

THE TEMPLE REBUILT

CORE PASSAGE: EZRA 6:6-12,16-22

CONTEXT

After the return to Jerusalem, God's remnant people prepared to rebuild the Lord's temple. The task ahead was daunting with opposition at every turn. On the surface, their work seemed insurmountable. Yet theirs was not a man-made assignment. They were commissioned by the Creator and Sustainer of all—the same God who providentially brought them back to their ancestral home and provided abundant supplies for the temple's reconstruction. This faithful Deliverer would continue to pave the way for them to complete the task, enabling them to proclaim His excellencies along the way.

KEY CONCEPT

God will restore worship of Him, resulting in a joyful celebration of His faithfulness.

As you examine Ezra 6:6-12,16-22:

- Reflect on the reality that though enemies of God tried to stop the rebuilding of the temple, God had a plan in place.
- Recognize that joy comes with worship as we remember God's faithfulness in the past, present, and into the future.



TIMELINE

King Cyrus of Persia
Issues Decree Allowing
the Jews to Return to
Judah (Ezra 1)

The Jews Face Opposition
and Pause Rebuilding the
Temple (Ezra 4)

SESSION STUDY:
The Temple Is Completed
and Dedicated (Ezra 6)

The First Group of Jews Returns,
Builds the Altar, and Lays the
Foundation for the Temple (Ezra 1-3)

Haggai and Zechariah
Encourage the Building
to Resume (Ezra 5)

Ezra the Priest Returns to
Judah and Instructs the People
in the Law (Ezra 7-10)

Daily Readings

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 1: Ezra 4:1-5 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 4: Ezra 6:1-15 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 2: Ezra 4:24-5:2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 5: Ezra 6:16-22 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 3: Ezra 5:3-17 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 6: Psalm 20 |



Scan this QR code to access
this session's Scripture passages.

GOD IS ABLE TO USE ANY MEANS TO RESTORE WORSHIP OF HIM (EZRA 6:6-12).

Circle the phrases in which King Darius references God as part of His decree.

6 Therefore, you must stay away from that place, Tattenai governor of the region west of the Euphrates River, Shethar-bozenai, and your colleagues, the officials in the region. **7** Leave the construction of the house of God alone. Let the governor and elders of the Jews rebuild this house of God on its original site. **8** I hereby issue a decree concerning what you are to do, so that the elders of the Jews can rebuild the house of God: The cost is to be paid in full to these men out of the royal revenues from the taxes of the region west of the Euphrates River, so that the work will not stop. **9** Whatever is needed—young bulls, rams, and lambs for burnt offerings to the God of the heavens, or wheat, salt, wine, and oil, as requested by the priests in Jerusalem—let it be given to them every day without fail, **10** so that they can offer sacrifices of pleasing aroma to the God of the heavens and pray for the life of the king and his sons. **11** I also issue a decree concerning any man who interferes with this directive: Let a beam be torn from his house and raised up; he will be impaled on it, and his house will be made into a garbage dump because of this offense. **12** May the God who caused his name to dwell there overthrow any king or people who dares to harm or interfere with this house of God in Jerusalem. I, Darius, have issued the decree. Let it be carried out diligently.

Soon after the temple's foundation was set and dedicated, opposition to the work emerged. Enemies sought to sabotage the efforts of God's people: first by attempting to infiltrate their work and then by making them afraid to build; they also bribed officials to frustrate the work (4:1-5). Unfortunately, the enemies' crusade to crush the construction efforts succeeded.

The work on the house of God stopped "until the second year of the reign of King Darius of Persia" (4:24). For over a decade, the job site sat in silence. Day after day, year after year, God's people passed by the unfulfilled slab of rock dedicated for the structure central to their life and worship. Perhaps the people felt defeated, at first, but then that seemed to give way to disinterest as they turned their focus to their own houses (Hag. 1:2-4).

