

Ezra 6:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy,

Analysis

And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy.

The dedication ceremony celebrated temple completion in 516 BC (sixth year of Darius, Ezra 6:15), marking the culmination of persistent effort despite opposition. The threefold description—'children of Israel, priests, Levites'—emphasizes comprehensive community participation. The inclusion of 'rest of the children of the captivity' underscores that this was the exiles' achievement, those who had experienced Babylonian destruction and now witnessed restoration.

The emphasis on 'joy' (chedvah, חֵדְוָה) reflects the emotional and spiritual significance of this moment. This wasn't merely architectural achievement but theological victory—God's house restored, His presence returning, His purposes vindicated. The joy responded not just to completed construction but to divine faithfulness fulfilling His promises despite human opposition and discouragement.

Theologically, this dedication anticipated the New Testament truth that believers are God's temple (1 Corinthians 3:16, Ephesians 2:21-22). As the returning exiles rejoiced in the physical temple's restoration, Christians celebrate that God dwells in His people through the Holy Spirit. The pattern of destruction, exile, and restoration prefigures the gospel of redemption from sin's destruction to new creation.

Historical Context

The dedication occurred approximately seventy years after the temple's destruction in 586 BC, fulfilling Jeremiah's prophecy about exile duration (Jeremiah 25:11-12, 29:10). The restored temple, while modest compared to Solomon's original structure, represented theological and spiritual restoration more than architectural grandeur. God's presence and covenant faithfulness mattered more than building magnificence.

Archaeological evidence from this period shows Jerusalem remained small and relatively poor. The Persian-period settlement didn't approach the city's former glory. Yet the community possessed what mattered most—restored temple worship and covenant relationship with God. Material poverty accompanied spiritual richness, teaching that God's blessing doesn't always correlate with worldly prosperity.

The dedication ceremony likely followed patterns from Solomon's original dedication (1 Kings 8), maintaining continuity with pre-exilic worship. This connection to the past provided identity and legitimacy, showing the community wasn't inventing new religion but faithfully continuing covenant traditions. Maintaining connection to historical faith provides stability and authenticity in changing circumstances.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does the dedication's joy teach about proper emotional response to completed spiritual work?
2. What does the temple's restoration prefigure about God's redemptive purposes in Christ and the church?

3. How should modern believers celebrate completed kingdom work while maintaining humility and God-centeredness?

Interlinear Text

וְשָׂא ר	וְלֵוִי א	כֹהֲנֵי א	! שְׂרָאֵל	בְּנֵי	וְשָׂב דו
and the rest	and the Levites	the priests	of Israel	And the children	kept
H7606	H3879	H3549	H3479	H1123	H5648
דָּן ה	אֱלֹהֵ א	בֵּית	חֲנֻכַּת	גְּלוֹת א	בְּנֵי
of this	of God	house	the dedication	of the captivity	And the children
H1836	H426	H1005	H2597	H1547	H1123
בְּחֵדוּהָ:					
with joy					
H2305					

Additional Cross-References

2 Chronicles 7:5 (References God): And king Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty and two thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep: so the king and all the people dedicated the house of God.

1 Kings 8:63 (References Israel): And Solomon offered a sacrifice of peace offerings, which he offered unto the LORD, two and twenty thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD.

Psalms 122:1 (Parallel theme): I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.

John 10:22 (Parallel theme): And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter.

Ezra 6:22 (References God): And kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the LORD had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

Philippians 4:4 (Parallel theme): Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.

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