

The Rebuilding of Jerusalem, Pt. 1

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One last thing that I want to mention in the announcements before we get started. Next week, especially for here in the U.S. and Canada, and possibly Europe, the first sermon is going to be up on the site because it's pre-recorded. Actually, the second one is too for Australia and New Zealand and over here as well.

But the first sermon I'm going to ask everyone that you can download that, obviously, and be ready to play it for wherever you're meeting together, Canada or the U.S. We have a few situations where there are some that aren't able to travel, aren't going to be able to travel so they're going to be keeping it where they live in their area. I'm going to ask that you not preview the sermon in advance, and I'm going to ask that if you do set it up for everyone else you only do the first 20 to 30 seconds of the sermon and to stop it. In other words, sometimes in order to get the screen set up, you have the picture come on. If it's a TV you don't have to worry about it because your TV is already set. But I'm doing this because I want you to have the same impact from the first sermon and forward from that point on that everyone else is going to have.

I'm going to ask one other thing. No emails or phone calls to anyone after you hear the first sermon because you may have the first opportunity to hear it and I'm going to ask that there are no emails. Because we have contacts worldwide in the Church, and so, I'm going to ask wherever you live, if it's Australia, New Zealand, you're going to be the first ones to hear the sermon on the first day I'm going to ask everyone over there to keep it to themselves, not to be emailing their friends that are in Europe at that time or here in the U.S. Vice versa for Europe, that you have the jump and then you can talk to different friends over here. I'm going to ask that none of that goes on, okay?

I want this to be fair in the sense of having the same impact on everyone at the same time wherever they hear it. Makes sense? Good.

This is a very important Feast, obviously. It's similar in most aspects for a Feast as the one in 2005, so it's a very important one, and that's why I'm asking everyone to follow the guidelines so that it's fair to everyone in that respect to be able to hear and be able to be moved by what they hear at the time they hear it, not from a friend, hearing some of it maybe not in full context.

Okay, let's see. I think that's pretty much it.

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Today we're beginning a new sermon series as the other series, as I mentioned last Sabbath, was getting a little bit long, and I didn't want to go much farther. So, we're going to have a little bit of a spin-off from the past series which was entitled *God's Glory and Greatness*.

By now that should be pretty much in our minds in the sense of knowing what that series was about, to be moved by how God works in our lives and to grasp the awesome ways He has planned and prepared things

for so, so long through time for mankind, especially when it comes to His plan and purpose that's to be worked out in the first 6,000 years, and beyond, obviously. But we live toward the end of the six.

Again, to me, it's a marvel. What other words can you use to describe, to explain the awesomeness of how God works, His great power of things that so often we don't think about. In the same terms, He's giving us the ability to see at this time, and I find that immensely inspiring when you see it in that context.

You'll see it now especially as we go on with this sermon today in this new series that's entitled *The Rebuilding of Jerusalem, Part 1*.

So, in the last series, in *Part 6* we ended as we were focusing on the end of the Babylonian kingdom which was that head of gold that Daniel was able to tell Nebuchadnezzar what the statue signified, what it meant in the dream that Nebuchadnezzar had. He didn't understand what he had seen, and no one could tell him. Daniel told him, "There is a God, the Great God of heaven that can reveal these things to man, and that He will be the one that will be giving this to you."

He explained the different periods of time that would exist in history, the first being the kingdom of Babylon. He says, "of which you are that head of gold." That kingdom lasted almost, well, right at seventy years. Then it ended and a new kingdom came along which is where we are now in the flow, in the story flow.

So, it began with Nebuchadnezzar primarily—his father—but primarily Nebuchadnezzar leading the armies and the things that took place. So, we ended at that point in time. Again, the Babylonian kingdom lasted until 539 BC. Basically, it started in power in 609. It ended in 539 under the rule of Belshazzar when he made a feast for a thousand of his lords.

So, we read that story last week. What an incredible story. He brought out the vessels of gold from the treasury, those things that had been taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar nearly, well, it was seventy years later, nearly, well, actually took the first batch three years later so that would have been sixty-seven years before this point in time when they started taking some of the treasures out of the house of God.

They took those things, passed them around, and they were drinking wine out of the vessels that were in the temple of God. It's at that point that he saw this hand on a wall that wrote, "*MENE, MENE, TELEK, UPHARSIN*." Again, Daniel was brought forth to tell the king what this meant because this was highly unsettling for him, as the scriptures bring out, and he wanted to know what this meant.

So again, last Sabbath's story. He was told, "Your kingdom is numbered," and basically, "It's over. This is it. You're found wanting. You're found lacking." So again, it's at this point here, on that same night, that the story begins of a new empire, a new kingdom, the next part of the statue which was the chest, the breastplate, the breast area, and the two arms of silver. This area here is the Medo-Persian Empire that's now going to rule.

Now, what's fascinating is that God had planned this so far before, that there would be these kingdoms. The time that He introduced various things, going way, way back, that He began to even reveal some of the

truth of these things that would happen later on. Again, the glory and the greatness of Almighty God, of how meticulous, how perfectly planned life is for mankind in the first 6,000 years and the next 1,100.

So again, in that same night, it's the story where Cyrus, who had been named by God right at two hundred years previous to this through Isaiah the prophet, conquered Babylon. So, He inspired Isaiah. I find the chapter where this is revealed fascinating as well because it's Isaiah 45. It's a powerful section of scripture that was used in 2005 when God began to reveal to us things that we had not grasped nor comprehended until He revealed it in 2005 concerning the fact that there was no Trinity, which we already knew.

