

Worship Is Restored

Key Verse: *“All the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.”*
—Ezra 3:11

Selected Scripture:
Ezra 3:1-6,10-13

Jewish captives to return to Israel and “build the house of the LORD God of Israel.”—Ezra 1:1-3

The first work of the returned Jews was to build an altar to offer burnt offerings, as written in the Law of Moses. In the second year of their return, “the foundation of the temple” was constructed. All the people were “praising and giving thanks unto the LORD; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel, ... because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.”—Ezra 3:2-6,8-11

The sounds were discordant—some of joy, some of weeping. Those who looked forward in hope for the future, shouted for joy. Those who looked backward in time, and pictured before their minds Solomon’s grand Temple, wept as they thought of the insignificance of the present one in comparison. (vss. 12,13) Similarly among the Lord’s followers today, there may be some

EVENTS RECORDED IN THE book of Ezra occurred at the close of the 70 years desolation of the land of Israel and captivity of the Israelites in Babylon. At that time Cyrus, king of Persia, declared that God had given him all the kingdoms of the earth and appointed him to “build him a house at Jerusalem.” Consequently, Cyrus issued a proclamation allowing the

who weep or are cast down, perhaps nostalgic for the past, when they should be rejoicing for the future. Paul's exhortation is, "forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead." (Phil. 3:13, *International Standard Version*) Let us keep in mind that each day we are, in fact, one day closer to the fruition of all our hopes, not only for ourselves but for all mankind.

We should never forget the lessons we have learned from our past sins or shortcomings, including "chastening of the Lord" and our striving to be rightly "exercised" by such experiences. (Heb. 12:5-11) However, to remember them does not mean to constantly mourn over them, because "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ." The merit of Christ's sacrifice covers all of our unwilling blemishes and mistakes. (I John 2:1,2; 1:7-10) We should "keep pursuing the goal to win the prize of God's heavenly call."—Phil. 3:14, *ISV*

In some ways, this scene recorded in the book of Ezra could also be indicative of conditions and events that will take place in the world soon after the end of Armageddon. At that time small groups of people, having faith in God, will turn toward him and joyfully accept the new conditions and arrangements on earth. Progressively, all mankind will eventually approach God, as Israel in olden times approached the Lord, through the spiritual temple.—Rev. 21:1-4

Mankind on earth will praise and give thanks to our Heavenly Father for his great goodness, mercy, and love. (Ps. 136:1) "In the last days, the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, ... and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."—Isa. 2:2-4 ■