a large Bible. Although it took great effort, everything she did was with the use of just one thumb.

She once told a visitor, "I have so much to be thankful for." When asked why, she replied, "Now that my sins are forgiven, I can lie back and daily drink in the great love of Jesus my Savior." Asked if at times she became despondent, she replied, "I'm perfectly content to lie here as long as the Lord keeps me in this world, and I'm also ready to leave whenever He calls me." ("Our Daily Bread," May, 1993.) She knew the joy of God's provision!

3. God wants us to know the joy of productivity in our service for Him.

The temple was finally finished, about 20 years after the foundation was laid, and just over four years after the rebuilding began again under the ministries of Haggai and Zechariah. There are differing views about the dimensions given in Ezra 6:3. These dimensions seem to exceed those of Solomon's temple, which was 20 cubits wide, 60 cubits long, and 30 cubits high. But if this temple was bigger, it is hard to explain the disappointment of the old-timers when the foundation was laid (Ezra 3:12). Since the length is not stated here, some think that the original text has been corrupted. Others suggest that these greater dimensions were the outside limits that Cyrus would support, but the actual building was much smaller, leading to the disappointment of some of the older Jews. But, whatever the solution, the temple was finished and the people rejoiced at its dedication (Ezra 6:15-16).

While we can and should rejoice at the completion of a building project, we should find much greater joy when we see the Lord using us in the building of His spiritual temple, the church. There is great joy in heaven when one sinner repents (Luke 15:7, 10). As the father of the prodigal explains to the grumbling brother, "We had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found" (Luke 15:32). Paul calls the Philippian church his joy and crown (Phil. 4:1). He says the same thing to the Thessalonians, that they are his joy and crown of exultation, his glory and joy (1 Thess. 2:19-20).

I admit that there can be a sense of frustration in ministry to people, in that the "project" is never completed, and there are many setbacks. You can't step back and say, "Ah, look at that person: Complete in Christ!" Or, "Look at this church: Harmonious, mature, fruitful—the work is done!" But while that is so, we can rejoice in the progress in godliness that we see in others' lives as God uses us in ministry to them. We can rejoice in that our work in the Lord is never in vain (1 Cor. 15:58). When we glorify God by bearing much fruit, our joy will be full (John 15:8, 11).

Thus God wants us to know the joy of His providential care for us; the joy of His provision for us; the joy of productivity in our service for Him.

4. God wants us to know the joy of praising Him corporately.

When the temple was completed, the people gathered and "celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy" (6:16). Their

offerings were not nearly on the grandiose scale of Solomon's dedication (1 Kings 8:63), but it was a sincere offering of what they had. Concerning the sin offering, Derek Kidner observes, "It was a confession of failure but also of faith. There was still atonement and still the covenant with the whole people—for this was the implication of the *twelve sacrifices*" (*Ezra & Nehemiah, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries* [IVP], p. 60, italics his). The appointment of the priests and Levites to their divisions and orders (Ezra 6:18) shows their ongoing commitment to worship God.

Their observation of the Passover was a celebration of God's gracious salvation, remembering how He delivered them from slavery in Egypt. The Feast of Unleavened Bread that immediately followed symbolized the holy fellowship of a redeemed people with their God. For us, these feasts are consolidated in the Lord's Supper, where we remember that Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us. "Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. 5:8).

Sincere and heartfelt joy must accompany our praise in order for the praise to be genuine. C. S. Lewis said that as he was beginning to believe in God, he could not understand the demands in the Psalms that we praise God. He didn't see the point in this; besides, it seemed to him to picture God as craving "for our worship like a vain woman who wants compliments." He goes on to show why he was wrong.

But the most obvious fact about praise—whether of God or anything—strangely escaped me. ... I had never noticed that all enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise.... The world rings with praise—lovers praising their mistresses, readers their favorite poet, walkers praising the countryside, players praising their favorite game....

My whole, more general difficulty about the praise of God depended on my absurdly denying to us, as regards the supremely Valuable, what we delight to do, what indeed we can't help doing, about everything else we value.

I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation. (*Reflections on the Psalms* pp. 94-95, cited by Piper, [*Desiring God*](#) p. 18.)

John Piper, who cites Lewis and credits him with helping Piper get clear on this, adds,

Pursuing joy in God and praising God are not separate acts. "Praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment." Worship is not added to joy, and joy is not the by-product of worship. Worship is the valuing of God. And when this valuing is intense, it is joy in God. Therefore the essence of worship is delight in God, which displays His all-satisfying value ([*The Dangerous Duty of Delight*](#) [Multnomah Books], p. 24).

Spontaneous praise is good when you're alone, but it's better when you share the experience with others. Last Monday, Daniel Liba, our guest from Slovakia, Marla, and I sat on the South Rim of the Grand Canyon and watched a spectacular sunset. I would have enjoyed it if I had been there alone, but it's better to share it with others you know and love. It's the same with worship. It's great to enjoy the beauty of the Lord in your private devotions, but it's better to join with others and praise Him corporately. Finally,

5. God wants us to know the joy of purity and obedience to Him.

It is stated that Israel rebuilt the temple "according to the command of God" (Ezra 6:14). They organized their worship "as it is written in the book of Moses" (Ezra 6:18). Further, it is stated that "the priests and the Levites had purified themselves together; all of them were pure" (Ezra 6:20). Not only the returned exiles, but also "all those who had separated themselves from the impurity of the nations of the land" joined together "to seek the Lord God of Israel" by celebrating the Passover (Ezra 6:21).

