

## The Lord Sustains! Ezra 5 & 6

**Intro: Phillip Eastman is a life long friend of mine. – We grew up together.**

A)Went to grade school together – Middle School – High School - We were in each others weddings –

B)Both moved from Orange County to Oceanside – Oceanside to Oregon

1)I moved back – He stayed – but we continue to stay close.

C)Let me tell you about the day we met

**1<sup>st</sup> grade at Jefferson Elementary School – 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> day of school – Dodgeball – at recess**

A)Phil was the hotshot player – but on this particular day – I beat him.

B)In line – Phil kicked me in the seat of the pants!

C)Who is this crazy kid: - Started there – had our moments – fights

1)Life long friend – incredible supporter – great encourager

**I have found in my life – I need ENCOURAGEMENT – and there are times when I need a good kick in the pants.**

A)One big kick in the pants – Senior year of High School – my High School Pastor – Richard Cimino – you know what your problem is ?

**B)You always know something bad is coming – when someone starts the conversation that way!**

1)You know what your problem is ?

C)Jesus is just a part of your life – not the Center – not your Lord!

D)True: Monumental kick in the pants – resulted in complete surrender

**As we come to Ezra chapter 5-6 We find that this group who has returned to Judah – need a good kick in the pants – as well as some encouragement.**

**Ch. 1 A King Proclaiming:** Cyrus – prophecy – Proclamation – 50K respond

A)Led by Zerubbabel

**Ch. 2-3 The People Reclaiming**

1<sup>st</sup> Genealogies – Possess land

2<sup>nd</sup> Theology – Built an Altar – Celebrated the Feast

Everything was on its way: Looking Good!

**Ch.4 An enemy Defaming: Attack –**

- Disguised cooperation
- Discouragement
- Accusation

**It worked: NOT BECAUSE OF ANY OFFICIAL EDICT**

A)The people of Israel just decided – too much hassle. – They quit building the temple - **the work stalled for 15yrs**

B)15 year gap between chapters 4-5 – during that time the people of Israel got their priorities out of whack –

C)They started focusing on Building their own homes instead of God's house – the Temple.

D)God was patient – but the time came for Him to stir them up to get back to the work

**It would take a KICK IN THE PANTS – and some encouragement that came from a couple of prophets that God raised up.**

Ch.5-6 Illustrate how God did that!

**#1 God's Word stirs them!**

**Then the prophet Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophets, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them.**

A)When you read the minor prophets (Not minor because they were lightweights, they were big league hitters, but because they are short books)

B)Haggai & Zechariah were two who were ministering at this time. – Turn to Haggai Ch.1

**C)Haggai – provided the kick in the pants: His word was quick and to the point.**

Haggai Ch.1:2

"Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying: 'This people says, 'The time has not come, the time that the LORD's house should be built.'"

3 Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, 4 "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?"

C) You have put all your time & money into fixing up your own houses – God's temple is in ruins

1) Caught up in simply trying to take care of yourselves your needs / pleasures

**Problem: You are spending all this effort and energy on trying to satisfy yourselves – NOT WORKING**

5 Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider your ways!

6 "You have sown much, and bring in little; You eat, but do not have enough; You drink, but you are not filled with drink; You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages, Earns wages to put into a bag with holes."

**Where did all the money go? Burning a hole in your pocket?**

A) That is how they felt.

B) God wanted them to understand – and he wants us to understand – MADE FOR SOMETHING GREATER than to LIVE FOR SELF

C) Eternal purpose: God's mission - It was time to get back on track!

D) You exist to bless him

**So Haggai – Challenges the people to get their priorities straight!**

A) He tells them it is time to get busy

7 Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider your ways! 8 Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified," says the LORD.

