

Zerubbabel

Ezra 3:1-6

Psalm 137

by Don Falkos

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The construction of the Temple in Jerusalem had come to a halt as soon as Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, assumed the thrown of Persia. Cambyses was a severe and arrogant man. He was overthrown by Darius, who was almost immediately compelled to put down a revolt in Babylon. And he did so violently.

It had been nearly ten years since the death of Cyrus, and during that time the people of God in exile in Babylon had suffered cruel oppression. They wept over their own predicament and at the thought of Jerusalem in ruins. Their captors tormented them; repeatedly demanding they sing the jubilant songs of their homeland. But how could they! Jerusalem was their greatest joy, and they were separated from her in this foreign land.

Rather than celebrate their lost home, they festered with rage against those who deprived them of her. They said, "On the day the armies of Babylon captured Jerusalem, the Edomites called for her complete destruction. We now feel the same way about you, Babylon."

Then came Zerubbabel. Appointed as governor of Judah by King Darius, he took a large number of exiles back to Jerusalem to finish the reconstruction of the House of God, the Lord's Temple.

Those who went with Zerubbabel quickly settled in their ancestral towns. A few days later everyone gathered in Jerusalem. Despite their fear of the locals, Zerubbabel and a priest named Jeshua rebuilt the altar of God on its original site and immediately reinstated the sacrificial system according to the Law of Moses.