For there to be true joy in our worship, there must be holiness in our lives. We must separate ourselves from the impurity of the nations. It is hypocrisy that the Lord hates if we live "like the nations" all week and then put on a pious front to worship Him on Sundays. Contrary to popular opinion, purity of life and obedience to God do not rob us of joy. Purity and obedience are at the heart of true joy. Sin gives brief pleasure but lasting scars and pain. Obedience may be difficult at the moment, but it yields "the peaceful fruit of righteousness" (Heb. 12:11).

Conclusion

C. S. Lewis said, "The ultimate purpose of God in all his work is to increase joy" (source unknown). He makes the radical suggestion that the thought that it is bad to desire our own good and enjoy it, is *not* a part of the Christian faith. He explains,

Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot

imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased (in Piper, [Desiring God](#), p. 17).

Lewis was saying what John Piper preaches so clearly, that God Himself is the source of infinite joy, and that we should pursue *joy in Him* with all our hearts.

So I ask you as I ask myself, "How high is the pursuit of joy on your priority list?" God's aim is to give us great joy in Him and His sovereign ways. Only when we have true joy in God will we glorify Him as we should.

Discussion Questions

1. What does biblical joy look like? Does it mean always being bubbly? If not, how would you describe it?
2. How can we have joy in God's providential care when we go through trials that make it seem that He does not care?
See James 1:2-5.
3. If a Christian is not involved in ministry of some kind, he is too self-focused. Agree or disagree? Give biblical support.
4. Why are pursuing God and pursuing our own joy *not* at odds? What would you say to a young person who said, "I want to have fun in life now; I'll follow God later"?

Brian Bell - Nehemiah 6

1. ROADBLOCK RESOLVED (Ezra 6)

1. Darius' response. I'll Read Ezra 6:1,2. They found it.
2. Map – They went looking where? (Babylon). They found it where? (Achmetha, probably *Ecbatana*, the ancient capital of Media)
 1. Show how far were they apart. 265 miles as the crow flies.
 2. If we were only dealing with **natural** means then they wouldn't have found this...but the eye of their God was upon *them*.
3. (Ezra 6:8-12) Don't miss this...the **difficulty** raised by their foes really *became their benefit*
 1. For the king decreed that their needs be supplied & expenses met.
 2. The man who would have hindered the progress is now used to *help with great gifts*.
 1. This reminds us of whom in Esther? (Moredcai/all the attacks, then backfired on Haman)
 3. When you **obey God**, you at once ensure *His cooperation* for the accomplishment of the task at hand.
4. (Ezra 6:13-18) Ezra 6:14-16
5. The work began with mingled joy & tears (Ezra 3:11-13) but it ended with **all** the people rejoicing (Ezra 6:16)
 1. It is highly probable that this is when Psalm 146-148 were composed.
 2. In the Septuagint they are entitled: *The Psalms of: Haggai & Zechariah*.
 1. See Ps.146:4,9; Ps.147:2,3
 3. The joy of worshipping & serving God, is always accompanied by *Satan's attempts to spoil it*
 1. He doesn't know how **not** to do that. *It is the heart, passion & core of his very nature*
 2. However, Satan cannot **thwart** the plans of God.
 3. **Dan 4:35** All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; **He does according to His will** in the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of the earth. **No one** can restrain His hand Or say to Him, What have You done?
6. (Ezra 6:19-22) Passover & The Feast of Unleavened Bread.
7. This is the 1st Passover since King Josiah's, more than 100 years earlier.
 1. They were made **clean** (Ezra 6:20) – They purified themselves.
 2. They were **unified** (Ezra 6:21a) - They ate together.
 3. Who partook? (Ezra 6:21b) – All who had separated themselves from the filth/uncleanness of the nations of the land.
 4. Why? (Ezra 6:22b) – In order to seek the Lord God of Israel.
8. **Communion**: point out where communion is set up. Come & pick up, back up, wait to be lead by 1 of the designated communion leaders.

Ezra 6:2 In Ecbatana in the fortress, which is in the province of Media, a scroll was found and there was written in it as follows: "Memorandum–

