

Ezra 6

Verses 1- 5

Then King Darius issued a decree, and a search was conducted in the archives, where the treasures were stored in Babylon. ² And in Ecbatana, in the fortress which is in the province of Media, a scroll was found; and the following was written in it: “Memorandum— ³ In the first year of King Cyrus, Cyrus the king issued a decree: ‘Concerning the house of God in Jerusalem, let the temple, the place where sacrifices are offered, be rebuilt, and let its foundations be repaired, its height *being sixty cubits and its width sixty cubits,* ⁴ *with three layers of large stones and one layer of timber.* And the cost is to be paid from the royal treasury. ⁵ Also the gold and silver utensils of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, are to be returned and brought to their places in the temple in Jerusalem; and you shall put *them* in the house of God.’

Then King Darius issued a decree, and a search was conducted in the archives, where the treasures were stored in Babylon. ² And in Ecbatana, in the fortress which is in the province of Media, a scroll was found; and the following was written in it: “Memorandum—

See Map 605



Apparently the archives in Babylon were searched but the decree they were searching for was not found. However, after searching another location farther north in Ecbatana, the summer residence of Persian kings, it was found.

The Behistun Inscription was discovered in 1835 by Sir Henry Rawlinson on a mountain with the same name, 200 miles northeast of Babylon. There was a rock rising 1700 feet out of the plain and Rawlinson noticed a large smoothed surface on which there were carvings and inscriptions.

These inscriptions were written in the Persian, Elamitic, and Babylonian languages. These were inscribed by Darius I in the year 516 B.C.

See video 610 8.61 The Behistun Inscription

<https://www.levickfamily.com/8.61.html>

³ In the first year of King Cyrus, Cyrus the king issued a decree: '**Concerning the house of God in Jerusalem, let the temple, the place where sacrifices are offered, be rebuilt, and let its foundations be repaired, its height being sixty cubits and its width sixty cubits,** ⁴ **with three layers of large stones and one layer of timber. And the cost is to be paid from the royal treasury.**

Solomon's temple was 40 by 80 cubits, 60 by 120 feet. The 2nd temple was 60 by (?) cubits. The height was to be 60 cubits.

See pic 615



See pic 620 Close up of the temple



Verses 6 – 10

⁶“Now as for you, Tattenai, governor of *the province* beyond the *Euphrates* River, Shethar-bozenai, and your colleagues, the officials of *the provinces* beyond the River, stay away from there. ⁷ Leave that work on the house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews rebuild that house of God on its site. ⁸ Furthermore, I issue a decree concerning what you are to do for these elders of Judah in the rebuilding of that house of God: the full cost is to be paid to those people from the royal treasury out of the taxes of *the provinces* beyond the *Euphrates* River, *and* that without interruption. ⁹ And whatever is needed, bulls, rams, and lambs for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, and wheat, salt, wine, and anointing oil, as the priests in Jerusalem order, *it* is to be given to them daily without fail, ¹⁰ so that they may offer acceptable sacrifices to the God of heaven and pray for the lives of the king and his sons.

⁷ Leave that work on the house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews rebuild that house of God on its site.

Not only did Darius confirm the existence of the decree, he added his own warning that no one should interfere with or impede the work on the building. 😊 He may have received a complaint from Tattenai and his companions and he wanted to make sure these Samaritans did not hinder the work.

⁸ Furthermore, I issue a decree concerning what you are to do for these elders of Judah in the rebuilding of that house of God: the full cost is to be paid to those people from the royal treasury out of the taxes of the provinces beyond the Euphrates River, and that without interruption.

Most of the 50,000 Israelites that returned to Jerusalem were poor so God provided the finances needed to build the temple.

¹⁰ so that they may offer acceptable sacrifices to the God of heaven and pray for the lives of the king and his sons.

See 1Timothy 2:1-2

First of all, then, I urge that requests, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made in behalf of all people, ² for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.

Verses 11 - 15

¹¹ And I issued a decree that any person who violates this decree, a timber shall be pulled out of his house and he shall be impaled on it; and his house shall be turned into a refuse heap on account of this. ¹² May the God who has caused His name to dwell there overthrow any king or people who attempts to change *it*, so as to destroy that house of God in Jerusalem. I, Darius, have issued *this* decree; *it is to be carried out with all diligence!*" ¹³ Then Tattenai, the governor of *the province beyond the Euphrates River*, Shethar-bozenai, and their colleagues carried out *the decree* with all diligence, just as King Darius had ordered. ¹⁴ And the elders of the Jews were successful in building through the prophecy of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they finished building following the command of the God of Israel and the decree of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia. ¹⁵ Now this temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar; it was the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.

¹¹ And I issued a decree that any person who violates this decree, a timber shall be pulled out of his house and he shall be impaled on it; and his house shall be turned into a refuse heap on account of this.