We understood that there was no such thing as a "holy ghost." It's the holy spirit of God spoken of in scripture. Man has used words like the word "ghost" to make it sound like it's a being or a person, and it's not. It's the power of God, the holy spirit. That was given to Herbert Armstrong to give to His Church. Then later on the last part of the Trinity then destroyed in the sense that Joshua the Christ has not eternally existed. He had his beginning when he was born. So again, all these things revealed to us toward the end-time here. Awesome!

So nearly two hundred years earlier it was written about Cyrus, his name given, that God had shown what his name would be and that that would be given, that he would be given the ability to conquer Babylon in that respect. So again, happened just the way He said in Isaiah 45.

Let's turn over to 2 Chronicles. We'll start there. Some of these things are in Ezra. Some of these things are in 2 Chronicles. But we're going to start in 2 Chronicles. The end of 2 Chronicles gives an account of the captivity and destruction of Jerusalem. As we're going through this story today, to me one of the greatest things that we can grasp and comprehend from this, to understand the importance of timing and how God works with people, and those, especially, in that respect that are going to be a part of His government and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, is to understand that much of what we're going to read through is about the end-time and what took place at the end that is akin to this story on a physical plane.

This is on a physical plane, but what happened later is on a spiritual plane. All of it planned by God. All of it written ahead of time, just like we read in Ezekiel, in Ezekiel 2 and 5, and in through there, as we've gone through recently now and discussed some of those things that were about a very specific time. This is the same thing.

Things begin to be revealed about the captivity and the destruction of Jerusalem. That shouldn't escape us, what this is about concerning God's Church at the end. It then reveals specific events that would be fulfilled so that Jerusalem could be rebuilt after the captivity. We covered the first part of this account in 2 Chronicles 36 in *Part 5* of the previous series and we're going to pick it up again where we left off there.

**2 Chronicles 36:18—So all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the Eternal, the treasures of the king and his princes were all brought to Babylon.** So, this is a summation—it's what Chronicles is about—of events that took place. It's showing here that over those different captivities of that time this is what transpired.

**They even burned the house of God.** So, by the time it was over, by the different captivities at the end here, even the house of God, it says, was burned, **and they broke down the wall of Jerusalem and burned all the palaces thereof with fire and destroyed its precious possessions.**

**Verse 20—Then those who had escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon.** So, we know of the different captivities. Got greater and greater until the last one. So, it talks about all those who were carried away to Babylon, **where they were servants to him,** to Nebuchadnezzar, **and his sons,** in other words, those descendants that we have spoken of that went all the way down to Belshazzar.

**...until the reign of the kingdom of Persia.** So, we're talking about a span there now of seventy years.

**...thus fulfilling the word of the Eternal by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land...** Now, this is a bad translation here where it says, **"had enjoyed."** It's not saying that at all. It's a word that has to do with "acceptance." **...until the land could accept her Sabbaths.** So again, it's symbolic here of various things that have taken place and making it clear here that what they had done, God brought judgment upon them to remove them over several times there, of being conquered until they were fully conquered.

It says here **until the land could accept her Sabbaths. For as long as she lay desolate she kept...** It's not the word **"Sabbath"** here, it's the word **"rest."** **...she kept rest, to the fullness,** again, it's not to **"fulfill."** It's amazing here how things are so screwed up sometimes in translations because they don't understand God's purpose, God's plan. Sometimes they distract away from what is true in the first place by design.

**...she kept rest to the fullness of seventy years.** Other scriptures talk about this seventy years as well, but this is one of the primary ones that really is one of the most succinct, in that respect, of what this is all about.

**Verse 22—Now, in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, that the word of the Eternal spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished.** So, there are several portions of seventy years in here that are really interesting, that we're not going to spend the time going through. But again here, there is a point where sending them back begins. There is a point when they arrive; there is a point when it's built. So many of these points have specific periods that to me are very clearly at seventy years. So, it's not just one event that took place here to fulfill that seventy years.

So, it says here, again, **Now, in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, that the word of the Eternal, spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah...** That's referring to the seventy, to get it accomplished, to fulfill it, **might be accomplished, the Eternal stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia.** To know how he did that is what's really inspiring because he was given understanding of what it said in Isaiah. Those things were read to him when it talks about his name. His very name is mentioned there two hundred years previous to that when it was written. He's moved by that. God stirred him up to hear, to see that this is about him, and this is about something that God has given to him. He takes it seriously. He's not being called but he's being stirred up in his mind, in his being, in that spirit essence that God has placed in every human being.

**...stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom...** He was so moved that he followed through by doing this. **...and also in writing, saying, Thus**

**says Cyrus, king of Persia...** He was very moved by the fact that he was able to go in and conquer something that was unconquerable.

That's how people felt. They felt Babylon could not be conquered by any army. That's why they were in partying when the Medes and the Persians were outside because they weren't concerned that they were going to be overrun or conquered. They had such confidence, such cockiness about them, that nothing can happen to them. Well, God changed that. He let the Persian and the Medes in through as it talks about the gates that would be crumbled, in essence, that they'd have the ability to enter right into the city. It was that night, it says, that Belshazzar died, was put to death.

So, he's been moved by all these things and now he sees his name and the fact that it was God Almighty who gave this to him, and he believes it. He sees it.

It's kind of like when you're called. There are certain things you see. Nobody can give that to you. But when the ability to see something is there because it's true, this is what God did; it was true in his mind, in his being. He was very deeply moved by this. That's why he took this action.

**Thus says the king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth has the Eternal God of heaven given me.**

Wow! Because that's what it said. **...and has charged me...** He's the part of silver now. He doesn't know that necessarily, that part of it, obviously, but he believes what was said about the Eternal God, that all of the kingdoms would be given to him to rule, all the power that he had there, vast power.