- at Achmetha (KJV): or, at Ecbatana, or, in a coffer, [achmta <Strong's H712>], probably from the Persian [chm,] {kham,} "a

house for a summer residence," with a prefix, [a,] {aleph,} and the Chaldee termination [ta,] {tha,} most likely denotes Ecbatana, as the Vulgate and Josephus read, the summer residence of the Persian monarchs. It was situated in a mountainous region at the foot of mount Orontes, or Jasonius, according to Ammianus, on the southern confines of Media and Persia, and according to Pliny, 750 miles from Seleucia the Great, 20 miles from the Caspian passes, 450 miles from Susa, and the same from Gaze Atropatene, and in lat. 37 degrees 45 min., long. 88 degrees, according to Ptolemy. The building of the city is ascribed to Semiramis by Diodorus, but to Deioces by Eusebius, (in Chron. 1.1,) and Herodotus, who states that it was surrounded by seven walls, strong and ample, built in circles one within another, rising each above each by the height of their respective battlements; each being distinguished by a different colour, the first white, the second black, the third purple, the fourth blue, the fifth orange, the sixth plated with silver, and the seventh with gold. The largest of these was nearly the extent of Athens, i.e., 200 furlongs, according to Dion Chrysostom; but Diodorus Siculus states the circumference of Ecbatana to be 250 furlongs. Within the inner circle stood the king's palace and the royal treasury, so much celebrated for its splendour and riches by Polybius. It is highly probable, as D'Anville and Major Rennel suppose, that the present Hamadan, whose ruins attest its former splendour, occupies the site of Ecbatana. It is situated in Al Gebal, at the foot of the lofty mountain Alwend, about 80 leagues from Ispahan, and also from Bagdad.



In Ecbatana in the fortress, which is in the province of Media, a scroll was found and there was written in it as follows:
“Memorandum

Bob Utley - "Ecbatana in the fortress" This name means "place of gathering" (BDB 1079). Xenophon, in his *Cyropaedia*, 8.6.22, says that Cyrus lived in the city of Babylon (capital of Babylon) in the winter, in the city of Susa (also called Sushan, capital of Elam) in the spring, and the city of Ecbatana (capital of Media) in the summer. We learn from other historical evidence that Cyrus II stayed in Ecbatana during his first year of reign and this is where the documents concerning the Jews and other peoples' repatriations were found. This is archaeological confirmation of the historicity of these historical records. The word **"fortress"** (BDB 1084) can mean (1) a castle; (2) a temple (cf. 1 Chr. 29:1,19; Neh. 2:8); or (3) a fort (Akkadian) ■ **Memorandum** - Davidson, *Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p. CL, says it is from a Chaldean (Babylonian) root "to record" or "to remember," therefore, a memorandum (BDB 1088, KB 1853).

Henry Morris - Achmetha. Archaeologists say that the Persian emperors of this period used four capitals--Babylon, Persepolis, Susa, and Achmetha (or Ecbatana). Accordingly, the "search" (Ezra 6:1) began in Babylon, but the scroll was finally found in the palace at Achmetha. This is the only reference in the Bible to this city.

Ryrie - The efficient Persian government kept its records on scrolls of papyrus or leather at Ecbatana (modern Hamadan on the road from Baghdad to Teheran). It was a city at 6,000 ft (1,829 m) elevation, with a climate conducive to the preservation of scrolls.

Ezra 6:3 **“In the first year of King Cyrus, Cyrus the king issued a decree: ‘Concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, let the temple, the place where sacrifices are offered, be rebuilt and let its foundations be retained, its height being 60 cubits and its width 60 cubits;**

- the first year (KJV): Ezr 1:1-4 5:13-15 2Ch 36:22,23
- the place (KJV): De 12:5,6,11-14 2Ch 2:6 Ps 122:4
- the height (KJV): 1Ki 6:2,3 2Ch 3:3,4 Eze 41:13-15 Rev 21:16

In the first year of King Cyrus, Cyrus the king issued a decree: 'Concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, let the temple, the place where sacrifices are offered, be rebuilt and let its foundations be retained, its height being 60 cubits and its width 60 cubits

Bob Utley - "Cyrus the king issued a decree" This occurred in 538 b.c. It is recorded in Hebrew in chapter 1, in Aramaic here in chapter 6. Some scholars think that chapter 1 was the verbal decree and chapter 6 was the written decree for the Archives. This seems possible because the Jews did not have written documentation for their claims concerning the decree of Cyrus. The historicity of this decree is confirmed by a similarly written Persian decree addressing the request for the rebuilding of an Elephantine Jewish worship center in Egypt. ■ **"be rebuilt"** This VERB (BDB 1084) is a *Hithpael* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense. ■ **"its height being 60 cubits and its width 60 cubits"** The size was specific to keep the cost of construction within limits. Cyrus let all the people groups exiled by Assyria and Babylon return home and rebuild their national temples, therefore, cost was a factor (cf. Ezra 6:4). It is just possible that the 60 cubits was meant to parallel Solomon's temple ("its foundations be retained," Ezra 6:3, cf. 1 Kgs. 6:2). Several aspects of the rebuilding effort mimic Solomon's temple (i.e., length – 60 cubits, width – 20 cubits, and height – 30 cubits). If this is true then the "20 cubit width" found in the Peshitta may be accurate. The MT also has a variant as to the height of the temple, "60 cubits seems inappropriate (unless one assumes the 120 cubits of 2 Chr. 3:4 to refer to the temple itself). Also notice the MT does not record the length at all. Some textual confusion has occurred. ■ **"cubits"** The ancients used parts of the human body for measurement. People of the ANE used the following (1) width between the outstretched arms (2) length from elbow to middle finger (cubit) (3) width from outstretched thumb to little finger (span) (4) length between all four fingers of a closed hand (handbreadth)

The cubit (BDB 52, KB 61) was not completely standardized, but there were two basic lengths: (a) normal male's elbow to middle finger (about 18 inches, cf. Deut. 3:11) (b) royal cubit was a bit longer (about 20 inches, cf. 2 Chr. 3:3; Ezek. 40:5; 43:13)

Ryrie - Vs. 6:3-5 These added details, appropriate to the official memorandum, were not included in the public proclamation of 1:2-4. For the dimensions, see note on 1 Kings 6:2.

