

Mar 13, 2022



Oaks Early Risers Bible Class

**The Oaks
Baptist Church**
Grand Prairie, Texas

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Lesson Leaders:
James Haymon

Class Leaders:
Inreach: Pat Hester
Deacon: C M Hester

Free to Worship Ezra 6:1-12

Lesson Background and Introduction

This lesson contains the text of a decree of Persian King Darius I (reigned 522–486 BC). He came to power after several years of internal strife. Darius strengthened the Persian government, established a new method of taxation, and further organized the empire. The decree continued a policy established by Cyrus (reigned 539–530 BC). While Darius was concerned with following Cyrus’s decree, he also had a pragmatic reason to support the temple’s reconstruction. By allowing agreeable Israelites to return to their homeland, Darius would have loyal subjects located in a geographically expedient place near Egypt, a region known for its rebellions and insurrections. Additionally, Darius would be able to institute a new tax system among the repatriated Jews in the regions of Judah, thus increasing his coffers. The sovereignty the Jews gained under Cyrus and maintained under Darius was short-lived. In the centuries that followed, the Jewish people experienced many years of occupation. However, in that specific season under the reign of and support from Darius, the Jews survived and even flourished as they resettled their homeland. Especially in difficult circumstances and trying situations, God calls his people to be faithful to his purpose for their lives. That Cyrus and Darius, two Gentile leaders, allowed for the resettlement of Jerusalem and the reconstruction of the temple showed the surprising ways God provides for his people. How has God called you to obey him? Through what unexpected circumstances is he calling you to obey?

(Adapted from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

The Work Restarted - The exiles returned to Judah from Babylon with the intention of rebuilding the Jewish temple. The people neglected their assignment for about 16 years. The families concerned themselves with reestablishing their properties. And they also were constantly harassed by surrounding enemy neighbors. God sent the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to preach to the congregation and get them to finish the temple. God specifically spoke to Zerubbabel, the governor, and Joshua, the high priest, encouraging them to be brave and restart the work. The prophets assured the people of God's backing of their efforts. God's Word proved to be a fresh wind of energy and enthusiasm to get the people to return to the building—in anticipation of a place to worship.

Confidence in God - Tatnai, the Persian governor over the province of Judah, became concerned. He saw large stones used for the building and thought it might be a coming revolt. He asked who gave the Jews the authority to work on the temple, and who was doing the work? The construction workers answered without hesitation—we are God's servants continuing to build His house. They knew God supported their efforts.

Provisions for the Temple - King Darius, the Persian monarch in charge at this time, authorized a search for the documentation permitting the Jewish people to rebuild. The former king, Cyrus, had signed off on their work, permitting the people to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. Cyrus ordered a return of the temple valuables and ordered funds from the royal treasury to be used for the rebuilding project. The king even requested animals be given to the Jews for sacrifices. King Darius realized the previous king had blessed the labor by the Jewish nation. He told Tatnai and other officials to allow the work to continue. Anyone who hindered the progress of the temple was subject to punishment under the Persian government.

God Is Able - The lesson for us today is simple: never underestimate the power of God's Spirit to renew His people and reestablish praise and glory to His name.

(Adapted from the Echoes Commentary)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

When we focus on who God is, what He’s done, and all He’s promised, we can rejoice in His constant presence as we worship Him with other believers, in our living rooms, and everywhere

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK:

Amazing God, please help me worship You as I rejoice in who You are, what You’ve done, and all You promise to do

SCRIPTURE FOR THE WEEK:

But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him
(John 4:23 NKJV)

(from "Our Daily Bread", Oct 04, 2021)

Series: God Frees and Redeems

UNIT 1: Liberating Passover

NEXT WEEK

NO CLASS

Combined Services

NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

Freedom through Past Promises (Ezra 6:1-5)

Promises from the past (1-2)

- From the past that teaches us hope (Rom 15:4)
- From the past that help us run a race with perseverance (Heb 12:1)
- From the past that should be followed (Acts 3:22-24)
- From the past that teach us to follow the correct Way (Acts 24:14-15)
- From the past that reveals the mystery of Christ (Eph 3:4-6)
- From the past that teach us patience (James 5:10)

Promises of provisions (3-5)

- Provisions for both physical and spiritual needs (Psalm 104:15)
- Provisions for when we are weak (1 Kings 19:5-8)
- Provisions for when we are needy (2 Kings 4:2-6)
- Provisions that are supernatural (Matthew 14:17-21)
- Provisions for good works (2 Cor. 9:8)

Freedom through Protection (Ezra 6:6-12)

Protection of leadership (6-7)

- Protection of having God with them wherever they go (Josh 1:6-9)
- Protection of God strengthening and helping them (Isa 41:10)
- Protection of having God for them (Rom 8:31)
- Protection of God's deliverance (2 Thess 3:1-4)
- Protection of God's rescue (Jer 1:17-19)

Protection of finances and possessions (8-9)

- By trusting God and being content (1 Tim 6:6-10)
- By knowing God never will forsake (Heb 13:5)
- By knowing life does not consist of abundance (Luke 12:15)
- By knowing God's promises to bless beyond our capacity (Mal 3:10)
- By knowing God will supply our physical needs (2 Cor 9:10)
- By knowing God is more than able to provide all things at all times (2 Cor 9:8)

Protection of worship (10)

- Protected because all will worship before God (Ps 22:27-28)
- Protected because God will be the eternal King over all the earth (Zech 14:8-9)
- Protected because God's kingdom will be glorious for all nations (Rev 21:24-27)
- Protected because it is commanded (Matt 4:10)
- Protected because we are to serve Him only (Deut 6:13)
- Protected because we are to have no other gods (Exodus 20:3)
- Protected because God is a jealous God (Exodus 34:14)

Protection through punishments of offenders (11-12)

- Punishment for doing evil (John 5:28-29)
- Punishment because of not being obedient to God (2 Thess 1:7-8)
- Punishment for being a hypocrite (Matt 23:13)
- Punishment of being shut out from the presence of God (2 Thess 1:9)
- Punishment filled with God's wrath (Rev 14:10-11)
- Punishment of being thrown into the lake of fire (Rev 20:15)
- Punishment named the second death (Rev 21:8)