B) So Haggai – gave this prophetic kick in the Pants

C) Zechariah was the encourager – Saw last week

**Ch.3 the vision He had for the High Priest Joshua – Living under condemnation – accusation.**

A) **God defends** – takes off his filthy clothes – new clothes

B) Great picture of What Christ has done for us as our advocate – **Our Defense attorney** –

1) Accuser of the Brethren stands before God – accuses – Jesus our defense attorney - Defends

C) Guilty Yes – But I already paid the price – took the punishment

**Zechariah's word to Zerubbabel**

A) Zechariah 4:6

"This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel:

'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,'

Says the LORD of hosts.

B) You laid the foundation of this temple – but the Lord says – I am going to finish it –

1) Zechariah – **don't despise the days of small things.**

C) Significant: Recall Ch.3 when the foundation was laid – **the young men cheered – old men wept**

1) Old men – had seen the glory of the former temple.

D) Seen Solomon's temple – 5 Billion dollars – Extravagant – Amazing

1) They were there the day it was torn down.

E) The footprint of this new temple – Much smaller – it was going to be a lot simpler

1) Some Commentators – Suggest – that is why they were crying!

**Zechariah tells Zerubbabel – don't despise the days of Small things**

A) Haggai 2: 4 Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel,' says the LORD; 'and be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land,' says the LORD, 'and work; for I am with you,' says the LORD of hosts.

5'According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!'

6 "For thus says the LORD of hosts:'Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; 7 and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the LORD of hosts.

This temple is the temple that was in place when Jesus lived – Herod added to it.

A)Mainly the court yard areas – but the temple itself was essentially the same.

9'The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,' says the LORD of hosts. 'And in this place I will give peace,' says the LORD of hosts.'

B)Amazing declaration: this building that was nothing in comparison to the first –

1)shall have a greater glory because of the purpose it would fulfill at the time of Christ's death –

C)The day Christ died – the earth shook – the veil was rent in two – Glory of God filled that place

So God used the Word of the prophets to stir up the people and it worked Turn back to Ezra ch. 5

They respond: 2 So Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua 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.

Not only did God's word Stir them but #2 God's Providence surrounds them.

<sup>3</sup>At the same time Tattenai the governor of the region beyond the River and Shethar-Boznai and their companions came to them and spoke thus to them: "Who has commanded you to build this temple and finish this wall?"

Tattenai – was a Persian official – the governor of that region – He was responsible to the King of Persia for what went on there.

A)So this building starts – he sees – large stones – looks more like a fortress than a temple – He gets concerned

B)Wants to know – by who's authority are you doing this? Reasonable request

<sup>4</sup>Then, accordingly, we told them the names of the men who were constructing this building. <sup>5</sup>But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, so that they could not make them cease till a report could go to Darius.

C)I love that the eye of their God was upon them! – God looks out for his people

1)His eye is on You - The eyes of the Lord run to and fro ..... hearts – Loyal

D)The people were back doing what they were supposed to be doing –

1)God's providence was going to be upon them.

E)He is going to show himself Strong on their behalf!

God's Providence is seen in the following ways

1<sup>st</sup> The Lord buys them time!

A)They couldn't call or text – google – the message had to be sent by courier.

B)900 miles journey – and even though Darius had constructed a major new road system in the region

1)It was still going to take a courier over a month on Horse back to complete the journey

C)So we see the Providence of God on his people in the way that he buys them time.

V.6 Gives us a copy of the letter that was sent

Then a written answer was returned concerning this matter. <sup>6</sup>This is a copy of the letter that Tattenai sent:

The governor of the region beyond the River, and Shethar-Boznai, and his companions, the Persians who were in the region beyond the River, to Darius the king.

<sup>7</sup>(They sent a letter to him, in which was written thus)

To Darius the king: All peace.

- 8 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**, and timber is being laid in the walls; and this work goes on diligently and prospers in their hands.
- 9 Then we asked those elders, *and* spoke thus to them: **“Who commanded you to build this temple and to finish these walls?”** <sup>10</sup> We also asked them their names to inform you, that we might write the names of the men who *were* chief among them.
- 11 And 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. <sup>12</sup> 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.

