

**February 18, 2024**

**Ezra 3:6b-13**

*6b* But the foundation of the temple of the LORD was not yet laid. *7* So they gave money to the masons and the carpenters, and food, drink, and oil to the Sidonians and the Tyrians to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea, to Joppa, according to the grant that they had from Cyrus king of Persia. *8* Now in the second year after their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak made a beginning, together with the rest of their kinsmen, the priests and the Levites and all who had come to Jerusalem from the captivity. They appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to supervise the work of the house of the Lord. *9* And Jeshua with his sons and his brothers, and Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together supervised the workmen in the house of God, along with the sons of Henadad and the Levites, their sons and brothers. *10* And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their vestments came forward with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the Lord, according to the directions of David king of Israel. *11* And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD, “For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel.” And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the LORD because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. *12* But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy, *13* so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping, for the people shouted with a great shout, and the sound was heard far away.

Scriptures for further study:

1 Peter 3:18

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

“The glorious good news of the gospel is that the sin-devastated relationship between lost sinners and the holy God can be restored.”

-Albert Mohler

“If I find in myself desires which nothing in this world can satisfy, the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world.”

-C.S. Lewis



### **The Hand of God to Protect Ezra 3:6b-13**

**BIG IDEA:** Because of Jesus’ restorative work, neither our present disappointments nor joys will destroy us.

The Gospel rescues me from the highs and lows of life.

### **OUTLINE**

1. Jesus’ Restorative Work

2. Our Present Joys

3. Our Present Disappointments

## SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These “Sermon Discussion Questions” are designed for study during the week for believers in a wide variety of ages & stages in their walk with Christ.

1. Over the past couple of weeks what were some highlights (or highs)? What were some low points (or lows)? How did you handle the highs? And the lows?
2. The temple's magnificence was immaterial to God because no building could match His magnificence, which God's people would one day experience through restored fellowship with Him in Christ. How can longing for the good old days deprive you and others of the Lord's presence in the moment and work for you in the present and future?
3. How can present triumphs and joys harm you?
4. Describe what Pastor Bill means by the Holy Spirit's work in your life through “the ministry of dissatisfaction?” How might your disappointments in life be an invitation from the Holy Spirit to be satisfied by God's presence and love?

“You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.”  
-Augustine

“The older priests, Levites, and family heads, who remembered Solomon's temple, wept because this temple would be much simpler than the former one.”  
-Mervin Breneman

“The only love that won't disappoint you is one that can't change, that can't be lost, that is not based on the ups and downs of life or of how well you live. It is something that not even death can take away from you. God's love is the only thing like that.”  
-Tim Keller



This is an artist's rendering of Solomon's Temple (957 BC) which was destroyed by the Babylonians.



This is artistic rendering of the rebuilt temple. Only the dimensions of the temple are described in Scripture. It was ninety feet high and ninety feet wide.  
- ESV Study Bible

***Praise to Jesus.*** Praise Jesus for His love, which the Holy Spirit has sealed in your heart. Praise Him because there is always a way out of your present disappointment. Rejoice in the knowledge that nothing can take away or separate you from the love of God. Praise Jesus for His love, which ensures that though things may be stripped from you in this life, you will lose absolutely nothing in the life to come. Praise Jesus for His love that ensures that your best days are always ahead of you despite some bad days in this life. Praise Him for a love that comforts, strengthens, and motivates you by saying disappointment is never the final story; victory is.

***Repentance through Jesus.*** Set aside time this week to ask the Holy Spirit to show you how you have allowed present disappointments to devastate you rather than trust God's plan and purpose in dissatisfaction and letdowns. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you life's greener pastures that you think will give you security, success, or peace at the cost of satisfaction in Christ. If appropriate, confess and repent to loved ones or friends you hurt because you have expected them to satisfy your heart in ways that only Jesus can.

***Consecration for Jesus.*** For Jesus, dedicate or consecrate yourself to embrace disappointments and successes as aspects of Gospel discontentment. Remember, the Holy Spirit lives in you and is guarding you from letting your heart get too absorbed by the things of this life. In the moments of devastation and joy, proclaim the blessings of the Lord in the highs and lows to your family, friends, coworkers, and neighbors .

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

After building the altar and making sacrifices, the Israelites began the work of rebuilding the temple. Work begins on the temple itself, with the laying of its foundation in the second year of the return (c. 537 B.C.). The second month, Ziv—the same time of year when Solomon had begun his temple—is in the Spring. The time of their return from exile is dated with the formula after they came to the house of God in Jerusalem. Even though the temple still lies in ruins, the place could be called “the house of God” because of its consecration for worship. The narrator stresses that those who have come from captivity do this. The priests and Levites are emphasized, and the qualifying age for Levitical service is mentioned. The laying of the foundations occasions praise, which echoes the celebrations of King David when he prepared for the building of Solomon's temple. But many ... wept with a loud voice. Sadness is mixed with this rejoicing, for some of the very old remembered the former temple and believed that this new one would not match the former temple's glory. The picture of the mitigated celebration is a small symbol of the whole event of the return, which was a triumph yet fell far short of the great hopes some had. - ESV Study Bible

To better understand the sadness expressed in the sermon passage, read Hagagai 2:2-9.

## FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

1. Read Ezra 3:7-8 and compare it with 2 Kings 5:6-11 and 2 Chronicles 2:16. What are the similarities in these verses? Why would the author want to connect the making of the first temple during King Solomon's reign with this new Temple? (The similarities include using cedars from Lebanon and taking them down to Joppa. Solomon dealt with the King of Tyre as we read in verse 7 that the returned exiles dealt with the Tyrians. One commentator wrote, "Ezra 3:7 deliberately and intentionally likens what the returnees did to what Solomon had done [in building the first Temple]." Also, Ezra 3:8 tells us that the building began in the second month of the year, the month Solomon began building the first Temple. See 1 Kings 6:1.)