Ezra 6:4 with three layers of huge stones and one layer of timbers. And let the cost be paid from the royal treasury.

- three rows (KJV): 1Ki 6:36
- the expenses (KJV): Ezr 7:20-23 Ps 68:29 72:10 Isa 49:23 60:6-10 Rev 12:16

with three layers of huge stones and one layer of timbers. And let the cost be paid from the royal treasury

Bob Utley - "huge stones" This does not refer to the huge stones of Solomon's Temple, but to stones so large that they had to be rolled. See note at Ezra 5:8. ■ **"one layer of timbers"** The Aramaic term "new" (*hdt*, BDB 1092) is probably a scribal variant for "one" (*hd*, BDB 1079, cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 30). This involves the change of one Hebrew letter and seems to fit the archaeological evidence of the architecture involved in the temples of this period and this locality (e.g., Ezra 5:8; 1 Kgs. 6:36; 7:12). This design may have been to help prevent earthquake damage or collapse. However, the Septuagint and many scholars believe this refers to "stories" (vertical), not sections of walls (horizontal). The term "layer" is uncertain (BDB 1102). If it does refer to "stories" then another affinity to Solomon's temple is mimicked (Solomon's temple had several stories). This would then denote three of stone and one of wood, which would make it taller and longer (cf. Ezra 6:3, i.e., 60 cubits vs. 30 cubits) than Solomon's temple! But this does not fit Ezra 3:12-13; Haggai 2:1; and Zech. 4:10. It is better to relate it to the cultural period of architectural design of earthquake resistant walls. ■ **"let the cost be paid from the royal treasury"** The VERB (BDB 1095, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT) is used in a JUSSIVE sense.

Ezra 6:5 'Also let the gold and silver utensils of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, be returned and brought to their places in the temple in Jerusalem; and you shall put them in the house of God.'

- the golden (KJV): Ezr 1:7,8 5:14 Jer 27:16,18-22 Da 1:2 5:2
- which Nebuchadnezzar (KJV): 2Ki 24:13 25:14,15 2Ch 36:6,7,10,18 Jer 52:19
- brought (KJV): Chal, go

Also let the gold and silver utensils of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, be returned and brought to their places in the temple in Jerusalem; and you shall put them in the

house of God

Bob Utley - There is another series of commands. (1) "be returned" (BDB 1117, *Haphel* IMPERFECT) used in a JUSSIVE sense (2) "brought" (BDB 1090, "go," *Peal* IMPERFECT) used in a JUSSIVE sense (3) "put" (BDB 1102, "deposit," *Aphel* IMPERFECT) possibly also used in a JUSSIVE sense ■ These utensils are described in Exod. 25:29 (cf. 1 Kgs. 7:50); Num. 7; and 2 Kgs. 25:13-16. They are discussed in Ezra 1 as being returned by the Persian government to Sheshbazzar to take back to the temple in Jerusalem.

Ezra 6:6 “Now therefore, Tattenai, governor of the province beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai and your colleagues, the officials of the provinces beyond the River, keep away from there.

- Tatnai (KJV): Ezr 5:3
- your companions (KJV): Chal, their societies, Ezr 5:6
- be ye far (KJV): Ge 32:28 43:14 Ne 1:11 Ps 76:10 Pr 21:1,30 Isa 27:8 Ac 4:26-28 Ro 8:31

Now therefore, Tattenai, governor of the province beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai and your colleagues, the officials of the provinces beyond the River, keep away from there

Bob Utley - **keep away from there** - This phrase is literally "far be from there." It is an Aramaic legal idiom also found in Egyptian papyri of this period (cf. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 643). The VERB (BB 1089, KB 1858) is a *Peal* IMPERATIVE PLURAL. The command is both physical and mental (BDB 113, "keep aloof"). It may be an Aramaic legal idiom (*Anchor Bible*, vol. 14, p. 50). Notice that the Persian leaders who officially initiated the inquiry are now commanded to (1) stop hindering the work and stay away (Ezra 6:7) (2) pay for the work (without delay, Ezra 6:8) (3) provide the necessary sacrificial animals and other items the priests needed for annual as well as aily offerings (cf. Ezra 6:9)

Ezra 6:7 “Leave this work on the house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews rebuild this house of God on its site.

- Let the work (KJV): Ac 5:38,39

Leave this work on the house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews rebuild this house of God on its site

Bob Utley - **"Leave this work. . .alone"** This is another *Peal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 1114). ■ **"rebuild"** This VERB (BDB 1084, *Peal* IMPERFECT) is used in a JUSSIVE sense. ■ **"on its site"** See note at Ezra 5:15. Apparently the use of ancient foundations was a Near Eastern way of showing continuity with previous generations.