**...given me and has charged me to build Him a house in Jerusalem which is in Judah. Of any who is among you of His people, the Eternal his God be with him and let him go up!** So, that's what he was telling them in this decree. So, "Anyone who wants to return, any of you who desire to, go up to Jerusalem!"

Now we're going to go on now to Ezra because the story is recapped there somewhat and that's where it goes in the story flow now. But again here, he, Ezra now, is one of the leaders who returned after the captivity. So, he doesn't return right here but he returns eventually. So, Ezra begins writing.

That's why I find it so incredible, the different ones who were taken into captivity, the various ones who grew up in captivity, and the various ones that God raised up during that period of time who were prophets who have sections of the Bible, Old Testament that are written there, that God gave to them.

So again here, he was one of the leaders who returned from captivity to help lead in the re-establishment of Jerusalem. He was a scribe and a priest, a descendant of Aaron, the high priest.

Now, they didn't lose sight of these while they were in captivity, and the Jewish people have been very much like that through history anyway. But in this respect, at this time here they knew who they were. They knew who they descended from. They never lost these things. They continued to keep the Sabbath even in captivity. The history is even that they build places to worship. Jerusalem wasn't there anymore, obviously. This is where there was a lot of the construction of various kinds of temples, and they began to worship there.

So, they continued that in Babylon even. So again here, he was a descendant of Aaron the high priest, and in this account, Ezra is writing about some of the history, of where this process began, of where the captives began to return, and how this happened. He brings it up in the story flow to when he finally went. Because he goes later on. He doesn't go right away.

Most people reading the book of Ezra think that this is happening right then and there. Some historians do, and they get all screwed up because they can't put the timing together then. Things don't fit. Well, there's a reason. Because he's just going back and recapping history for a time until he actually went up to Jerusalem.

**Ezra 1:1—Now, it's taking off from Chronicles. It's all it's doing. Now in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, that the word of the Eternal by the mouth of Jeremiah might be (become) fulfilled, the Eternal stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, the king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put also in writing, saying...** So, he's repeating here the things that are written in the last part of Chronicles and he's going to continue on now with the story.

**Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia, The Eternal God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has charged me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Of any who is among you of His people, his God be with you, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Eternal God of Israel (He is the God)...** So, it begins to add things here that weren't in Chronicles. **He is the God who is in Jerusalem.** So, it's revealing even more as we go through the story here.

**So whoever remains in any place where one will go on the journey...** So, what is he saying? He's saying, "Of all you who go up, choose to go up, any who remain here in Babylon, this is what you're to do." Okay? So, he's being very specific here in what he's telling them.

**So, whoever remains in any place where one will go on the journey, let the men of his place help him with silver and with gold, and with goods and with beasts, along with the freewill offering of the house of God that is in Jerusalem.** Pretty strong.

**Then there arose of the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites.** They all know who they were. The different ones who were priests of the Levites, they knew who they were. They never lost track of that. Some were born in captivity by this time, obviously, and they knew who they were.

**...and the priests and the Levites, with all whose spirit God had awakened...** So, God stirred up, first of all, Cyrus, and it uses this term here "all whom God awakened" to do this. There are people He moved in the thousands to return. It was in their heart, in their mind, in their being, in their spirit to do this. That's what it's saying.

**...with all whose spirit God had awakened to go to build the house of the Eternal which is in Jerusalem.** Now, see, when I read this I see the present time. Because this is a physical thing, spiritual by the means of what God did here in moving people to do this, but that is literally what had to happen to everyone who

fell asleep, who were moved to continue to go forward and rebuild something. That's exactly what happened in God's Church after the Apostasy.

Now, if that doesn't send a few shivers up and down your spine? Does mine.

**Then all those round about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods and with beasts, and with precious things along with all that was willingly offered. Also, Cyrus, the king, brought forth the vessels of the house of the Eternal which Nebuchadnezzar had taken forth out of Jerusalem and had put them in the house of his gods; even this did Cyrus, king of Persia, bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered or counted it... In other words, it's recorded and so it's all numbered, counted. ...them unto Sheshbazzar the prince... It's a ruler. It's a governor. It's the word used for that. ...of Judah.**

So, this is in 538, one year later after he had conquered. These things now were being done and they're going forward with plans. So, it takes a little while before this is happening before they can actually get everything together and then begin to get the people moved together and start the journey down to Jerusalem. This doesn't happen overnight, which brings us to another seventy in a little bit.

So, although this account, again, in the first chapter of Ezra is about the beginning process of captives being given support and freedom by Cyrus, king of Persia, to return to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, again, Ezra was not among this first group. He's telling the story in past tense and bringing it up to the present when he begins to reveal when he went. Because a little bit later he's going to be sent to Jerusalem.

So there are different waves that returned, just as there were different waves that were taken captive out of Babylon. Awesome!

So, he's simply giving an account of how the process began and what leads up to a second return of people to Jerusalem, which involves him.

Now, I'm going to point out another thing here about Sheshbazzar. There are certain things written in history or even in scripture that they really don't know necessary who Sheshbazzar is, but it appears very much like, and I believe with all my being, it's Zerubbabel, the same person. One has a Babylonish name, one has one of Judah, just like Daniel and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, when all of them, they were given different names by some of the others. So, here was one name that was given, and this is whom he counted and numbered out all the wealth to, in the sense of what was in the temple, and now it's been numbered to a specific individual. But it's very clear who actually takes these and is responsible over them, and it's Zerubbabel. Anyway, when you read those accounts and you know history of some of these things it just makes those things come alive even that much more when you read some of these stories.