LEADER NOTE: A look at the rebuke Haggai brought against the people provides perspective on their hearts during this period (see Hag. 1:2-11). Certainly, after the political and psychological beating they took from the opposition, they were war-torn and weary. But they had given in to more than just discouragement; they had become selfish and complacent. To rouse them out of this mind-set,

the Lord asked through Haggai, “Is it a time for you yourselves to live in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?” (v. 4).

When has opposition discouraged you from obeying the Lord?

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In His perfect timing, God raised up the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to re-declare God’s plan and stir up God’s people to restart the rebuilding efforts. But this also rekindled the difficulties—a letter from the regional governor was sent to the king of Persia asking if this rebuild was allowed (Ezra 5:1-17).

The faithful God of Israel led King Darius of Persia to respond to the letter with a clear decree in the Jews’ favor. First, Cyrus’s original decree was found (6:1-5). Then in keeping with Medo-Persian law, in which a decree of the king is irrevocable (Dan. 6:8), and in deference to “the God of the heavens,” Darius supported, protected, and provided for the construction of God’s house (Ezra 6:6-12). The Lord used both Cyrus and Darius to accomplish His will.

LEADER NOTE: The book of Zechariah includes the same time reference as Ezra 4:24: “in the second year of Darius” (Zech. 1:1). Through Zechariah, God called His people to covenant faithfulness: “Do not be like your ancestors” (v. 4). The Jewish remnant’s lack of resolve to rebuild the temple was a deep disobedience. But God didn’t just rebuke them; He also sent a message of hope: The temple would be completed “not by strength or by might, but by my Spirit” (4:6).

How does God’s sovereignty relate to His faithfulness, as seen in this passage?

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

GOD IS FAITHFUL: God’s faithfulness means He keeps His word and always fulfills His promises (1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Tim. 2:13; 1 Pet. 4:19). God’s faithfulness is demonstrated in His fulfillment of the promises He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The apostle Paul linked the attribute of “faithful” to God’s coming through on His word in 1 Thessalonians 5:24. We reflect God by keeping the promises we make to Him and to others.

WHEN WE CELEBRATE GOD'S PAST FAITHFULNESS, JOYFUL WORSHIP ENSUES (EZRA 6:16-22).

Underline the ways the Israelites celebrated the dedication of the temple “with joy.”

16 Then the Israelites, including the priests, the Levites, and the rest of the exiles, celebrated the dedication of the house of God with joy. **17** For the dedication of God's house they offered one hundred bulls, two hundred rams, and four hundred lambs, as well as twelve male goats as a sin offering for all Israel—one for each Israelite tribe. **18** They also appointed the priests by their divisions and the Levites by their groups to the service of God in Jerusalem, according to what is written in the book of Moses. **19** The exiles observed the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month. **20** All of the priests and Levites were ceremonially clean, because they had purified themselves. They killed the Passover lamb for themselves, their priestly brothers, and all the exiles. **21** The Israelites who had returned from exile ate it, together with all who had separated themselves from the uncleanness of the Gentiles of the land in order to worship the LORD, the God of Israel. **22** They observed the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days with joy, because the LORD had made them joyful, having changed the Assyrian king's attitude toward them, so that he supported them in the work on the house of the God of Israel.

LEADER NOTE: The offerings recorded in Ezra 6 are a fraction of the number presented by Solomon at the dedication of God's first temple, a sober reminder of how far God's people had fallen (1 Kings 8:63). Yet Psalm 51:17 provides a good reminder: “The sacrifice pleasing to God is a broken spirit. You will not despise a broken and humbled heart, God.” The remnant's offerings resembles that of the widow's mite (Mark 12:41-44). They may not have been much compared to other offerings, but they did demonstrate the people's devotion to the Lord.

The people celebrated, offered, appointed, observed, and more “in order to worship the LORD” (Ezra 6:21). And all of this unfolded in the context of community and “with joy, because the LORD had made them joyful” (v. 22). Worship activates action, fosters fellowship, and rouses rejoicing. The context of the majority of God's commands surrounding worship is corporate, expecting a body of believers with a common goal of God's glory.

