

Dedication of the Temple

Key Verse: *“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.”*
—**Ezra 6:16**

Selected Scripture:
Ezra 6:13-22

ing of Israel’s Temple, which had been so long in ruins, was finished. “This house was finished on the third day of the month Adar [February-March on our calendar], which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.”—Ezra 6:15

The completion of the Temple is spoken of in the words: “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.” (vs. 14) The prophet Haggai also testified: “The LORD stirred up . . . the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came

AS WE CONTINUE OUR

study of the restoration of Israel’s Temple in Jerusalem, we note that the events concerning its dedication took place about five years after the start of construction, except for the foundation, which had been completed about twenty years earlier—the work having ceased for the intervening fifteen-year period before being started again. Now, however, the rebuild-

and did work in the house of the LORD.”—Hag. 1:14

Let us draw special attention to this rebuilt “house of the LORD.” The rebuilding was done according to the specifications given years earlier by King Cyrus. He had decreed that the new Temple was to be sixty cubits high, and sixty cubits broad. (Ezra 6:3) We understand that a cubit was equal to about eighteen inches. With this in mind, we can better comprehend the scope of this undertaking, and the size of the new Temple. With respect to these dimensions, we know that it was much larger than Solomon’s Temple, although it was likely greatly inferior to it in ornamentation.—I Kings 6:2-38

The dedication of the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem was a very important event, since no one who had returned from captivity had probably ever seen Solomon’s Temple—it having been destroyed some ninety years earlier. In verses 17-22 of Ezra 6, we are given a description of the elaborate ceremony with which the new Temple was dedicated. Although the people now were likely not of as much financial means as had been the case when the original Temple was built and dedicated, they nevertheless rejoiced in its completion. We are told in our Key Verse that the priests, Levites, and all the rest of the children of Israel who had returned from captivity, dedicated the Temple “with joy.” As part of the ceremony, they offered “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.” (vs. 17) These last words indicate that all of the twelve tribes were represented among the returned captives.

The “rest of the children of the captivity” rejoiced at the completed Temple, bringing many offerings to its dedication. Spiritual Israelites today are also to offer themselves and be built as “living stones” for the spiritual temple. “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices.”—I Pet. 2:5 ■