King Darius made it quite clear that anyone who attempted to slow down or halt the work on the temple would suffer accordingly. Crucifixion was the most common form of punishment among the Persians and King Darius had impaled 3,000 Babylonians when he took their city.

¹² May the God who has caused His name to dwell there overthrow any king or people who attempts to change it, so as to destroy that house of God in Jerusalem. I, Darius, have issued *this* decree; *it* is to be carried out with all diligence!”

King Darius appealed to the God of Jerusalem to execute divine justice on anyone that tried to destroy the temple.

¹⁴ And the elders of the Jews were successful in building through the prophecy of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they finished building following the command of the God of Israel and the decree of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.

Some have wondered why King Artaxerxes was mentioned here since his reign began 51 years after the temple was completed.

See chart 625

King	Reign (BC)	Events	Year
Cyrus	559 - 529	Cyrus releases the Jews	539
		Foundation of temple completed	538 - 536
		Work on temple stopped	536 - 520
Cambyses	529-522		
Smerdis (Bardiya)	522		
Darius I (Hystaspes)	521-486	Work on temple begins	520
		Temple completed	516
Xerxes I (Ahashuerus)	485-465		
Artaxerxes (Longimanus)	465-424		465
		Nehemiah rebuilds the wall	445

It has been proposed that the author of Ezra may have included King Artaxerxes here because at a later date he contributed to the work and support of the Levites. However, this “solution” lacks credibility because the support he provided to the Levites took place 50 years after the completion of the temple.

¹⁵ Now this temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar; it was the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.

The temple took about 5 years to complete after a 15 year delay.

See chart 630

Kings of Persia 559 to 330 BC			
King	Reign (BC)	Events	Year
Cyrus	559 - 529	Cyrus releases the Jews	539
		Foundation of temple completed	538 - 536
		Work on temple stopped	536 - 520
Cambyses	529-522		
Smerdis (Bardiya)	522		
Darius I (Hystaspes)	521-486	Work on temple begins	520
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Verses 16 - 18

¹⁶ And the sons of Israel, the priests, the Levites, and the rest of the exiles, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy. ¹⁷ They offered for the dedication of this temple of God a hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs, and as a sin offering for all Israel twelve male goats, corresponding to the number of the tribes of Israel. ¹⁸ Then they appointed the priests to their divisions and the Levites in their sections for the service of God in Jerusalem, as it is written in the Book of Moses.

¹⁶ And the sons of Israel, the priests, the Levites, and the rest of the exiles, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy.

After years of poverty, legal struggles and other opposition from the Samaritans this was a great success and time of joy for the Jewish people.

¹⁷ They offered for the dedication of this temple of God a hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs, and as a sin offering for all Israel twelve male goats, corresponding to the number of the tribes of Israel.

For the number of people present (about 50,000) this was a great offering.

Solomon offered about 200 times as many bulls and sheep but Israel had a much larger population at the time. If the number of animals offered is based on the population, then the numbers are fairly close to being even.

Verses 19 - 22

¹⁹ The exiles held the Passover on the fourteenth of the first month. ²⁰ For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves together; all of them were pure. Then they slaughtered the Passover *lambs* for all the exiles, both for their brothers the priests and for themselves. ²¹ And the sons of Israel who returned from exile and all those who had separated themselves from the impurity of the nations of the land to *join* them, to seek the Lord God of Israel, ate *the Passover*. ²² And they held the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days with joy, because the Lord had made them happy, and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward them to encourage them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

And the sons of Israel who returned from exile and all those who had separated themselves from the impurity of the nations of the land to *join* them, to seek the Lord God of Israel, ate *the Passover*.

There were 2 groups of people in Jerusalem

1. The exiles who had returned.
2. Those that had been left in Palestine by Nebuchadnezzar.

This second group was made up of two subgroups.

1. Those who had kept themselves pure in their loyalty to God.
2. And those who had become mixed with the heathen population.

The exiles and those who had kept themselves pure observed the Passover.

²² And they held the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days with joy, because the Lord had made them happy, and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward them to encourage them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

Just as the slaves were freed by God in the exodus, in the same way the exiles had been freed by God in this exodus from Babylon.

The Persian king is called the king of Assyria because he ruled over all the provinces that had previously been part of the Assyrian empire, and these provinces made up the greater part of the Persian Empire.

In a similar fashion Cyrus, the King of Persia, was called the King of Babylon.

See Ezra 5:13

¹³ However, in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, King Cyrus issued a decree to rebuild this house of God.

And Artaxerxes, the King of Persia, is called the King of Babylon.

See Nehemiah 13:6

⁶ But during all this *time* I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I had come to the king. After some time, however, I requested a leave of absence from the king,