Ezra 6:8 “Moreover, I issue a decree concerning what you are to do for these elders of Judah in the rebuilding of this house of God: the full cost is to be paid to these people from the royal treasury out of the taxes of the provinces beyond the River, and that without delay.

- I make a decree (KJV): Chal, by me a decree is made
- the king's (KJV): Ezr 6:4 4:16,20 7:15-22 Ps 68:29-31 Hag 2:8
- hindered (KJV): Chal, made to cease, Ezr 4:21,23 5:5

Moreover, I issue a decree concerning what you are to do for these elders of Judah in the rebuilding of this house of God: the full cost is to be paid to these people from the royal treasury out of the taxes of the provinces beyond the River, and that without delay.

Bob Utley - Darius is following Cyrus' decree by funding the project from the Persian royal treasury.

Ryrie - Vs. 6:8-10 Darius not only confirmed Cyrus's previous decree, but added one of his own, which provided for some of the taxes to be given to the Jews--a provision that must have shocked Tattenai, since it cut into his share. Animals and foods for the sacrifices in the Temple were also to be supplied.

Ezra 6:9 “Whatever is needed, both young bulls, rams, and lambs for a burnt offering to the God of heaven, and wheat, salt, wine and anointing oil, as the priests in Jerusalem request, it is to be given to them daily without fail,

- young bullocks (KJV): Lev 1:3-5,10 9:2 Ps 50:9-13
- lambs (KJV): Ex 29:38-42 Nu 28:1-29:40
- wheat (KJV): Lev 2:1-16 Nu 15:4-31 1Ch 9:29
- salt (KJV): Lev 2:13 Mk 9:49
- let it be given (KJV): Isa 49:23

Whatever is needed, both young bulls, rams, and lambs for a burnt offering to the God of heaven, and wheat, salt, wine and anointing oil, as the priests in Jerusalem request, it is to be given to them daily without fail

Bob Utley - "Whatever is needed, both young bulls, rams, and lambs for a burnt offering" Obviously the Persian Archives received information from the Jews because they knew exactly the type of sacrifices which needed to be offered (cf. Exod. 29:38ff; Lev. 2:1; Num. 28:11ff). From other archaeological finds it is clear that the Persians made the effort to know the regulations and cultus of the religions of their empire. ■ **"salt"** Salt was to be a part of every sacrifice (cf. Lev. 2:13; Num. 18:19; Ezek. 43:24). Salt was a cultural sign and symbol of a covenant (cf. 2 Chr. 13:5). It was an idiom of fellowship and loyalty (cf. Ezra 4:14).

Ezra 6:10 that they may offer acceptable sacrifices to the God of heaven and pray for the life of the king and his sons.

- sweet savours (KJV): Chal, rest, Ge 8:21 Lev 1:9,13 Eph 5:2
- pray (KJV): Ezr 7:23 Jer 29:7 1Ti 2:1,2

that they may offer acceptable sacrifices to the God of heaven and pray for the life of the king and his sons

Bob Utley - 6:10 "may offer acceptable sacrifices to the God of heaven and pray for the life of the king and his sons" This "acceptable sacrifices" (BDB 1102, cf. Dan. 2:46) is a Hebrew (BDB 629) idiom, "soothing aroma" (e.g., Gen. 8:21; Exod. 29:18,25,41; Lev. 1:9,13,17; 26:31), which denoted an acceptable offering that corresponded to YHWH's specifications, directions, as well as the proper motive. This fits in perfectly with the Persian religious world-view as we understand it from Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius, and later, Artaxerxes. Although they were Zoroastrians they sought the good will of the national gods of the ancient Near East by repatriating their peoples, rebuilding their temples, and by making sure the regular sacrifices were done appropriately. Their actions had more to do with self-interest and superstition than religious zeal.

Ezra 6:11 “And I issued a decree that any man who violates this edict, a timber shall be drawn from his house and he shall be impaled on it and his house shall be made a refuse heap on account of this.

- whosoever (KJV): Ezr 7:26
- timber (KJV): Es 5:4 7:10
- hanged (KJV): Chal, destroyed
- his house (KJV): 2Ki 9:37 10:27 Da 2:5 3:29

And I issued a decree that any man who violates this edict, a timber shall be drawn from his house and he shall be impaled on it and his house shall be made a refuse heap on account of this

Bob Utley - This verse has three IMPERFECTs used in a JUSSIVE (command) sense (Ezra 6:12; 7:21 also have two IMPERFECTs used in the same way). This royal threat was serious! ■ **impaled** - This VERB (BDB 1099, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT) is used in a JUSSIVE sense. Whatever the exact meaning, it was a public display of capital punishment used as a deterrent (cf. Gen. 40:22; 41:13; Deut. 21:23; Dan. 2:5; 3:29). Verse 11 is typical of the curse formulas used to insure compliance to royal edicts. ■ **"his house shall be made a refuse heap on account of this"** The Septuagint, I Esdras 6:32, and JPSOA have "forfeit." However, the rabbinical understanding is reflected in the Aramaic Targums, which translate this as "dung-hill" (cf. 2 Kgs. 10:27; Dan. 2:5). Reducing criminals' homes and possessions to rubbish was a common practice in the ancient Near East to humiliate both the offender and his family. The ultimate cultural insult would be to turn the site of the home into a public latrine.