So, many from Judah returned and began reconstruction of the altar and then work on the foundation of the temple. Again, these things took time. But they started with the reconstruction, if you will, of the altar itself. So, we're going to look at various parts of the story here.

When we began reading in Ezra, again here, about the return, and from there toward the end of chapter 1 the items from the temple are listed. So, we're not going to go through all that because there is no point in it. But we're going to go on past that to chapter 2 now.

**Ezra 2:1—Now, these are the children of the province that went out from the captivity, of those who had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon, and came again unto Jerusalem and Judah, every one unto his city.** So, they came into that region and specifically even talks about some of the different towns or cities around there.

**...who came with Zerubbabel...** Then it goes on to say, **Joshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah...** and so forth and so forth and so forth.

Then jumping all the way down to **verse 64—The whole assembly numbered forty-two thousand, three hundred and sixty.** This is a big thing that's taking place. 42,360 people. **Also, their servants and their maids, of whom were seven thousand, three hundred thirty-seven.** So, very explicit here of what's recorded and the numbers.

**Ezra 3:1—Then when the seventh month had come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one in Jerusalem. Then stood up Joshua, the son of Jozadak, with the brethren, the priests, and Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel and his brethren, and built the altar of God.** So, this is how they started, they had to have an altar to begin this.

**...built the altar of the God of Israel, in order to do what they wanted to do first, to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is written in the Law of Moses, the man of God.**

**So, they set the altar upon its bases, for fear upon them because of the people of those countries.** Now, you have to understand here, seventy years have passed, and they've been taken into captivity. And so, just as they grew and prospered in Babylon, which they did, others grew in their own rights by taking that land that was left vacant, and they moved into it and prospered in their own physical way.

And so, you have another people, a people coming back in mass numbers, and this isn't taken very well. There are a lot of problems. There were some battles at times, and they had to be prepared for war on a constant basis. That's what I'd call it, is war. But there would be those who would come up against them at different times, so they had a lot of battles going through this process of striving to rebuild the temple. That's part of the story here then.

So, they set up the altar first, as it says here, and offered up the offerings, **And they offered burnt offerings there unto the Eternal, even burnt offerings morning and evening,** as they were supposed to. **They kept, also, the Feast of Tabernacles, as it is written—**awesome, timely, we're right there, **Feast of Tabernacles—as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number according to the custom as the duty of every day's requirements,** every day required.

So anyway, it's a part of a process here, very physical, very ordered way the Levitical system was set up and how to offer up offerings and the like, and especially for the Feast time like it's mentioning here.

**Ezra 3:8—Now, in the second year of their coming unto the house of God...** So, again here, this is talking about the journey down, and now this is talking about a period of two years that had passed on.

**Now, in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month begins Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua, the son of Jozadak, and the remnant of their brethren, the priests and the Levites, and all they who had come out of the captivity unto Jerusalem.**

I hope you're seeing what this is about on a spiritual plane concerning the end-time because it's an exact—How would you put it?—diagram, plan. It's like a blueprint. "Here is a period of time that God's going to work something out. Babylon is going to be there, going to take Judah captive, Persia is going to arise, they're going to come back and begin to rebuild, and descriptions that are used," but it's a blueprint that's happening on a physical plane of something that's to happen later on toward the end on a spiritual plane in God's own Church.

Because the point being, we can look at something happening on a physical scale like this and be in awe of what happened to them over all this period of time—and indeed we should—and how God worked various things out, but which one do you think is more important in the sense of what God was doing? Something physical in a physical construction of something or something spiritual that's far more meaningful that's a part of something of completing a temple in the rebuilding of the temple that had to take place after the Apostasy.

I hope you understand the answer. Because that in itself should be very moving to everyone who has a part in an opportunity to be a part of something so incredible. Because that's what this is about. We can be in awe of something very physical that took place but we're to learn lessons as well of something that happened a long time ago because that's what we're supposed to do.

How many times have we gone through and had various sermons, especially in the beginning of PKG talking about rebuilding of the temple, talking about the rebuilding of the walls around Jerusalem? Because that was on a spiritual plane. This was on a physical one but we're to learn from it and be inspired by it – and to understand one is more important than the other because God is not concerned with physical sacrifice. God was not concerned, in that respect, of things that could be offered upon the altar because it didn't take away sin. It wasn't about a spiritual calling; it was about the fulfillment of something on a physical plane so that a certain people could continue on, so that certain examples could be there for us to learn from, and for people to learn from in time—because most of them aren't going to learn until the Great White Throne—and then for the Church later on.

So it talks about this process here, **begins Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua, the son of Jozadak, and the remnant**—the remnant—**of their brethren the priests and the Levites.** They were large in number. In the end, it wasn't large in number, but it was about a remnant. That's what Ezekiel talks about, about a remnant.

**...and the Levites, and all they who had come out of the captivity unto Jerusalem.** What do you think happened in the Apostasy? It was much faster. We don't have this length of time, seventy years, to work

within, but we do have time frames to work within that God is going to reveal more about later on. But we already know several of them that we have fulfilled in the sense of the Church and things that took place in them that were unique and different in each one.

Then about a captivity. That's what the thrust was about, about taking the Church, God's people, into captivity again, and if God hadn't awakened, stirred up by the power of His spirit, there wouldn't be a Church today. But God has a plan to keep the Church going. Nothing can stop it. God was going to see to it from the time of Christ on that the Church would continue to exist no matter what happened.

