

# THE TEMPLE REBUILDING COMPLETED

**BIBLE TEXT** : **Ezra 4:1-24; 5:1-17; 6:1-22.**

LESSON 429 Senior Course

**MEMORY VERSE:** "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life" (Psalm 27:4).

## **BIBLE TEXT in King James Version**

### **Ezra 4:1-24**

<sup>1</sup> Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the LORD God of Israel;  
<sup>2</sup> Then they came to Zerubbabel, 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.  
<sup>3</sup> 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.  
<sup>4</sup> Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building,  
<sup>5</sup> 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.  
<sup>6</sup> 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.  
<sup>7</sup> 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.  
<sup>8</sup> Rehum the chancellor and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king in this sort:  
<sup>9</sup> Then *wrote* Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their companions; the Dinaites, the Apharsathchites, the Tarpelites, the Apharsites, the Archevites, the Babylonians, the Susanchites, the Dehavites, *and* the Elamites,  
<sup>10</sup> 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.  
<sup>11</sup> 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, and at such a time.  
<sup>12</sup> Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came up from thee to us are come

## **BIBLE REFERENCES:**

### **I Opposition**

1. The adversaries of the Jews pretended to want to help build the Temple, Ezra 4:1, 2.
2. The Jews could not use the help of idolaters, Ezra 4:3.
3. The people of the land weakened the hands of Judah, and wrote false accusations to the king, Ezra 4:4-16.
4. The king granted that work should cease, Ezra 4:17-24.

### **II Helping Hands**

1. When a new king reigned, God sent prophets to encourage the leaders of the people to resume building, Ezra 5:1, 2;

#### **Haggai 1:12-14**

<sup>12</sup> Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the LORD.  
<sup>13</sup> Then spake Haggai the LORD'S messenger in the LORD'S message unto the people, saying, I *am* with you, saith the LORD.  
<sup>14</sup> And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God,

2. A governor again came to inquire about the building, Ezra 5:3, 4.
3. The work could not be stopped until authority came from Darius, Ezra 5:5-17.

### **III Darius's Decree**

1. Search was made for King Cyrus's decree that the Temple should be rebuilt, Ezra 6:1-5.
2. King Darius approved Cyrus's decree and forbade any to hinder the work, Ezra 6:6-12.
3. The building prospered and the Temple was dedicated, Ezra 6:13-18.
4. The Feast of Passover was kept in its appointed season, Ezra 6:19-22;

#### **Leviticus 23:5-8**

<sup>5</sup> In the fourteenth *day* of the first month at even *is* the LORD'S passover.  
<sup>6</sup> And on the fifteenth day of the same month *is* the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread.  
<sup>7</sup> In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.  
<sup>8</sup> But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD seven days: in the seventh day *is* an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work *therein*..

## **NOTES:**

The echoes of the great shout of praise that the people had given to the Lord at the completion of the foundation for the Temple had scarcely died away when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin came to see what was happening. When they saw

unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and the bad city, and have set up the walls *thereof*, and joined the foundations.

<sup>13</sup> 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.

<sup>14</sup> Now because we have maintenance from *the king's* palace, and it was not meet for us to see the king's dishonour, therefore have we sent and certified the king;

<sup>15</sup> 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.

<sup>16</sup> 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.

<sup>17</sup> Then sent the king an answer unto Rehum the chancellor, and *to* Shimshai the scribe, and *to* the rest of their companions that dwell in Samaria, and *unto* the rest beyond the river, Peace, and at such a time.

<sup>18</sup> The letter which ye sent unto us hath been plainly read before me.

<sup>19</sup> 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.

<sup>20</sup> There have been mighty kings also over Jerusalem, which have ruled over all *countries* beyond the river; and toll, tribute, and custom, was paid unto them.

<sup>21</sup> 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.

<sup>22</sup> Take heed now that ye fail not to do this: why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings?

<sup>23</sup> 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.

<sup>24</sup> 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.