Believer's Study Bible - "Alters" apparently means either changing or violating the edict. The punishment described may be

impalement, crucifixion, or hanging. The Persians used both impalement and crucifixion frequently. The Romans continued crucifixion by nailing the victim to a cross.

Ezra 6:12 "May the God who has caused His name to dwell there overthrow any king or people who attempts to change it, so as to destroy this house of God in Jerusalem. I, Darius, have issued this decree, let it be carried out with all diligence!"

- caused (KJV): Ex 20:24 De 12:5,11 16:2 1Ki 9:3 2Ch 7:16 Ps 132:13,14
- destroy (KJV): Ps 5:10 21:8-10 137:8,9 Isa 60:12 Ob 1:10 Zec 12:2-4 Ac 5:38,39 9:5 Rev 19:14-21
- I Darius (KJV): Es 3:14,15 8:14
- speed (KJV): Ezr 6:13 Ec 9:10

May the God who has caused His name to dwell there overthrow any king or people who attempts to change it, so as to destroy this house of God in Jerusalem. I, Darius, have issued this decree, let it be carried out with all diligence

Bob Utley - "the God who has caused His name to dwell there" This follows the covenant phrasing of Deuteronomy (cf. Deut. 12:5,11,13-14,18; 26:2; and Exod. 20:24). This became a reference to Mount Moriah in Jerusalem (cf. Gen. 22:2; 1 Chr. 21:18-27; 2 Chr. 3:1) where, later, Solomon's Temple was built.

Ezra 6:13 Then Tattenai, the governor of the province beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai and their colleagues carried out the decree with all diligence, just as King Darius had sent.

- Tatnai (KJV): Ezr 4:9,23 5:6
- so they did (KJV): Es 6:11 Job 5:12,13 Pr 29:26

Then Tattenai, the governor of the province beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai and their colleagues carried out the decree with all diligence, just as King Darius had sent

Bob Utley - As Darius commanded "with all diligence" (BDB 1082, cf. Ezra 6:12), these officials responded "with all diligence" (Ezra 6:13).

Matthew Henry - The temple is finished - Ezra 6:13-22. The gospel church, that spiritual temple, is long in the building, but it will be finished at last, when the mystical body is completed. Every believer is a living temple, building up himself in his most holy faith: much opposition is given to this work by Satan and our own corruptions. We trifle, and proceed in it with many stops and pauses; but He that has begun the good work, will see it performed. Then spirits of just men will be made perfect. By getting their sins taken away, the Jews would free themselves from the sting of their late troubles. Their service was with joy. Let us welcome holy ordinances with joy, and serve the Lord with gladness.

Ezra 6:14 And the elders of the Jews were successful in building through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they finished building according to the command of the God of Israel and the decree of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.

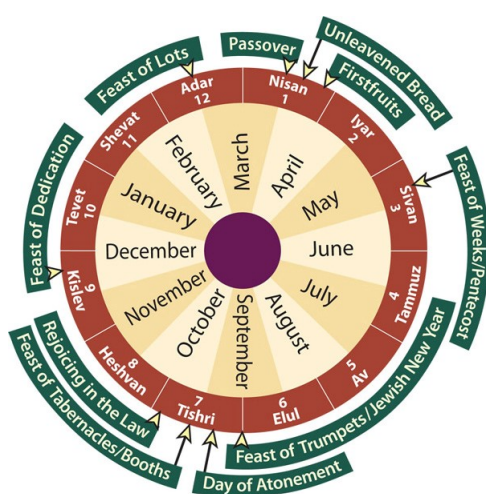
- And the elders (KJV): Ezr 3:8 4:3
- through (KJV): Ezr 5:1,2 Hag 1:12-14 2:2-15 Zec 2:1-4:14 6:1-15
- finished it (KJV): Zec 4:9
- according (KJV): Isa 44:28 Hag 1:8
- commandment (KJV): Chal, decree
- Cyrus (KJV): Ezr 6:13 1:1-4 4:24 5:13
- Artaxerxes (KJV): This was Artaxerxes, the third son and successor of Xerxes, surnamed [Makrocheir,] or Longimanus, or in Persian, {Ardsheer deeraz dest,} "Ardsheer the long-handed;" so called, according to the Greeks, from the extra-ordinary length of his hands, but according to the Easterners, from the extent of his dominions. He ascended the Persian throne, A.M. 3540, B.C. 464, and reigned forty-one years. He is said to have been the most handsome person of his age, and to have been a prince of a very mild and generous disposition. Ezr 7:1

And the elders of the Jews were successful in building through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they finished building according to the command of the God of Israel and the decree of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia

Bob Utley - "the elders of the Jews were successful in building" This same VERB (BDB 1109) was used to describe their work in Ezra 5:8 before these Persian leaders started their accusations and litigation. ■ **"according to the command of the God of Israel and the decree of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes"** This is the mystery of divine sovereignty (i.e., Prophets' message and God's command) and human free will (decrees of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes, as well as the actions of the Jewish leaders). Both God's will and human will combined to accomplish the task. This is true in every area of life. ■ **"Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia"** The decrees of Cyrus and Darius dealt with the rebuilding of the temple, while Artaxerxes' decree dealt with the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. There is a 57-year gap between Ezra 6 (temple) and Ezra 7 (walls).

