

## Having A Basic Understanding of Some Old Testament Truths

### Part 72 – Cyrus Allows Temple Reconstruction Through The Letter Sent to Darius (Ezra 1-5)

1. Who aided Cyrus in his decision to see that the house of the Lord was rebuilt?

God did: “(1) Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, (2) Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah” (Ezra 1:1-2).

2. How did Cyrus seek to find those who would build the Lord’s house?

He asked for those who were of Israel, that God was with: “(3) Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. (4) And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem” (Ezra 1:3-4).

3. Who decided to carry out the instructions given by Cyrus?

“(5) Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem. (6) And all they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered” (Ezra 1:5-6).

4. How did the children of Israel get the vessels of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem?

“(7) Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods; (8) Even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah” (Ezra 1:7-8).

5. Were the people of Judah now free from Babylonian captivity and able to return to Jerusalem?

Yes: “(1) Now these are the children of the province that went up out of the captivity, of those which had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon, and came again unto Jerusalem and Judah, every one unto his city” (Ezra 2:1).

6. Who was “put from the priesthood”?

“(61) And of the children of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai; which took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called after their name: (62) These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood. (63) And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim” (Ezra 2:61-63).

7. What was the number of the whole congregation returning home besides servants, etc.?  
42,360: “(64) *The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore, (65) Beside their servants and their maids, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and there were among them two hundred singing men and singing women*” (Ezra 2:64-65).

8. Did some give their abilities as an offering to rebuild God’s house?

Yes: “(68) *And some of the chief of the fathers, when they came to the house of the LORD which is at Jerusalem, offered freely for the house of God to set it up in his place: (69) They gave after their ability unto the treasure of the work threescore and one thousand drams of gold, and five thousand pound of silver, and one hundred priests’ garments*” (Ezra 2:68-69).

9. What standard was used in the burnt offerings upon the altar to the Lord?

The Law of Moses: “(1) *And when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, **the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem.** (2) Then stood up Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, **to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God***” (Ezra 3:1-2).

10. At this point in time, did God’s people fear the people of the countries around them?

Yes: “*And they set the altar upon his bases; for fear was upon them because of the people of those countries: and they offered burnt offerings thereon unto the LORD, even burnt offerings morning and evening*” (Ezra 3:3).

11. Did God’s people want to continue in burnt offerings, feasts, and freewill offerings to God?

Yes: “(4) *They kept also the feast of tabernacles, **as it is written**, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required; (5) And afterward offered the continual burnt offering, both of the new moons, and of all the set feasts of the LORD that were consecrated, and of every one that willingly offered a freewill offering unto the LORD*” (Ezra 3:4-5).

12. Though the people of the Lord were doing a lot of good things, what is the “but” that exists?

The very purpose they were sent was to rebuild the temple. This is the “but”. They had not started yet: “*From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt offerings unto the LORD. **But the foundation of the temple of the LORD was not yet laid***” (Ezra 3:6).

13. When are Levites appointed to set forward the work of the house of the Lord?

In the second year: “*Now **in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, began Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the remnant of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all they that were come out of the captivity unto Jerusalem; and appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to set forward the work of the house of the LORD***” (Ezra 3:8).

14. Was there joy when the work started on the temple?

Yes: “(9) *Then stood Jeshua with his sons and his brethren, Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together, to set forward the workmen in the house of God: the sons of Henadad, with their*

sons and their brethren the Levites. (10) And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the LORD, after the ordinance of David king of Israel.

(11) And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

(12) But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy: (13) So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off” (Ezra 3:9-13).

15. What occurred when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard the temple of God was being built?

“(1) Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the LORD God of Israel; (2) 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 Esar-haddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither. (3) 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) Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, (5) 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. (6) 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. (7) 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. (8) Rehum the chancellor and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king in this sort: (9) 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, (10) 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” (Ezra 4:1-10).

Remember, they feared these people too (Ezra 3:3).

16. What was said in the letter to Artaxerxes?

“(11) 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. (12) 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. (13) 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. (14) 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; (15) 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. (16) 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” (Ezra 4:11-16).*

17. What response was made to the letter written to Artaxerxes?

*“(17) 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. (18) The letter which ye sent unto us hath been plainly read before me. (19) 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. (20) 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. (21) 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. (22) Take heed now that ye fail not to do this: why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings” (Ezra 4:17-22)?*

18. What did Rehum, and Shimshai the scribe, and their companions do in reaction to the letter?

*“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**” (Ezra 4:23).*

19. Did Judah and Benjamin keep building the temple against the will of their adversaries?

No: *“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 4:24).*

As we'll see in the next chapter, God was not at all pleased until they began work again for they had become complacent (**Haggai 1:1-15**).

20. What did it take to get Judah and Benjamin to do what was right?

*“(1) 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. (2) 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” (Ezra 5:1-2).*

21. What happens as reconstruction of the temple begins again?

*“At the same time came to them **Tatnai**, governor on this side the river, and Shethar-boznai, and their companions, and said thus unto them, **Who hath commanded you to build this house, and to make up this wall.** Then said we unto them after this manner, What are the names of the men that make this building?” (Ezra 5:3-4)?*

22. Why didn't the elders of the Jews command the building to cease?

*“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” (Ezra 5:5).*

23. Who wrote unto Darius questioning the authority behind the reconstruction of the temple?  
“The copy of the letter that Tatnai, governor on this side the river, and Shethar-boznai, and his companions the Apharsachites, which were on this side the river, sent unto Darius the king” (Ezra 5:6).

24. What are some key things that were said in the letter sent to Darius?

“(7) They sent a letter unto him, wherein was written thus; Unto Darius the king, all peace. (8) **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.** (9) Then asked we those elders, and said unto them thus, Who commanded you to build this house, and to make up these walls? (10) We asked their names also, to certify thee, that we might write the names of the men that were the chief of them. (11) 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. (12) 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. (13) But in the first year of Cyrus the king of Babylon the same king Cyrus made a decree to build this house of God. (14) 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; (15) 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. (16) 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. (17) 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 5:7-15).