And so, **they appointed Levites from twenty years old and upward, and set forward the work of the house of the Eternal.** So, it's taken work. Individuals who became a part of it have had to work. It's one of a spiritual thing. And where is that work in the temple? On self. Because everyone called out of that period of time, everyone who has been added to it since that time has had to work. They have to work on themselves in what's being built as part of a structure.

To me, it's beautiful to understand that; it truly is. To build something of rock, wood, and so forth, is one thing, but to be a part of building and working on something that is up here in the mind, the transforming of the mind and the thinking that takes place, it's hard to find words to describe it all, how beautiful it is.

#### **Verse 10—Then when the builders had laid the foundation of the temple of the Eternal...**

I'm sorry... I'm not sorry, but I'm just dumbfounded. We did this! What did we have to do as soon as the Apostasy was over? We had to start building things, the foundation. Passover was the biggest of all because it was being destroyed in the scattered groups. God gave us a job to do, and it was one of rebuilding. Not only of rebuilding but making it stronger than it ever was, giving us understanding of "*bane ha erebyim*," things of that nature, and what that means, "between the two evenings," that's only mentioned twice in scripture, one in Leviticus 23 making it very clear that Passover is "*bane ha erebyim*," "between the two evenings," and how dumb were we to not see that and understand that. But we didn't until God gave it.

That's a humbling thing to understand then. When it's used again later on in explaining about Atonement it's "between the two evenings." Well, duh, so is every Sabbath and every other Holy Day. It's exactly between the two evenings. And yet we, before that, during Worldwide, during Philadelphia, and during Laodicea, there was this concept that as soon as the sun went down there is this period of time that there's still light in the sky until it gets dark, and that's when you're to observe it, in that little cranny, whatever that means before the darkest of dark.

When you hear some of the Jewish scholars, they call themselves scholars, but the high priests whoever they are, some of them through time what they've written, what they've said about it. Anyway, it's amazing some of the rabbis what they've come up with, but the high priest especially, the ones who call themselves the *crème de la crème* of the group, they're the ones who made some of these stupid comments because this is where they began to get all screwed up. And so did the Church then because they followed: "Surely, the Jews know what they're doing?"

“At the going down of the sun.” Well, let’s see, at 12:00 you know what happens, it starts going down. So, that’s what they started to follow because they didn’t understand the 14<sup>th</sup> at the going down of the sun. It wasn’t talking about that, but they couldn’t understand this thing about the sacrifices.

That’s why they didn’t understand the Passover, that it’s not a sacrifice from people, it’s a sacrifice of God, of Christ, given to us. But there were sacrifices on that day that began to be killed in the sense they weren’t sacrificed to God until sundown after Passover.

So, the start of it for them, yes, from sundown, the going down of the sun, they take that in Deuteronomy in the wrong way and they get confused on that. Then later on, on the sacrifices in the afternoon they get screwed up again because they don’t understand they begin to kill animals by the thousands so they would all be prepared and ready for the offerings at sundown when the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins.

So, things that we learn through time that have been so messed up. Yet this is where God had us start, Passover, so that we could be more deeply moved by understanding what it means, “*bane ha erebyim*” and some of those because people were trying to move it into the 15<sup>th</sup>. Some people were trying to start early.

Yet it says right there in Leviticus it’s “in that day,” “in the fourteenth day.” It’s not in the thirteenth, it’s not in the fifteenth, it’s in the fourteenth if we just take it for what it says.

So this is what we had to do. We had to do that with Pentecost. We had to reestablish the foundation of Pentecost because it was being lost in God’s Church that was scattered. Already, by that time it had been tarnished. And so, one thing after another. That people don’t go off to heaven. Doctrine after doctrine began to work their way into, in the latter part of Laodicea, and people’s minds began to be screwed up and began to fall asleep on a spiritual plane until we all were asleep on a spiritual plane by the time of the Apostasy.

God had to stir up His spirit in those whom He decided He was going to stir up their spirit, to continue to fulfill something, a remnant of His Church.

So anyway, **verse 10** again, **Then when the builders had laid the foundation of the temple of the Eternal, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, and the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the Eternal with the ordinance of David, king of Israel.** So, they were following those things that were written out according to what they should do in their service.

So, the struggles of rebuilding the temple were many, then and now, and we’re to understand that. We didn’t understand it as we were going through some of those battles but there’s been battle after battle after battle after battle. It was not meant to be easy on a spiritual plane. Hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people who had the opportunity to be stirred up in spirit have gone by the wayside.

The struggles of rebuilding the temple were many as well as later when the walls—because they began to be attacked even more so then. I like it, in one part there, it talks about how they’re rebuilding on the wall,

and they have their armaments right beside them as they're working. They're ready to battle if need be, if they're called to, if something happens while they're working on rebuilding the walls around the temple.

That's great as a story, inspiring and moving, to understand this is symbolic of the thing we have to do. While you're fighting the fight you have to be with your armor. If you're without it, if you're not on guard, if you're not alert you can become one of the victims, one who is conquered, one who goes off into captivity again. To lose all that. Many have because they didn't keep the armor, they didn't stay on guard, they didn't keep watchful.

I tell you, when I give this sermon here, I'm sorry, I could give hours and hours and hours about this, about these battles and things that have happened on a spiritual plane because they are so many. I do in sermons from time to time, but I don't even touch on many of them, haven't, there are so many, of things that have happened and taken place to destroy, to stop, to stop the process, to end it, just like there.

So again here, even as they built on the wall later on, all of which covers quite a bit of time in this particular story here, they had a lot of opposition at different times with those who had been, again, living in the region of Judah.