Ezra 6:15 This temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar; it was the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.

- Adar (KJV): Es 3:7,13 8:12 9:1,15,17,19,21



Calendar of Jewish Feasts
(Source: [Rose Guide to the Tabernacle](#)
Excellent Teaching Resource)

This temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar; it was the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.

Bob Utley - "This temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar; it was the sixth year of the reign of King Darius" This date is mentioned in I Esdras 7:5 and Josephus' *Antiq.* 11.4.7. It would be 516 B.C., exactly seventy years from the destruction of the temple under Nebuchadnezzar II (cf. Jer. 25:9-13).

Henry Morris - house was finished. The building of the temple began under Cyrus (Ezra 3:8), but the local opposition caused it to cease until the second year of Darius (4:24), at least fifteen years later.

Believer's Study Bible - "Adar" was the twelfth month (see depiction above). According to Haggai's date of the resumption of building (Hag. 1:15) and Ezra's date of the completion here, the time required for reconstruction was four years, five months, and ten days.

Ryrie - The Temple was completed on March 12, 515 B.C.

Ezra 6:16 And the sons of Israel, the priests, the Levites and the rest of the exiles, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy.

- the children (KJV): 1Ch 9:2 Ne 7:73
- children of the captivity (KJV): Chal, sons of the transportation, Ezr 4:1
- the dedication (KJV): 1Ki 8:63 2Ch 7:5,9 Joh 10:22
- with joy (KJV): Ezr 6:22 3:11,12 De 12:7 1Ch 15:28 2Ch 7:10 30:23,26 Ne 8:10 12:43 Ps 122:1 Php 4:4

And the sons of Israel, the priests, the Levites and the rest of the exiles, celebrated the dedication of this house of God

with joy.

Bob Utley - **"and the rest of the exiles"** Who could this refer to? Possibly (1) converts to Judaism who were converted while they were also in exile (cf. Ezra 6:21). Or (2) it could refer to those Jews who remained in Palestine, but did not participate in pagan or synergistic worship (cf. Ezra 6:21).

Ezra 6:17 They offered for the dedication of this temple of God 100 bulls, 200 rams, 400 lambs, and as a sin offering for all Israel 12 male goats, corresponding to the number of the tribes of Israel.

- offered (KJV): Ezr 8:35 Nu 7:2-89 1Ki 8:63,64 1Ch 16:1-3 2Ch 7:5 29:31-35
- a sin offering (KJV): Lev 4:3,13,14,22,23,28 2Ch 29:21-23
- according to (KJV): Though the tribes of Benjamin and Judah, with the priests and Levites, formed the bulk of the people, yet many from the other tribes had returned with them from captivity. 1Ki 18:31 Lu 22:30 Rev 7:4-8 21:12

They offered for the dedication of this temple of God 100 bulls, 200 rams, 400 lambs, and as a sin offering for all Israel 12 male goats, corresponding to the number of the tribes of Israel.

Bob Utley - **"as a sin offering for all Israel 12 male goats"** Although a detailed description of the sacrifices for the dedication is listed (much smaller than Solomon's dedication, cf. 1 Kgs. 8:63), the Day of Atonement (cf. Lev. 16) is never mentioned in Ezra or Nehemiah. [See The Number Twelve](#) ■ **"for all Israel 12 male goats, corresponding to the number of tribes of Israel"** It was important for the returning Jews (mostly from the southern tribes called Judah) to affirm they represented all the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Most of the northern ten tribes taken into captivity by Assyria (722 B.C., fall of Samaria) never returned to Palestine. Nevertheless these were the covenant people of God. The promises and covenants of YHWH also belonged to them!

Ezra 6:18 Then they appointed the priests to their divisions and the Levites in their orders for the service of God in Jerusalem, as it is written in the book of Moses.

- the priests (KJV): 1Ch 23:1-26:32 2Ch 35:4,5
- as it is written (KJV): Chal, according to the writing, Nu 3:6 8:9-26

Then they appointed the priests to their divisions and the Levites in their orders for the service of God in Jerusalem, as it is written in the book of Moses.

Bob Utley - **"the priests of their divisions"** The law of Moses stipulated the special tribe of temple servants (i.e., Levi, cf. Num. 3:6; 8:6-22; 18:1-7; 1 Chr. 6), but it was David who organized them into 24 orders who took turns serving in the temple (cf. 1 Chr. 23-24; 2 Chr. 35:4-5). Only four orders returned under Zerubbabel (cf. chapter 2). ■ **"the book of Moses"** This would have been a way to show the validity of the returning exiles as the people of God! See [Moses' Authorship of the Pentateuch](#)

Ryrie - their divisions. 24 of them. See note on 1 Chron. 24:4.

Ezra 6:19 The exiles observed the Passover on the fourteenth of the first month.