#### **Ezra 5:1-17**

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak,

the foundation laid, these adversaries pretended to be friends, desiring to help build on the Temple with the Jews. They claimed to serve the Lord as the Jews did; but the Bible says of them: "They feared the LORD, and served their own gods" (II Kings 17:33).

The Jews had learned from experience the tragic results of halfhearted service to God. They had just returned to Jerusalem after 70 years of exile in Babylon -- exiled because they had tried half-heartedly to serve the Lord, meanwhile tampering more and more with idolatry. The Jews learned their lesson during those years and as a nation were never again guilty of serving idols. God has no pleasure in halfhearted service, even today; but He receives, loves, and blesses the wholehearted service given by anyone.

#### **No Agreement**

"What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" the Word of God asks. The returned exiles knew the true standing of their adversaries in the sight of God, so the plain statement was made that the adversaries could not help in building God's house. This took the mask of friendship off the adversaries' faces, and their true intent soon came to light: "Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building."

The Bible instructs us, "As much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18); but a line must be drawn when it comes to sin and idolatry. If the Jews had allowed the idolaters to help build the Temple, then the Jews would have been obligated to allow the idolaters to worship in the Temple, thus defiling God's house. A Christian today cannot compromise with sin and the sinner and be guiltless any more than the Jews could be unequally yoked with the unbelievers of that bygone day.

#### **Misrepresentation**

The opposition and hatred of the people of the land toward the Jews reached the point that a letter of accusation was written to the king of Persia. Motivated by anger, envy, and malice, the people wrote much untruth about the Jews. Truth is truth and will stand on its own, but falsehood is weak and needs more lies to prop it up. The letter stated that the Jews were building the whole city of Jerusalem, whereas they were building only the Temple. The people inferred that the city was being built in order that the Jews might rebel against the king's authority, thus depriving the king of his revenue from this part of his realm.

The king did not bother to investigate fully the misrepresentation. He looked into the records to find that Jerusalem had been ruled by some mighty kings, but he did not investigate the work of the Jews or the real reason for their being in Jerusalem. The king answered the letter with a command that the people of the land should go to Jerusalem and compel the Jews to cease their work.

Christian people today are often misrepresented as they labour for the Master. The Lord foretold this condition, saying: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven" (Matthew 5:11, 12). The Christian is further enlightened regarding these things in other parts of God's Word: "If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (I Peter 2:20, 21). "If ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; . . . having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you,

and began to build the house of God which *is* at Jerusalem: and with them *were* the prophets of God helping them.

<sup>3</sup> 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?

<sup>4</sup> Then said we unto them after this manner, What are the names of the men that make this building?

<sup>5</sup> 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*.

<sup>6</sup> 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:

<sup>7</sup> They sent a letter unto him, wherein was written thus; Unto Darius the king, all peace.

<sup>8</sup> Be it known unto the king, that we went into the province of Judea, to the house of the great God, which is builded with great stones, and timber is laid in the walls, and this work goeth fast on, and prospereth in their hands.

<sup>9</sup> Then asked we those elders, *and* said unto them thus, Who commanded you to build this house, and to make up these walls?

<sup>10</sup> We asked their names also, to certify thee, that we might write the names of the men that *were* the chief of them.

<sup>11</sup> 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.

<sup>12</sup> 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.

<sup>13</sup> But in the first year of Cyrus the king of Babylon *the same* king Cyrus made a decree to build this house of God.

<sup>14</sup> 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;

<sup>15</sup> 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.

<sup>16</sup> Then came the same Sheshbazzar, *and*

as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ" (I Peter 3:14, 16).

### **Need for Zeal**

The letter from the Persian king did not state that the building of the Temple should cease, but that the city should not be built. If the Jews had requested to read the letter, or if they had presented their own case to the king, perhaps the delay in building the Temple could have been prevented.

We as Christians today too, often allow the oppositions of sinners and their defiance to God's cause to prevent us from putting our wholehearted zeal into the Gospel of the Kingdom. Spiritual coldness causes as much or more drag on Gospel progress as does the heat of unbelievers' persecutions and accusations. The Lord demands that we be on fire for Him.

