

Ezra 3:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy:

Analysis

The intergenerational contrast is poignant: old men who remembered Solomon's temple wept while younger returnees shouted for joy. The weeping wasn't disapproval but grief over the diminished glory compared to the original temple's splendor. This emotional complexity shows authentic faith embracing both sorrow over loss and hope for restoration. The inability to distinguish weeping from joy ('could not discern') suggests overwhelming volume and emotional intensity. This mixed response illustrates that legitimate spiritual experience encompasses diverse emotional expressions. Theologically, it demonstrates that faithful people may respond differently to the same situation based on their experiences, yet all participate in God's purposes.

Historical Context

Those who 'had seen the first house' were at least seventy years old (the temple was destroyed in 586 BC; this foundation was laid in 536 BC). Haggai 2:3 later addresses this emotional dynamic directly, acknowledging the diminished physical glory while prophesying greater spiritual glory. The weeping reflected not just nostalgia but recognition that this rebuilt structure lacked the original temple's gold overlay, massive cedar work, and enormous dimensions. Archaeological evidence suggests the second temple was indeed smaller and less ornate, though it

occupied the same sacred site. The mixed emotional response creates the acoustic image of unified participation despite different perspectives.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How should churches honor grief over past glory while celebrating present renewal and future hope?
2. What does the inability to distinguish weeping from joy teach about the complexity of authentic spiritual experience?
3. In what ways does God use diverse generational perspectives to accomplish His purposes in the church?

Interlinear Text

But many	of the priests	and Levites	and chief	of the fathers	קָבָב וְתַ	וּבְאָשָׁר	וּפְלוּם	מִהַפְּקָדָן יְמִם	וְרַבָּב יְמִם
H7227	H3548	H3881	H7218	H1					
who were	ancient men				פְּזַקְנָן יְמִם	אָשָׁר	בְּאָזְנָה	אָשָׁר	קָרָא שׁוֹן
H2205		H834	H7200	H853					H7223
was laid		house	before their eyes	wept	הַבְּבִתְהָרָה	בְּכִים	בְּעֵינֵיהֶם	בְּבִתְהָרָה	הַבְּבִתְהָרָה
H3245	H2088	H1004	H5869	H1058					H1419
But many	shouted	for joy	aloud	voice	לֹאָלָּל:	לֹאָלָּל:	בְּשִׁמְךָ הָ	בְּתִרְשֵׁשָׁה וְרַבָּב יְמִים	
H7227	H8643	H8057	H7311	H6963					

Additional Cross-References

Haggai 2:3 (Parallel theme): Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org