- the children (KJV): Ezr 6:16
- kept (KJV): Ex 12:6-36 Jos 5:10 2Ch 30:1-35:27

The exiles observed the Passover on the fourteenth of the first month - Concerning Passover, see notes on Ex 12:11.

Bob Utley - The Aramaic section concludes at Ezra 6:18 and the Hebrew resumes until Ezra 7:12-26, which again is Aramaic.

Ezra 6:20 For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves together; all of them were pure. Then they slaughtered the Passover lamb for all the exiles, both for their brothers the priests and for themselves.

- purified together (KJV): 2Ch 29:34 30:15-17

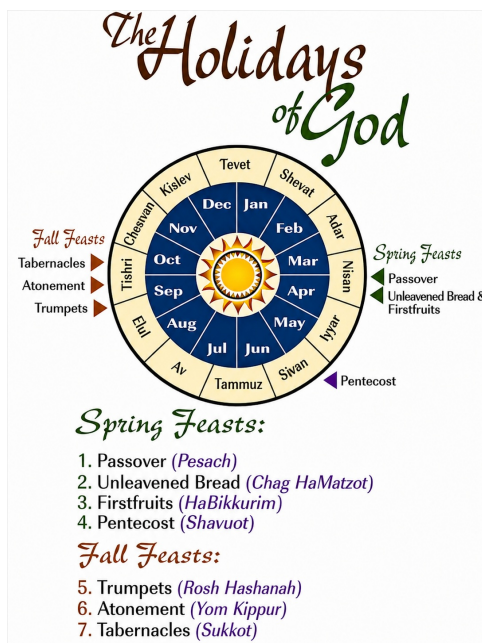
- killed (KJV): Ex 12:21 2Ch 35:11 Heb 7:27

For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves together; all of them were pure. Then they slaughtered the Passover lamb for all the exiles, both for their brothers the priests and for themselves

Bob Utley - "all of them were pure" This phrase is similar in purpose to Ezra 3:1 (i.e., "gathered as one man"), which denotes the unity of the Jews during this difficult but victorious period.

Ezra 6:21 The sons of Israel who returned from exile and all those who had separated themselves from the impurity of the nations of the land to join them, to seek the LORD God of Israel, ate the Passover.

- all such (KJV): Ezr 9:11 Nu 9:6,7,10-14 Isa 52:11 Eze 36:25 2Co 6:17 7:1
- did eat (KJV): Ex 12:47-49 Ps 93:5



The sons of Israel who returned from exile and all those who had separated themselves from the impurity of the nations of the land to join them, to seek the LORD God of Israel, ate the Passover.

Bob Utley - "all those who had separated themselves" God demanded that His people be different from "the nations" (cf. Deuteronomy 7). They were to love and obey the covenant God of Israel. This "separation" involved those who never compromised with pagan cultures and those who repented and turned from their involvement with pagan culture. Either of these could eat the Passover. God is the compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in covenant loyalty (cf. Neh. 9:17) One! Israel was meant to disclose YHWH to the world, but she failed (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38). Covenant obedience is crucial! ■ **"to seek the Lord God of Israel"** The opposite of "separate from" (Ezra 6:21) is "to seek" (BDB 205, KB233, *Qa/INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT*). Good parallels of the necessity of seeking and the promise of finding are 1 Chr. 28:9 and 2 Chr. 7:14. Humans seek and YHWH reveals Himself. He satisfies the human longing and searching for fellowship and intimacy with the God in whose image we were created (cf. Deut. 4:29). However, there are covenant conditions (cf. 1 Chr. 15:2).

Henry Morris - separated themselves. In addition to the returning exiles, at least some Israelites, descendants of those left in the land by Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 52:16), joined with them in the reestablished worship of the true God.

Ryrie - Two groups are indicated here: the returnees, and the residents of the land who had remained separate from heathen practices.

Ezra 6:22 And they observed the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy, for the LORD had caused them to rejoice, and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward them to encourage them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

- the feast (KJV): Ex 12:15-20 13:6,7 2Ch 30:21 35:17 Mt 26:17 1Co 5:7,8
- turned (KJV): Ezr 7:27 Pr 16:7 21:1 Joh 19:11
- the king (KJV): Darius, as reigning over the country of Assyria, is here called "the king of Assyria." Ezr 6:6-12 1:1 2Ki 23:29 2Ch 33:11 Zec 10:10,11

And they observed the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy -Concerning unleavened bread, see notes on Ex. 12:15-20.

for the LORD had caused them to rejoice, and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward them to encourage them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

Bob Utley - "the king of Assyria" If literal, this seems to be out of place and unexplainable! This may refer to Cyrus or Darius (cf. Josephus', *Antiq.* 11.4.8). The Persian king used several titles (i.e., Ezra 5:13, Cyrus is called "King of Babylon"). Nehemiah uses this title as a collective term for all the kings of the eighth through fifth centuries in Neh. 9:32.

Henry Morris - Although Darius was emperor of Persia, he was also king of Assyria and king of Babylon, for the Persians had conquered both of these earlier empires that had previously conquered Israel and Judah.

Believer's Study Bible - The reference is undoubtedly to the Persian king Darius, who is designated "king of Assyria" because he ruled the former realm of Assyria.