Some students of the Bible feel that the building of the Temple was delayed as much as 16 years. However long, it was delayed longer than it should have been. In due time Darius became king; and in the second year of his reign, the Lord sent prophets to the people in Jerusalem to stir them into action. The Jews were saying that it was not yet time to build. They had no "go-ahead" from the king. How could they build without his approval? But God said through the prophet: "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?" (Haggai 1:4). There was a new king on the Persian throne, therefore there was a new opportunity to work on the Lord's building.

Today we should take advantage of every time and occasion that we have to work for the Lord and to further His Kingdom. In fact, the Bible says that we as Christians should redeem the time; in other words, buy an opportunity. If opportunity does not come our way readily, we are instructed to seek that opportunity -- to go into the world and find something to do for the Master. A sick person needs someone to help him; a discouraged person needs someone to speak a word of cheer; the sinner needs someone to tell him the story of Jesus and the way out of sin. There are opportunities for everyone, and if we are watchful for those opportunities we will find them.

### **Resuming the Work**

With the encouragement and help that the prophets of God gave, the people once more took heart and began construction on the Temple. The governor of the land came at this time also to see what was being accomplished; but the Lord prevented him from stopping the work until a letter was sent to Darius, that the king might give his voice in the matter. This governor wrote a more truthful letter, giving the facts as they really were.

King Darius searched the records and found that the Jews had in fact been given a commission to return and to build the Temple. He sent word to the governor: "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." The king added that even the expenses of the builders should be paid out of the king's tribute, that sacrifices and burnt offerings should be given: "That they may offer sacrifices of sweet savours unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons." Thus we see the Scripture fulfilled: "When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Proverbs 16:7).

### **Completion**

With the smile of God upon their efforts, with the co-operation of the king and the governor and the people of the land, the Jews were able to finish the Temple in the third day of Adar in the sixth year of Darius's reign. How happy those people were as they

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.

<sup>17</sup> Now therefore, if *it seem* good to the king, let there be search made in the king's treasure house, 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.

#### **Ezra 6:1-22**

<sup>1</sup> Then Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in the house of the rolls, where the treasures were laid up in Babylon.

<sup>2</sup> 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:

<sup>3</sup> 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, *and* the breadth thereof threescore cubits;

<sup>4</sup> *With* three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber: and let the expenses be given out of the king's house:

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> Now *therefore*, Tatnai, governor beyond the river, Shetharboznai, and your companions the Apharsachites, which *are* beyond the river, be ye far from thence:

<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> 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 beyond the river, forthwith expenses be given unto these men, that they be not hindered.

<sup>9</sup> 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:

<sup>10</sup> That they may offer sacrifices of sweet savours unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons.

<sup>11</sup> Also I have made a decree, that whosoever shall alter this word, let timber

dedicated the House of the Lord, bringing their offerings and sacrifices in great numbers! They had done the will of God, and now they reaped the blessings. So it is with us. There is no greater joy in all the earth than doing the whole will of God with all the heart. "It is joy to the just to do judgment" (Proverbs 21:15).

#### **QUESTIONS**

1. What did the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin request to do when they saw the Temple being built?
2. Why could not the Children of Israel allow this?
3. What did the adversaries do next?
4. How did the adversaries cause the work on the Temple to cease?
5. How did God get the work on the Temple started again?
6. Who was the new king of Persia who commanded that the work should not be hindered?
7. When was the House of God finished?
8. How did the Jews feel when the Temple was dedicated?
9. What event followed the dedication?



be pulled down from his house, and being set up, let him be hanged thereon; and let his house be made a dunghill for this.

<sup>12</sup> 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.

<sup>13</sup> 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.

<sup>14</sup> 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.

<sup>15</sup> 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.

<sup>16</sup> 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,

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

<sup>18</sup> 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.

<sup>19</sup> And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth *day* of the first month.

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

<sup>21</sup> 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,

<sup>22</sup> 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.