2. What was the reaction of the Israelites in Ezra 3:10-11 when the Temple foundation was laid? (The Israelites sang praises and gave thanks to the LORD God. They used a common praise celebrating God's goodness and steadfast love. The same praise can be found in Psalms 107:1, 118:1; 1 Chronicles 16:34, 41; 2 Chronicles 7:3)

3. What was the reaction of other Israelites in Ezra 3:12? Which Israelites had this reaction? Why did they have this reaction? (We read in verse 12 that the "priests and Levites and heads of fathers' houses...wept with a loud voice." It was the "old men who had seen the first house [Temple]." The new Temple foundation did not have the glory of the first Temple, so these older men remembered the majesty of the first Temple and were sad.)

4. How do you see God's goodness in their lives? (Make sure to offer how you see God's goodness.)

5. How do we have mixed reactions of joy and sadness in our Christian lives? (We praise God for saving sinful people like us so that our sins are forgiven. Therefore, the guilt of sin is gone, and due to the presence of the Holy Spirit in us, sin no longer has power over us. That fills us with joy. But since the presence of sin is still around us and in us, then we still struggle with and battle sin. This causes us to weep at sin in our lives and in the world.)

Scriptures for further study:

Romans 7:24-8:1

1 John 1:8 -2:11

Luke 10:23-24

## FOR STUDENTS

1. Picture the sights and sounds of the joyful scene as God's people worship and celebrate the temple foundation! Look back to King David's song as he led God's people in worship (1 Chron 16:4-36, especially v.34). What is the consistent focus as God's people worship? Consider the way David's words grow richer in meaning generation by generation- even to our day.
2. What can we discern from the text about the reasons for the people's weeping (Ezra 3:12-13)? How might 1 Kings 8:1-11 help?
3. Think of our worship celebrations today as followers of the risen Christ. Compare and contrast the ways in which we rejoice-and yet still weep. How can this Old Testament scene encourage and exhort us as New Testament believers?
4. What are the things that promote unity in the local church? What practical steps do you think you and others could take to develop such unity?
5. What place should emotion have in worship?

## FOR SEEKERS AND NEW BELIEVERS

1. Now that the people have returned from exile, they immediately rebuild the temple (along the same lines as the original temple under King Solomon).

Question: Why do you think rebuilding the temple was the very first thing they did? Why is this important and what does this suggest? How can you apply this to your own life?

2. It is clear that proper worship involved the right kind of leadership and oversight (in this case, Levites, priests, etc.). It is also clear that worship involved the participation of “all the people” (verse 11).

Question: Why is good worship leadership so important? Would you spend some time praying for all those who lead us in worship? And what about you: are you fully engaged in worship as a participant? When you worship, are you worshipping with a “great shout of praise” (verse 11)?

3. When the Israelites sang, “He is good; his love endures forever,” they were remembering the faithfulness of God in the past, present, and future. Reflect: Take some time to thank God and praise Him for all of His past faithfulness to you, His present faithfulness to you, and rejoice in all the ways He promises to be faithful to us in the future. Let this fuel your worship.

4. The sound of weeping coming from the “old timers” is somewhat unexpected and yet somewhat understandable too. The rebuilding of the new temple served as a point of contrast to those who remembered the glory days of Israel and of the original temple. Things were certainly not what they once were!

Question: How can weeping sometimes be appropriate in our worship, if by this we mean weeping over our sin, and weeping over the consequences of our sin? In what ways should there be both “sounds of weeping” and “shouts of joy” (verse 13) mixed together in our worship?

5. The new temple would never match the glory of the former Solomonic temple, but in the end, why is the size of one’s church building (or congregation), not all that important? Why, in fact, is it significant that the people here are worshipping God even when there is only just a modest foundation that has thus far been laid?

# The Hand of Our God and His Divine Sovereignty in the Return and Renewal of God's People



*The Ancient of Days, William Blake, 1794.*

About the artwork:

The Ancient of Days, found in prophecies of Daniel, is the subject of William Blake's engraving in which he shows us the Hand of Our God and His Divine Sovereignty in the Return and Renewal of God's People, the sermon series title for Ezra.

The Ancient of Days is the cover art for Blake's Poem *Europe: a Prophecy* (1794). The Ancient of Days is a name for God the Father, whom the prophet Daniel spoke of in Daniel 7, where he saw Jesus, the Son of Man, "given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed." This artistic rendering by Blake serves to encourage God's people to know that He is still active and on the move with His plan of redemption despite their surroundings and circumstances.

William Blake (1757-1827) was committed to bringing prophecies and visions of the God of the Bible to life; the poet, printmaker, and painter was unrecognized and died impoverished. Despite their circumstances, William and his devoted wife Catherine, whom he taught to read and write, enjoyed a happy marriage and life together.

As a child, he came home one day and told his parents he saw "a tree filled with angels, bright angelic wings bespangling every bough like stars." His middle-class mom and dad greatly loved him and all their seven children but didn't appreciate their son's story. Only the pleas of his mom saved him from the "beating" his dad said he deserved! Blake's visions continued throughout his fifty years. Among his many visions, Blake saw Christ with his Apostles and a great procession of monks and priests and heard their chant." He saw "God's face pressed against his window, seeing angels among the haystacks, and being visited by the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel." Blake believed the Bible was the most significant work of poetry ever written. It was the basis for the art. His love for the Bible and his visions were the stuff of a vast collection of visual and literary art through which Blake attempted to describe "the body of God.

Barker, (2004) (Barker, William Blake 1757-1827, 2004)

Today, William Blake is considered one of the greatest poets in the English language and one of the most original visual artists of his day.