**Pause – I like how forthright the people of Israel are here.**

A) Col. 4:5, NKJV God’s people must “walk in wisdom toward those who are outside”

B)(1 Thes. 4:12), and “walk honestly toward them that are outside”

1)Otherwise we have no effective witness where a witness is greatly needed.

C))The Jews knew their history and told Tattenai how the temple was built – Great King - Solomon

**D)Their Sin and Rebellion caused it to be destroyed  
God sent King Nebuchadnezzar.**

E)The world likes to see that type of honesty in God’s people!

1)Sometimes we come across like we have it all together – or we have all the ANSWERS

F)Instead of admitting – Broken – there is a lot of problems in Church History!

1)Crusades – Slavery – Calvin – people killed who disagreed with him

**So the people of Israel are being very real – but they also speak of how God in his grace – moved on the heart of Cyrus – permission to do this**

<sup>13</sup> However, in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, King Cyrus issued a decree to build this house of God. <sup>14</sup> Also, the gold and 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—those King Cyrus took from the temple of Babylon, and they were given to one named Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor. The Babylonian name for Zerubbabel – clear in v. 16

<sup>15</sup> And he said to him, ‘Take these articles; go, carry them to the temple *site* that *is* in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be rebuilt on its former site.’ <sup>16</sup> Then the same **Sheshbazzar came and laid the foundation** of the house of God which *is* in Jerusalem; but from that time even until now it has been under construction, and it is not finished.”

**Zerubbabel laid the foundation – Ch. 3:10  
Zechariah 4:9**

**So word gets sent to Darius Ch. 6**

Then King Darius issued a decree, and a search was made in the archives, where the treasures were stored in Babylon. <sup>2</sup> And at Achmetha, in the palace that *is* in the province of Media, a scroll was found, and in it a record *was* written thus:

**There was NO record in Babylon, but 300 miles NE of Babylon Cyrus had a summer Palace in Ach/Metha**

A)So Darius makes a search and eventually finds the decree of Cyrus in the government archives.

B)This is what he reads V.3

In the first year of King Cyrus, King Cyrus issued a decree *concerning* 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, <sup>4</sup> *with* three rows of heavy stones and one row of new timber. Let the expenses be paid from the king’s treasury.

<sup>5</sup> Also let the gold and 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, *each* to its place; and deposit *them* in the house of God.”

#2 God’s Providence surrounds them.

1<sup>st</sup> God buys them time.

2<sup>nd</sup> God gives them provision:

➤ Provides - Space

Now *therefore*, Tattenai, governor of *the region* beyond the River, and Shethar-Boznai, and your companions the Persians who *are* beyond the River, keep yourselves far from there. <sup>7</sup> Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God on its site.

➤ Resources

<sup>8</sup>Moreover I issue a decree *as to* what you shall do for the elders of these Jews, for the building of this house of God: Let the cost be paid at the king’s expense from taxes *on the region* beyond the River; this is to be given immediately to these men, so that they are not hindered. <sup>9</sup> And whatever they need— young bulls, rams, and lambs for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the request of the priests who *are* in Jerusalem—let it be given them day by day without fail, <sup>10</sup> that they may offer sacrifices of sweet aroma to the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king and his sons.

**Miracle: Government tax money used to build the temple of God!**

1<sup>st</sup> God buys them Time.

2<sup>nd</sup> God gives them Provision:

3<sup>rd</sup> God gives them Protection

Also I issue a decree that **whoever alters this edict**, let a timber be pulled from his house and erected, and let him be hanged on it; and let his house be made a refuse heap because of this.

Historians tell us this Darius had 3,000 Babylonians impaled on trees for disobeying one of his decrees

A)I am sure when Tattenai and his gang heard this they were like, Yes Sir!

B)Then as if to say: And If I can’t catch them or deal with them – Darius adds

12 And may the God who causes His name to dwell there destroy any king or people who put their hand to alter it, or to destroy this house of God which is in Jerusalem. I Darius issue a decree; let it be done diligently.