So, a lot of these events and the timing of them is muddled up because like I said here about Ezra and how people read it, but let's continue on in Chapter 4 here. At this point here where we're going to start, we're going to skip a section that is basically about some of the fighting that had taken place in the region beforehand, and some false accusations had gone out about the rebuilding of the temple and the Jews that were there. There was a king that did listen to the false accusations and stopped the building of the temple for ten to fourteen years before they started it up again. So basically, he commanded them to stop.

So, these people in this region had sway because they were a part of this kingdom of Persia, they had been conquered, so they gave their allegiance then to the new kings of the Medes and the Persians, and this is a part of the story flow then that this one king, in essence, listened and told them to stop, but never gave them the authority to start again. And so, the story gets a little funny as we go along here because God told them to start again. They didn't get it from the king. We'll get to that.

So, this is part of that story. **Ezra 4:24**, it says, **Then ceased the work of the house of God.** So, it's telling us what happened. I'm not going to go through the entire story that leads up to this and the king they went to and what he said. But he stopped. This is what it's saying here, **Then ceased the work of the house of God which is in Jerusalem. So, it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius, king of Persia.** So again, this was ten to fourteen years later. Don't know for sure what it was there but somewhere in that vicinity.

Then the following verse, **Ezra 5:1** says, **Then the prophets, Haggai, the prophet, and Zechariah,** so, here we go, two more prophets. Incredible, all the prophets that came out of this period of time. **Haggai, the prophet, and Zechariah, the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them.**

**Then Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, rose up, as did Joshua, the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God,** in essence, once again, because they had stopped. Now they're told by the prophet, "This is what God is telling you; start building again." So, who do they listen to, the government or God? God.

**...and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem; and with them were the prophets of God, helping them.** So, how? By what they were saying, by what they were preaching, by what they were teaching that was coming from God.

Haggai 1:1. You don't always turn there. So, if you have a computer that's fast, an iPad, that's fast. May not be as fast if you're looking through the Old Testament. Some of the placement of some of these, we don't always go there, but toward the back of the minor prophets.

**Haggai 1:1—In the second year of king Darius, in the sixth month.** So, here now we're talking about, again, the same period of time, **on the first day of the month, the word of the Eternal came to Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel.** So again, we're picking up a part of what it's saying here, of what was already covered in Ezra. **...the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying, Thus says the Eternal of hosts, saying, This people says...** What people? The people around there, the Jews who had come into the area as a whole.

**This people says, The time has not come, the time that the Eternal's house should be built.** So, they were told to stop, so they stopped for ten to fourteen years and what happened in that length of time? It wasn't good. It wasn't good. Time is not a friend when it comes to learning about God and applying, living what is given. You have to be careful. You have to be on guard.

We understand that for the Church. We have to be on guard constantly because if we're not careful what happens? This is what is happening to them. Physical things began to be more important. They had lived there now for fourteen to sixteen years, reestablished homes, reestablished ways of living and so forth to survive in that area once again, and that became their focus. Because they weren't focusing on rebuilding of the temple or the walls anymore over a long period of time.

Now, spiritually, that's hideously dangerous! You can't go that long! But any length of time for God's people to move away from their focus, away from building the temple and the walls to guard what has been given to us can be exceedingly dangerous. It has been to so many who have gone by the wayside.

So, lesson after lesson after lesson, things that happened there physically happened at the end on a spiritual plane very powerfully so.

This is the lesson in this here, be on guard, be careful, don't let this physical world begin to be your primary focus as though this isn't the time. This is the time! It's just not in our time, maybe. Maybe we like to see things happen more quickly. We'd like to see things come together when we thought they were supposed to, at that point in time, and they didn't. Then we learn whose fault was that?

It's like the Apostasy, who's fault was the Apostasy? Every one of us who were in Worldwide! It's what God says. We all became lukewarm, and He can't accept that, so He spewed it out of His mouth.

It uses the word “vomit,” and vomit is not a pretty sight. So, to be a part of vomit is like, “That stinks, doesn’t it?” Sure does. Did I stink? Yes, I did. Because that’s what it’s like if you begin to fall asleep. You’re not doing what you should be doing spiritually. You should be more on guard and fighting certain battles that are there in front of you regardless of where the chips may fall. That’s what you learn from that.

So, same thing here. So, I think about the Apostasy as well, and not just the Apostasy, but then we can go on, 2012. Whose fault was that? God’s fault? No, it was certain people’s fault because they gave up their crown. Then it’s been offered to others.

Now, I find that inspiring in many ways because for those who gave up their crown there was a flaw somewhere there going quite a way back anyway, and God already knew that and knew it before it ever became close to that. It’s part of His plan. We learn from all that. Others in time will learn from all that.

So, it’s all in God’s time and we continue to press forward. That’s what this is about. It’s about staying in the fight.

So again, stories like this are incredibly inspiring because it gives something like this, then it says, **The people say, The time has not come, the time that the Eternal’s house should be built.** Not a smart move. See, we can do things and not realize spiritually this is what we’re saying. This has already happened to people, “This is not the time.”

You think, how much more sabre-rattling do you have to hear? How intense just over the past year have things gotten? Have to be pretty blind and deaf not to hear, not to be able to see things that are happening in this world. Putin talking in the way he is. What kind of a mind would threaten the use of nuclear weapons? What kind of a mind is capable of that?

I think of the example, which is apropos in many ways, of the bear. You keep poking at a bear? I think of some that I’ve seen on TV at times when they show certain videos on there and they show these people trying to get up close to a bear to take its picture. I think, where is your mind? Then the bear turns out not to be friendly. Shock! Duh. People going on safari and doing some of the stupidest things sometimes. You think, “These are wild animals that can kill you quickly!” Sometimes we’re not bright.