Though we no longer slay lambs and build temples, we can worship with the same fervor and joy, together as the church. Worship isn't passive or solitary. While lyrics and mountaintops may stir our souls, the call to worship leads God's people to active, corporate rejoicing in who God is and all He has done.

Key Concept: God will restore worship of Him, resulting in a joyful celebration of His faithfulness.

CHURCH CONNECTION

God made the rebuilding of the temple possible so the people could see His faithfulness to them, resulting in joy and celebration. God's faithfulness is revealed ultimately in His provision of His Son, Jesus Christ, which results in ultimate joy and celebration for believers today.

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What obstacles in your life might you need to address to worship God actively, corporately, and joyfully?

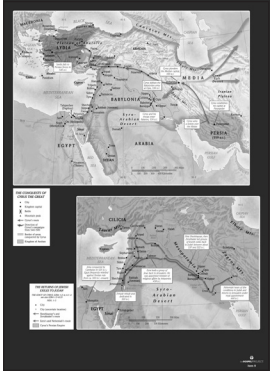
Within a month of the temple's completion and dedication, the time arrived for Passover—a long-standing celebration of God's deliverance of His people from slavery in Egypt—and then the Festival of Unleavened Bread. Both were instituted by the Lord at the beginning of the exodus “because on this very day I brought your military divisions out of the land of Egypt. You must observe this day throughout your generations as a permanent statute” (Ex. 12:17).

LEADER NOTE: The first Passover occurred on the evening of the final Egyptian plague (Ex. 12:1-28). That night, God passed through the land of Egypt and struck down the firstborn of every household—except those with a lamb's blood on their doorposts, as God had instructed. God then commanded His people to observe the Passover feast each year to celebrate God's deliverance (Ex. 12:14-20; Deut. 16:1-8). The destruction of the temple prevented this celebration, making the Passover in Ezra 6 a restorative event.

Recalling God's faithfulness is vital to our faith and worship. Day by day, year by year, generation after generation, we are called to remember who God is and all He has done. He is good. He does good. He is worthy of our praise. Though the remnant Jews in Jerusalem faced an uncertain future under Persian rule, they chose to worship God for His past deeds and what He was presently doing. When the future seems cloudy, we can look to our past and present to see how God has unfailingly provided all we needed, precisely when we needed it.

How can remembering God's past and present faithfulness help you worship God more deeply today?

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ARRIVAL

INTERACT: As adults arrive, invite them to share a time when they were given something in a very unexpected way. Encourage them to consider how they responded—was it with joy, gratitude, or thankfulness? Perhaps even relief? This will set the stage for discussing how God's provision leads to worship and joy.

CONTEXT

SAY: Display **Pack Item 9: Persia and the Return Map** to visualize the returns of the Jews to Jerusalem after Cyrus's decree. Say: "The book of Ezra recounts the return of Jewish exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem and the restoration of the temple and religious life in Israel. It covers a period of about eighty years and is divided into two parts. The first part, chapters 1–6, focuses on the first two waves of exiles (led by Sheshbazzar and then Zerubbabel). These people responded to Cyrus's decree and returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the Lord's temple. The restoration process faced opposition, but God sovereignly worked through pagan rulers to see His temple brought to completion. Ezra 6 records how God turned resistance into provision, demonstrating His faithfulness. With the temple rebuilt, the people responded with worship and celebration, recalling God's covenant promises."

RECAP

REFLECT: Ask group members to share one truth they learned through their personal preparation during the past week.

TRANSITION: Today in our study of Ezra 6, we'll see how God ensured the temple's full restoration despite opposition. As we interact with Scripture, we'll consider for ourselves how God's faithfulness in our own lives should lead us to worship Him with joyful celebration.



