

Chapters 4 and 5 tell how work progressed on the temple once the adversaries were ignored. Chapter 6 gives some formal correspondence between the local governor Tatnai and King Cyrus documented here in Ezra. It is now part of the inspired scriptures, the word of God. Aramaic, the language of the current Gentile empire, is used, not Hebrew. This gives witness to the fact that the times of the Gentiles predicted by Daniel and so titled by the Lord had commenced. Today we are still living in that era. Though the Jews returning from their captivity in Babylon would resettle in their homeland, they would not be independent of foreign rule before Christ was born. When He came He was their hope of independence and prosperity, if they had received Him. But they rejected Him.

There are two prominent institutions featured in Ezra. The Temple and the Passover. The Temple, built by Zerubbabel and Ezra, was modified and greatly enlarged by Herod the Edomite king just before Jesus' time. The boy Jesus interviewed the elders there when He was twelve years old, Luke 3. His parents customarily traveled there with their family for Passover.

The adult Jesus entered the Temple and inspected it at the beginning of His public ministry and again near the end. Both times He evicted money changers and dove sellers. When in Jerusalem, He taught there and healed there. But when He knew His rejection and death was inevitable He predicted its destruction. Upon suffering on the cross He loudly declared "It is finished" and the veil in the Temple was rent in two. About forty years later (AD 70), after rejecting many overtures of the gospel of grace, Israel rebelled. Thereupon the Temple was burned and leveled by the Romans. Yet the Lord also predicted a yet future desolation would be brought upon the nation by God. This will be triggered when they erect an idol, *the Abomination*, in the Temple as predicted by Daniel (11:31; 12:11). But there was no nation and no Temple for almost two thousand years.

In 1948 the Jews reestablished themselves as an independent nation (Israel) in their former homeland. They still do not nationally recognize any God, although there is a growing contingent of Orthodox who do. But none appear to recognize Jesus as Messiah/Christ, much less as God the Son. Nor do they even seem aware that He actually rose bodily from the dead and ascended bodily to heaven. They continue to be ignorant in willing unbelief though He was seen by many reliable witnesses for forty days. Today, neither atheistic or orthodox Jews believe Jesus was Messiah. So some religious Israeli groups are reportedly preparing to erect a Temple again on the same site and foundation as the original. A Temple to resume worship in the same mode as the Jews in the days of their return from captivity with Zerubbabel. Ironically it will stand as a monument of their continued rejection of Jesus as Christ. A revered

Moslem building now stands in the way on the Temple site, greatly complicating things. (Will we see it removed before the Rapture? Not necessarily, for there remain no prophesied events to be fulfilled prior to the Rapture.) But Paul refers to the presence of "the Temple" where the False Prophet will display himself as God and seek worshippers.

*2Thessalonians 2:3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition 4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.*

(See also, Daniel 7:25; Matthew 24:4; John 17:12; Ephesians 5:6; 1Timothy 4:1; 1John 2:18; Revelation 13:11.)

The times of Gentiles will continue on past the Rapture of the Church and Old Testament believers (Hebrews 11:39,40). The "Seventieth Week" of seven years predicted in Daniel 9 remains pending to commence and be fulfilled. Many prophecies not yet fulfilled will be accomplished after we are Raptured to heaven. The seven years will be a period of great trouble (Tribulation) upon Israel, the latter three and one half years being the worst ever to come upon the world. When the Lord returns to reign He will come to the Temple.

Back to the Jews in Ezra's time. They rebuilt the Temple with the blessing and major assistance of the ruling Gentiles. To their eternal credit, they were more interested in reestablishing their religious heritage and resuming worship than in gaining national independence. God honored them for not rebelling against the discipline He had put on them. Paul recognized this and pointed it out in Romans chaps. 9 - 11.

The current the role of the Gentiles as a channel of God's blessing upon mankind will come to an end as soon as the Lord comes for us. Then Jewish evangelists will emerge, scattering throughout the world preaching the gospel of the kingdom. So when the Lord returns to reign, Israel will become the Head of all nations. Meanwhile, we await Him and witness to a lost world the salvation freely offered to all who will but come and take it.

*John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

For Jesus' graphic description of the last days ahead read Matthew 24 & 25, Mark 13, and Luke 21.

*Luke 21:24 And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*

*Mark 13:20 And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.*