That’s the way it is in the world today, we’re not too bright. Maybe you’ve heard in the news, because I believe it with all my being, some are pushing more than they should be pushing at him, and it’s all for a reason. If you want a change in regime and you think you can do it, what a stupid thing to do, to push someone who has nuclear weapons and is losing, what looks like losing to the world, a war, to where generals disappear or are replaced, where things like this are happening on a constant basis. How much can a mind like that take before they’ll be pushed into a corner?

I was listening this morning to some giving their opinions. I just love it. It’s not news. It’s “Well, what do you think?” “Well, I think...” It’s like, “I don’t really care what you think because you’re stark raving mad!” It’s like, “Oh, he’s not going to do that. I think he’s just bluffing!” How do you play, how do you do something like that in a world with nuclear weapons and you’re banking on the fact that they’re bluffing? If they’re not then our military knows how to deal with that.

How do you deal with nuclear weapons that once they're fired there is not much you can do? You can fire some back if you have time, if they're not coming out of submarines that are so close to your shore you don't have time to stop them anyway. And if they're hypersonic you're really up the creek because we have nothing to take down a hypersonic missile. So, we're pretty much fish in a bowl. What a horrible thing. Yet that's where we are in history in time.

So, if we can't see that, that's pretty bad. Because of all people, we should be able to see where we are in this world. We know it's going to happen. We know we live in that time prophesied for so long ago. We know that Russia is going to be one of those nations. China is going to be one of those nations. Europe, primarily Germany, is going to be one of those nations again that does things that are unthinkable.

But they feel pushed into a corner, too. You know, when you start pushing things, people into a corner, what are you going to do? What are you going to do when all that oil is cut off and your people are going to turn against you? What's happened in times past in history when your people turn against you? Well, you've got to do something. So, who's a threat? This time the U.S. is considered the threat.

So, we know these things are going to come to pass and we're almost there. That's why for so many years... You know, how long have I talked about, "It's our last car." It's our last car! And I really think this is! And that's all we can do, is laugh about it sometimes because you keep going forward because we don't know the exact timing of things that God has in mind or is going to reveal to us as we go along. But we're going to learn from it as we go along.

It is about maybe going somewhere. Are we going to come back? I don't know. I'm planning for a meeting in November down in Dallas. May not be here for it, I don't know, things could happen. Things could happen during the Feast. Do you understand that? See, I believe that with all my being and I'm prepared in the mind. That's the way we have to be because things could happen that quickly in the world. Because there are some other prophecies that have to do with a portion of Europe, certain tribes, two in particular, that help protect some of God's people at the end-time.

Anyway, interesting. Someone gets stuck in a certain area and God will take care of it. Wherever we are, whoever we are, we'll be taken care of; we're going to be where we're supposed to be at any time. But you better be prepared in your thinking.

**The time has not come, the time of the Eternal's house should be built.** I've seen that played out in people's lives over and over again and they're gone.

**Then the word of the Eternal came to Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for yourselves to dwell in your padded houses?** Is this your concern about your future, about your welfare, about your continuation in life? Is this your focus in life, of what you have built, and now you have your padded houses, and you can take it easy? **...and this house, the temple be in ruins?** Is this the time or should you keep focusing on the building of the temple?

That's the message. That's what we want, especially if you've been called to be a part of 144,000 – which we don't know who is! But you'd all better be fighting for it like you are. At least that's my hope. I don't

want this to go on any longer than need be. But God knows the timing and the working with different people and how long certain things take. So, I know it's going to work according to His will. But anyway, we have to yield ourselves to that process, too.

**Now, therefore, thus says the Eternal of hosts, Consider your ways!** "Take a good hard look at yourself!" That's been going out for two years now strong. Basically, telling them as it says here in Hebrew, "Set your heart on your ways, whatever your ways should be." What are your ways? Is it God's way? Is God first? Better be right.

Verse 12, jumping down, **Then Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Eternal their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Eternal their God had sent him; and the people feared the presence of the Eternal.**

Those are things we have to look at in our own lives, fear that has to do with turning away from what God has said, not listening to what God has said. That's a healthy kind of fear in life in that respect.

**Then Haggai, the Eternal's messenger, spoke the Eternal's message to the people, saying, I am with you.** It's a powerful message. That's what God is telling us. **I am with you, says the Eternal. So the Eternal stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua, the son of Jehozadak the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the Eternal of hosts, their God.**

What a beautiful story. What a beautiful way of expressing it.

Now, at this stage we come to an interesting story. Those who had returned had already experienced a lot of opposition from those who lived in the region while they were rebuilding the temple, and they'd already been shut down once and had begun to drift in behavior and focus in their thinking.

Then we come to this section here in Ezra 5. This is an account where others now who came forward, who were leaders of the region and the government under Persia, who had been possibly a part with Babylon but now had changed that allegiance, which normally happened. Often then those kinds of leaders were picked up and used if they would pledge that kind of allegiance then to a king of a conquering nation. They did to Persia, the Medes and the Persians.

Some of those came up, but their motives weren't so good as others had before because they were in that region, and they really weren't keen on the Jews coming back and reestablishing themselves there. Because they had been there for so long, to them that was theirs.

So, here they come up and they handle it a little differently this time, and that's what this story is about. But they basically wanted to bring a halt again to the building. They didn't want to see this finished because they saw it as a strength to these people, the Jews.

**Ezra 5:1—Then the prophet Haggai and Zechariah, the son of Iddo, prophets, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, even to them in the name of the God of Israel. So Zerubbabel, the**

son of Shealtiel, and Joshua, the son of Jozadak, rose up and began to build the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them, helping them.

