

STONE OF JOY & WEeping. EZRA 3:8-13. 06/16/24. #05.

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8 Now in the second month of the second year of their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the rest of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all those who had come out of the captivity to Jerusalem, began *work* and appointed the Levites from twenty years old and above to oversee the work of the house of the LORD. 9 Then Jeshua *with* his sons and brothers, Kadmiel *with* his sons, and the sons of Judah, arose as one to oversee those working on the house of God: the sons of Henadad *with* their sons and their brethren the Levites. 10 When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests stood in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the LORD, according to the ordinance of David king of Israel. 11 And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD: "For *He is* good, For His mercy *endures* forever toward Israel." Then all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. 12 But many of the priests and Levites and heads of the fathers' *houses*, old men who had seen the first temple, wept with a loud voice when the foundation of this temple was laid before their eyes. Yet many shouted aloud for joy, 13 so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people, for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the sound was heard afar off.
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1. A beginning

- a. In the 2nd month of the ceremonial calendar, the returning Jews laid the foundation stone for the new temple
 - a1. The 1st month was focused on the Passover
 - a2. The 2nd month (Iyyar, April/May) was also when Solomon began the 1st temple (1 Kn. 6)
 - a3. High Priest Joshua (Jeshua) & Zerubbabel oversaw the work
- b. Everything had to be in order
 - a1. They followed the prescribed procedures laid out in the book of Leviticus
 - a2. Originally, a Levite had to be 30 to work in the tabernacle, but this was changed to 25 in 1 Chr. 23 & now due to a lack of Levites the number was lowered to 20
- c. The cornerstone was laid with great fanfare
 - a1. The Levites blew the silver trumpets
 - b1. Trumpets were used for celebrations, such as anointing kings or the beginning of great feasts
 - b2. Stringed instruments was used in worship (David was the harpist of Israel)
 - a2. The people shouted for joy
 - a3. Accented by using cymbals

2. Mixed emotions

- a. The younger generation shouted for the joy
 - a1. They had never experienced anything like a cornerstone laying for the temple of God
 - a2. The excitement of being part of building a new temple was exhilarating
- b. The older generation wept loudly
 - a1. The new temple would contain very little of the grandeur of the original temple
 - a2. The beginning of a new temple brought back a flood of memories from worship in the old

3. A good beginning is not the end

- a. As much as the celebration encouraged the people, there was still much work to do
 - a1. As hard work sets in, enthusiasm wanes
 - a2. Fatigue, setbacks, opposition, discouragement, & lack of commitment doom many works
- b. Many have quit the pulpit, mission field, & other Christian endeavors due to unrealistic expectations
- c. Rebuilding the temple had to be completed by dedicated workers with realistic goals & unwavering commitment
 - a1. The work would not go quickly
 - a2. There would be many obstacles
 - a3. The new temple would not have the grandeur of the original temple
 - a4. The temple was for the service of the Lord; not as a glorious artwork to put on display
- d. The work quickly slowed to a stop & few continued
 - a1. Haggai (Hag. 2) chastised the Jews for not finishing the project
 - a2. Zechariah (Zech. 4:6) admonished the Jews not to *despise the days of small things*
- e. The American idyll is to have big thriving churches & great successful works
 - a1. Rev. 3 Laodicea was prosperous, but spiritually impoverished
 - a2. The average church in Am. has 75 attendees
- f. The call of the Christian is not to largeness or fame, but to faithfulness & holiness
 - a1. To labor in obscurity for the Lord is better than to receive praise & reward from men
 - a2. Gal. 6 we are commanded not to grow weary
 - a3. 1 Cor. 15:58 no labor is in vain in the Lord