

Ezra 5

Verses 1- 2

When the prophets, Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them, ² then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak rose up and began to rebuild the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them, supporting them.

The building of the temple had been delayed for 15 years for two reasons:

1. The Samaritans bribed advisors to frustrate the plans of the Jews.

See Ezra 4:4

⁴ Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah, and frightened them from building, ⁵ and bribed advisers against them to frustrate their advice all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

2. The lack of zeal and devotion on the part of God's people.

See Haggai 1:

² “This is what the LORD of armies says: ‘This people says, “The time has not come, the time for the house of the LORD to be rebuilt.”’” ³ Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, ⁴ “Is it time for you yourselves to live in your paneled houses while this house remains desolate?” ⁵ Now then, the LORD of armies says this: “Consider your ways!”

Verses 3 - 5

³ At that time Tattenai, the governor of *the province* beyond the *Euphrates* River, and Shethar-bozenai and their colleagues came to them and spoke to them as follows: “Who issued you a decree to rebuild this temple and to finish this structure?” ⁴ Then we told them accordingly what the names of the men were who were reconstructing this building. ⁵ But the eye of their God was on the elders of the Jews, and they did not stop them until the report could reach Darius, and then the decree concerning it could be sent back.

Tattenai, the governor of the province, asked the Jews who issued them a decree to rebuild the temple.

The Persian Empire was divided into 120 provinces.

See Daniel 6:1

It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps over the kingdom, to be in charge of the whole kingdom, ² and over them, three commissioners (of whom Daniel was one), so that these satraps would be accountable to them, and that the king would not suffer loss.

The territory ruled by Tattenai included Syria, Palestine, Phoenicia (Lebanon) and Cyprus. Tattenai's capital was at Damascus.

See map 505



We can guess that the Samaritans contacted the governor, who then asked the Jews who gave them permission to build the temple.

But the eye of their God was on the elders of the Jews, and they did not stop them until the report could reach Darius, and then the decree concerning it could be sent back.

This governor was fair-minded and was not manipulated by the Samaritans. He allowed the work to proceed until he could consult Darius the king.

Verses 6 - 17

⁶ *This is the copy of the letter that Tattenai, the governor of the province beyond the Euphrates River, and Shethar-bozenai and his colleagues the officials, who were beyond the River, sent to Darius the king. ⁷ They sent the report to him in which it was written as follows: “To Darius the king, all peace. ⁸ May it be known to the king that we have gone to the province of Judah, to the house of the great God which is being built with large stones, and beams are being laid in the walls; and this work is being performed with great care and is succeeding in their hands. ⁹ Then we asked those elders and said to them as follows: ‘Who issued you a decree to rebuild this temple and to finish this structure?’ ¹⁰ We also asked them their names so as to inform you, in order that we might write down the names of the men who were in charge. ¹¹ So they answered us as follows, saying, ‘We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and are rebuilding the temple that was built many years ago, which a great king of Israel built and finished. ¹² But because our fathers provoked the God of heaven to wrath, He handed them over to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this temple and deported the people to Babylon. ¹³ However, in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, King Cyrus issued a decree to rebuild this house of God. ¹⁴ Also the gold and silver utensils of the house of God which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem and brought them to the temple of Babylon, King Cyrus took them from the temple of Babylon and they were given to one whose name was Sheshbazzar, whom he had appointed governor. ¹⁵ And he said to him, “Take these utensils, go and deposit them in the temple in Jerusalem, and have the house of God rebuilt in its place.” ¹⁶ Then that Sheshbazzar came and laid the foundations of the house of God in Jerusalem; and from then until now it has been under construction and it is not yet completed.’ ¹⁷ And now, if it pleases the king, let a search be conducted in the king’s treasure house, which is there in Babylon, as to whether a decree was issued by King Cyrus to rebuild this house of God in Jerusalem; and let the king send to us his decision concerning this matter.”*

⁸ May it be known to the king that we have gone to the province of Judah, to the house of the great God which is being built with large stones, and beams are being laid in the walls; and this work is being performed with great care and is succeeding in their hands.

The Hebrew word for “large stones” is “rolling stones”, stones so large that they would have to be moved by rolling them on rollers.

See pics 510



To be clear this picture is only used as an example. The stones seen here were added over a number of centuries beginning in the 1st century BC. The stones near the bottom of the wall were put there by King Herod (72 – 4 BC) when he increased the size of the temple mount and rebuilt the temple. Additional layers were added in subsequent centuries and one can see that the size of the stones decreased over time.

See video 515 8.42 The western wall

<https://www.levickfamily.com/8.42.html>

¹⁴ Also the gold and silver utensils of the house of God which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem and brought them to the temple of Babylon, King Cyrus took them from the temple of Babylon and they were given to one whose name was Sheshbazzar, whom he had appointed governor.

Some commentators say that Sheshbazzar was another name for Zerubbabel, maybe his Babylonian name. Others think Sheshbazzar was the Persian appointed leader and he appointed Zerubbabel as the local leader of the Jews.

¹⁷ And now, if it pleases the king, let a search be conducted in the king's treasure house, which is there in Babylon, as to whether a decree was issued by King Cyrus to rebuild this house of God in Jerusalem; and let the king send to us his decision concerning this *matter*."

If Cyrus had made such a decree, and he had, then according to the Medo-Persian Law it was impossible to change it.