At the same time, Tattenai, the governor of the region beyond the river, and Shethar-Boznai and their companions came to them and asked them, **Who has commanded you to build the temple and finish this wall?** So, here they are, leaders on the other side of the river, possibly speaking of the other side of the Euphrates coming down in through this region here, because they oftentimes used that word to refer to a division then of rest of Babylon and the area of the Medes, or Medes and the Persians, I should say, who conquered that region.

Then **verse 4** it goes on to say, **Then, accordingly, we told them...** So, here they're going through this particular story and it's telling here what they're going to do now. **Then, accordingly, we told them the names of the men who were constructing this building. But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews.**

So, this is a story then of this governor and what he does with information he's gathering, and why he's asking them these questions. He's going to report then to the king, to Darius.

**Then, accordingly, we told them the names of the men who were constructing this building. But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews so they could not make them cease until a report could go to Darius. Then a written answer was returned concerning this.** So, basically, they're saying, "We went there. We found out information," and now they send this report then to Darius and Darius answers back.

But anyway, this is a part of the story and so it says here—this is kind of an awkward way of stating it all, but it says, **This is a copy of the letter then of Tattenai, that he sent.** This is what he said, **The governor of the region beyond the river,** that's who he is, showing he has the responsibility of governing over this region under him, under Darius, **and Shethar-Boznai, and his companions, the Persians who were in the region beyond the river, to Darius the king.**

**They sent a letter to him in which it was written, To Darius the king, All peace. Let it be known to the king that we went into the province of Judea, to the temple of the Great God, which is being built with heavy stones, timber, and being laid in the walls; and their work goes on diligently and prospers in their hands. Then we asked those elders, Who commanded you to build this temple and to finish these walls?**

Because they had known of the authority that had come down to stop them and they wanted to know who has told you you could start again? Because they didn't want to see it start again.

**We also asked them the names to inform you, that we might write the names of the men who were chief among them. Thus they returned us an answer, saying, We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the temple that was built many years ago, which a great king of Israel built and completed. But because our fathers provoked the God of heaven to wrath, He gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this temple and carried the people away to Babylon.**

However, in the first year of Cyrus, king of Babylon, king Cyrus issued a decree to build this house of God. Also, the gold and the silver articles of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple that was in Jerusalem and carried into the temple of Babylon—these king Cyrus took from the temple of Babylon, and they were given to the hand of Sheshbazzar, whom he made governor.

Then he said to him, Take these articles; go, carry them to the temple that is in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be rebuilt on its former site. Then the same Sheshbazzar (Zerubbabel) came and laid the foundation of the house of God. He laid the foundation. He was responsible. It is very clear, really. ...which is in Jerusalem, but from that time even to now...

So, here they are, they're writing this story to the king. They have a certain motive but they're doing it in a pretty shrewd way in how they're addressing it because they knew that they'd been told to stop. But perhaps it's in this first part of the story that they didn't know about so they're walking a little more carefully. If Cyrus had said this and it's recorded accordingly they probably ought to be a little more careful, because this is what they were told. So, if they only had part of the history and not the whole story...? So, not totally stupid as some others were before this.

So again here, **They came and laid the foundation of the house of God, which is in Jerusalem, but from that time even unto now it has been under construction, and it is not finished. Now, therefore, if it seems good to the king, let a search be made in the king's treasure house, which is there in Babylon, whether it is so that a decree was issued by king Cyrus to build the house of God at Jerusalem, and let the king send us his pleasure concerning this.**

So, giving the appearance of being totally subservient, in unity with whatever the king says. Smooth talk. Wise talk. Political in how people are because they want to keep their office and they sure don't want their heads cut off. So, they're very careful about what they wrote here. It was really quite shrewd, just didn't totally work the way they wanted to.

**Ezra 6:1—Then king Darius issued a decree, and a search was made in the archives, where the treasures were stored in Babylon. Then at Achmetha, in the palace that is in the province of Media, a scroll was found, and in it a record where the following was written...** So, they found this and here is how they recorded it as far as the government under Cyrus at that time.

**In the first year of king Cyrus, king Cyrus issued a decree on the house of God at Jerusalem: Let the house be rebuilt, the place where they offered sacrifices; and let the foundations of it be firmly laid, its height sixty cubits and its width sixty cubits... This is approximately 100' x 100' (30m x 30m), four, with three rows of heavy stones and one row of new timber.**

So, very explicit. Isn't that amazing that this was written? How did Cyrus know all these things, and how it was to be done?

**Let the expenses be paid from the king's treasury. Also, let the gold and the silver articles of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple which is in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, be**

**restored and taken back to the temple which is in Jerusalem, to its place; and deposit them in the house of God.**

So, when I see something like this, read something like this, it's hard not to read it in a context of something that's unique in that respect, because for us the treasure is not silver and gold. It's not about a physical temple. It's about the things that we're blessed to have in the mind that are our treasure. That's where it is. It's in the truth that God gives to us. It's in the understanding of the things that God has given to us over time.

Again, I'm very moved by the things we see physically that were done then, and the things that are spiritual that happen to God's people, that have happened in the matter of rebuilding of the temple.

I'm going to stop there. I'm getting quite warm. I wish I wasn't wearing this. But my mind doesn't work as well when it's at this point. This is probably enough to digest for today, so we'll continue with *Part 2*... We're going to have different schedules now. It's going to get kind of complicated. The guys know when to show these, so you'll have *Part 2* and some others as well in between.

Have a great Feast!