#1 God’s Word Stirs them.

#2 God’s Providence surrounds them.

#3 God’s Joy fills them! V.22 – God made them Joyful

C. S. Lewis said, “The ultimate purpose of God in all his work is to increase joy”

Joy and gladness in the Lord are major themes in the Bible.

We are commanded, “Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness; come before Him with joyful singing” (Ps. 100:1-2).

“Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous ones; and shout for joy, all you who are up-right in heart” (Ps. 32:11).

“In Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever” (Ps. 16:11).

Jesus told the disciples to “rejoice that [their] names are recorded in heaven.” (Luke 10:20-21).

He told the disciples that He had spoken to them so that His joy may be in them, and that their joy may be made full (John 15:11).

Reasons their heart was filled with Joy!  
Joy in dedicating V.13-18

<sup>13</sup> Then Tattenai, governor of *the region* beyond the River, Shethar-Boznai, and their companions diligently did according to what King Darius had sent. <sup>14</sup> So the elders of the Jews built, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they built and finished *it*, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the command of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia. <sup>15</sup> Now the temple was finished on the third day of

the month of Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.

A) This means that it took four years from the resumption of construction.

B) It was such a big job that even with all doing the work **diligently** it was not quickly completed.

“The mention of Artaxerxes, who belongs to the next century, takes us forward to the restoration of the city walls by Nehemiah, which this king authorized

**<sup>16</sup> Then the children of Israel, the priests and the Levites and the rest of the descendants of the captivity, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy. <sup>17</sup> And they offered sacrifices at the dedication of this house of God, one hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs, and as a sin offering for all Israel twelve male goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel. <sup>18</sup> They assigned the priests to their divisions and the Levites to their divisions, over the service of God in Jerusalem, as it is written in the Book of Moses.**

**Though there was no Ark in the Holy of Holies, and no glory filled the house,**

A) The temple was still dedicated to the Lord because it was His house, built for His glory.

B) Instead of weeping over what they didn't have, the Jews rejoiced over what they did have,

1) That is such a great example for us to follow.

C) Too many Christians spend so much time complaining about what they don't have instead of rejoicing in what they do have!

**When King Solomon dedicated the temple that he built, he offered so many sacrifices that they couldn't be counted (1 Kings 8:5),**

**A) Plus 142,000 peace offerings which were shared with the people (1 Kings 8:63).**

B) This Jewish remnant offered only 712 sacrifices, but the Lord accepted them.

C) Most important, they offered twelve male goats as sin offerings, one for each tribe,

1) Because they wanted the Lord to forgive their sins and give them a new beginning.

**So there was Joy in Dedicating themselves to the Lord**

**There was Joy in Remembering: V.19-22 The Passover Celebrated**

<sup>19</sup> And the descendants of the **captivity kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month.** <sup>20</sup> For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves; all of them *were ritually* clean. And they slaughtered the Passover *lambs* for all the descendants of the captivity, for their brethren the priests, and for themselves. <sup>21</sup> Then the children of Israel who had returned from the captivity ate together with all who had separated themselves from the filth of the nations of the land in order to seek the LORD God of Israel. <sup>22</sup> And they kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy; **for the LORD made them joyful**, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

**Now it was during this time that Haggai uttered the prophecy that we read earlier in Haggai – Chapter 2**

A) Glory of this temple would exceed the glory of the former temple.

B) The Final Passover lamb was coming – the Veil in the temple would be rent in two –

C) Open house – Come boldly - NEW COVENANT ESTABLISHED

**Great word – for us to close on!**

A) There is Joy in Dedicating ourselves to the Lord

B) Parents with Babies – Joy -

C) Same type of personal Joy – We dedicate ourselves – Surrender - Jesus be the CENTER

**AND there is Joy in remembering His Faithfulness**

A) Same child: Graduation

B) Wedding – The Faithfulness of God

C) Memorials - Journals – His faithfulness in your life