

Ezra 6:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

And kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy—חַג הַמְצֻבָּד (chag hamatzot, feast of unleavened bread) commemorates the Exodus deliverance (Exodus 12:15-20). The שִׁמְחָה (simchah, joy) marks a profound emotional shift from the weeping at the temple foundation (3:12-13) to exuberant celebration at its completion. This seven-day observance following Passover signified the community's full restoration to covenant worship patterns established in the Mosaic law.

For the LORD had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them—the phrase 'king of Assyria' referring to the Persian king Darius is historically jarring (Assyria had fallen in 609 BC), but reflects either popular usage for any Mesopotamian monarch or theological irony: the empire that once destroyed Israel now funds its restoration. The בָּשָׂר (hesev, turned) is divine causation—God sovereignly influences pagan rulers to accomplish His covenant purposes, echoing Proverbs 21:1. **To strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God**—חִזְקָה (chizzeq, strengthen) appears throughout Ezra-Nehemiah for divine and human encouragement in temple-building (Ezra 1:6, 6:22, Nehemiah 2:18, 6:9).

Historical Context

The temple dedication occurred in 515 BC, seventy years after its destruction (586 BC), fulfilling Jeremiah's prophecy (Jeremiah 25:11-12, 29:10). Persian King Darius I had not only permitted the work to continue (6:1-12) but funded it from royal treasury and threatened severe punishment for any who hindered it (6:8-11). This astonishing imperial support vindicated the prophets Haggai and Zechariah who urged the discouraged returnees to resume building (Ezra 5:1-2).

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does God's sovereign control over pagan rulers (Darius) encourage believers facing hostile political environments?
2. What does the transformation from weeping (3:12-13) to joy (6:22) teach about God's faithfulness through discouragement to completion?
3. In what ways should completed gospel work result in communal celebration similar to Israel's feast observance?

Interlinear Text

כִּי בְשִׁמְךָ הַיְם יָמִים שְׁבָעַת	מֵצֶת וְתִשְׁעַת	חַג	תַּעֲשֶׂת	1
And kept	the feast	of unleavened bread	seven	days
H6213	H2282	H4682	H7651	H3117
with joy				H3588
H8057				
אֲשֶׁר מֶלֶךְ	לְבָב	וְהַסְבֵּב	יְהוָה	שָׁפָטֵם
of Assyria	the heart	and turned	for the LORD	had made them joyful
H804	H4428	H5437	H3068	H8055
בֵּית	בְּמַלְאָכָת	יְדֵיכֶם	לְמַצֵּךְ	עַלְיָהָם
of the house	in the work	their hands	unto them to strengthen	H5921
H1004	H4399	H3027	H2388	
אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהִים	ישָׁרָאֵל			
of God	of God	of Israel		
H430	H430	H3478		

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 21:1 (Kingdom): The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.

2 Chronicles 30:21 (References Lord): And the children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness: and the Levites and the priests praised the LORD day by day, singing with loud instruments unto the LORD.

Ezra 1:1 (Kingdom): Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

Proverbs 16:7 (References Lord): When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

2 Chronicles 35:17 (References Israel): And the children of Israel that were present kept the passover at that time, and the feast of unleavened bread seven days.

Ezra 7:27 (Kingdom): Blessed be the LORD God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem:

John 19:11 (Parallel theme): Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.

Matthew 26:17 (Parallel theme): Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?

2 Kings 23:29 (Kingdom): In his days Pharaoh-nechoh king of Egypt went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates: and king Josiah went against him; and he slew him at Megiddo, when he had seen him.

2 Chronicles 33:11 (Kingdom): Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.