

Ezra 6:1-22 – The Temple is Completed

For about 16 years, the returned exiles ignored their primary purpose in coming back to Judah. Then God raised up the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to urge the people to put God's work above their own priorities. In the first month of Haggai's prophesying, the temple rebuilding resumed. Even though an official letter had been sent to King Darius questioning the legitimacy of the temple rebuilding project, the work on the temple continued. Chapter six reveals King Darius' response to the official letter. Chapter six also closes the first section of the book of Ezra with the completion of the temple, the keeping of the Passover and the keeping of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Read Ezra 6:1-5.

According to F. Charles Fensham, Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (viii.6.22) states that "in the winter Cyrus lived in Babylon, in the spring in Susa, and in the summer in Ecbatana." Ecbatana is located in present day northwestern Iran. Where did they find a document that had Cyrus' decree about the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem? (6:1-2)

In verses 3 and 4, what was revealed about Cyrus' decree that had not been mentioned in Ezra chapter 1? In verse 5, what information was repeated from Ezra chapter 1?

Read Ezra 6:6-12.

Once Cyrus' decree was found, what did Darius tell Tattenai, Shethar-bozenai and their associates in verses 6 and 7?

Based on verse 8, what provisions did Darius make for the temple rebuilding project? Based on verse 9, what daily provisions were to be given to the priests at Jerusalem?

What did Darius ask of the Jews in verse 10?

What incentive did Darius give so that people would not interfere with the rebuilding of the temple? (6:11-12)

Read Ezra 6:13-18.

How did Tattenai, Shethar-bozenai and their associates respond to Darius' new decree? (6:13)

Once Darius made provisions for rebuilding the temple and all opposition was removed, what was the result? (6:14)

Who decreed that the returned exiles should rebuild the temple? Why did the decrees of Cyrus and Darius contain the same goal as the decree of God? (6:14)

When was the temple completed? How long did it take them to rebuild the temple once they resumed the work in the second year of Darius' reign? (6:15)

How did they commemorate the completion of the temple? Note that before the temple was rebuilt, only burnt offerings were mentioned. Now that the temple was dedicated, sin offerings were mentioned for the first time in Ezra. (6:16-17)

Read Ezra 6:19-22.

The temple was completed in the last month of the Jewish calendar. What happened in the month following the completion of the temple? (6:19)

What did the people do to observe the Passover? Who was included in the celebration? (6:20-21)

The people also celebrated the Feast of Unleavened Bread which began the day after Passover. How did God's sovereignty manifest itself in the completion of the temple? (6:22)