



Session 2



THE TEMPLE WAS REBUILT

Ezra 4–6

The foundation of the temple had been laid and the Israelites were offering sacrifices. The people living around Jerusalem did not want the temple, or the city for that matter, rebuilt because they feared the people of Israel would again become too strong and successfully defend themselves against their neighbors. These neighboring people were not God-followers and as such, Zerubbabel and the other Israelite leaders refused their offer of “help.” Instead of dropping the matter, their neighbors decided to try and discourage the workers. They also sent letters to King Darius asking that he command work be stopped.

For almost 20 years following the foundation construction, no work was done to rebuild the structure of the temple. God eventually sent two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, to re-energize Israel to start rebuilding the temple. Instead of building God’s house, the Israelites had been building their own houses. Watching the renewed excitement of the Israelites to rebuild the temple, their neighbors again became worried and tried to stop the rebuilding of the temple and the wall that surrounded the city.

A man named Tattenai was the governor of the region defined as “west of the Euphrates River.” This area was of significant size, but when Tattenai heard that rebuilding had started, he sent a quick note to the Persian king, Darius, to determine if this building project was allowed. Unlike before in the face of opposition, the Israelites refused to stop building while they waited on the king’s reply. After a thorough investigation, Darius determined that not only had Cyrus decreed the rebuilding of the temple, Cyrus had further ordered that the temple be rebuilt using funds provided from taxes levied against other cities in the land west of the Euphrates. Darius commanded the temple to be completed and he threatened death to anyone who stood in the way of its completion. God’s people built a new temple in the sixth year of Darius, and they dedicated the temple by celebrating the Passover.