

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

הָאָבֹת וְרֹאשׁ יִּי וְלֵוִיִּם מִהִכָּהֵן יִם וְרַב־יִם
But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers
H7227 H3548 H3881 H7218 H1

הָרִאשׁוֹן הַבַּיִת אֶת כֹּא וְ אֲשֶׁר הָיִינוּ יִם
who were ancient men that had seen house the first
H2205 H834 H7200 H853 H1004 H7223

גָּד וּלְ קוֹל: בָּכָה יִם בְּעֵינֵיהֶם הַבַּיִת הַ זֶה בִּיטָד וְ
was laid with a loud voice wept before their eyes house this was laid
H3245 H2088 H1004 H5869 H1058 H6963 H1419

קוֹל: לְהִרְיֵא יִם בְּשִׂמְחָה הַ בְּתִרְעָה וְרַב־יִם
But many shouted for joy aloud voice
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?

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