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GROUP ACTIVITY

Notes

CHART: Direct your group to page 66 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a chart titled “God’s Continuing Faithfulness.” Recreate this chart on a board in your room so you can record the group’s responses.

God’s Continuing Faithfulness	
Read the following Scriptures and write down how God displayed His faithfulness. Then record how God has shown you His faithfulness.	
Exodus 14:13-31	Daniel 2:1-23
Acts 2:36-47	Acts 5:25-42
Ezra 6:6-12,16-22	
TODAY	

ANALYZE: Form four smaller groups and assign each group one of the following Scripture passages: Exodus 14:13-31; Daniel 2:1-23; Acts 2:36-47; Acts 5:25-42. In their smaller groups, encourage teams to read their passage and write down in their PSG the ways God showed His faithfulness. After a few minutes, invite a volunteer from each group to summarize their Scripture, identify how God provided for His people, and discuss how the people responded. Write down on the chart their responses. Ask: “What methods did God use to show His faithfulness?” (examples: the Red Sea [Ex. 14:13-31]; supplied His wisdom through prayer [Dan. 2:1-23]; the Holy Spirit and unity of the early church [Acts 2:36-47]; boldness from God and the reasoning of an opponent [Acts 5:25-42])

READ: Ask two volunteers to read Ezra 6:6-12 and 16-22.

IDENTIFY: As a whole group, identify ways God showed His faithfulness to the Israelites in Ezra 6 and how the people responded to God’s faithfulness. Record these on the board. Then lead the group to consider God’s faithfulness in their

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own lives. Discuss: “How does recalling God’s faithfulness fuel our worship and joy? How might our worship and joy for God’s faithfulness appear to those who are not yet part of the family of faith?”

DEBRIEF

How did God use unexpected means to restore worship in the passages we examined?

(PSG p. 66) What part do we play in the restoration of God’s worship in the world today?

SUMMARIZE

God’s faithfulness is not confined to the past; it remains evident today. Just as He orchestrated the temple’s restoration, He continues to work in our lives, leading us into joyful worship. When we recognize His faithfulness, our natural response should be celebration and devotion.

HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 67). If running short on time, specifically highlight the **Head** section in this week’s study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



HEAD: In the hustle and bustle of daily life, it’s easy to forget why we exist. God created us for His glory. He has left us on this earth for His glory. He will call us into eternity for His glory. We must settle this in our minds to live out our purpose rightly. Any other purpose falls short of why we exist. We exist for God’s glory.

What are some ways you can regularly remind yourself that you exist for God’s glory?



HEART: Worship can sometimes feel like an abstract concept or archaic relic of the past. Yet the reality is our hearts are made to worship. With every moment shared, effort given, dollar spent, talent used, word spoken, and deed done, we worship. The question we must seek to answer is this: Who or what is the object of my worship? If the answer is anything other than God, we have work to do when it comes to our worship.

Who or what has been the true object of your worship lately? Why?



HANDS: As we seek to turn our hearts toward Christ more each day because He is always faithful in our salvation, we can be encouraged that we are not left to our own devices. God has given us many gifts of grace to help our pursuit of His worship as we combat the idols vying for our affections. Chiefly, our faithful Father has provided His truth-filled Word, His Spirit—our Helper, Counselor, and Guide—and His people to live, learn, suffer,

and worship alongside. These provisions have been gifted lavishly. But we must intentionally employ them to enjoy their benefits if we seek to worship God better in our lives.

How can you better enjoy and employ God's Word, God's Spirit, and God's people this week?

NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this week's session.

- This week, journal how God has been faithful to you. Take time to recall His love for you and write how that leads you to worship.
- Plan a time of thanksgiving, either personally or with others, to praise God for His faithfulness.
- Consider how you can encourage someone else by sharing how God has provided for you. Make an appointment to meet for coffee and/or a chat with that person this week.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 67 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

CLOSE: Pray through Psalm 20:6-9 with your group, thanking the Lord for His gifts, provision, and salvation to those who call on His name.

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