

Israel's Temple Rebuilt

Key Verse: *“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.”*
—Ezra 6:14

Selected Scripture:
Ezra 6:1-15

the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the LORD.”—Ezra 5:1; 6:14; Hag. 1:14

SOMETIME SUBSEQUENT to the death of Persian King Cyrus, adversaries of the Jews sent a letter to King Artaxerxes, falsely accusing the Israelites of rebuilding the city. (Ezra 4:7-16) Actually, at this time the Israelites were rebuilding the Temple. However, the shrewd enemies of God's people led the king to believe that it was the city and its walls that were being built. Consequently, the king ordered all of the rebuilding to cease.—vss. 17-24

Years passed with no further work done to rebuild the Temple. Then God raised up two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, and through them “stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel,” governor of Judah, and “the spirit of Joshua,” the high priest, “and

Israel's enemies again endeavored to hinder the work, asking by whose authority they were resuming the rebuilding of the Temple. The Jewish leaders replied that it was by the authority of their God and also that a decree had been issued by King Cyrus.—Ezra 5:3-16

A letter was sent to Darius, now the king of Persia [a later king than “Darius the Median” of Daniel 5:31], asking that a search be made to discover whether such a decree had been issued. The records were searched, and Cyrus' decree was found. Darius then made a proclamation, “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.”—Ezra 6:1-7

King Darius also commanded that “young bullocks, and rams, and lambs, for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven,” and also “wheat, salt, wine, and oil” be supplied “day by day without fail: 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.”—vss. 8-10

As a result of this favorable decree from Darius and the encouraging words of God's prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, the rebuilding of the Temple was completed in the sixth year of Darius' reign.—vss. 14,15

There was much rejoicing when the Temple was finally completed, and it was dedicated with a great deal of ceremony. Haggai, one of the prophets used by God to stir up the spirit of the people to resume and complete the rebuilding of the Temple, also prophesied concerning a still greater “house.” We read, “The desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD.”—Hag. 2:6,7

Paul quotes from the foregoing verses and applies them to the present time of great “shaking,” which is preparing the world for Messiah's kingdom. (Heb. 12:26-28) The “house” which Haggai said the Lord would fill with his glory is the symbolic temple of God, which is Christ and his church in glory—the spiritual phase of the kingdom. ■