



Biblical Building

Sermon #11

'Unexpected Blessings!'

Ezra 6:1-12

Sunday, July 20th, 2025

Last Sunday in the Biblical Building Sermon Series:

- Last Sunday was another great day at FBCG!
 - We looked at ***Ezra 5:6-17*** with a sermon entitled 'Be Honest about the Past!'.
 - ***This was Tattenai's letter, the governor of the province, that he sent to King Darius.***
 - ***In that text we found that more information was recorded of Israel's response when asked questions by the persian inspectors.***
 - **Truth #1: *Investigatory Questions.* (vv. 6-10)**
 - **Truth #2: *Integrity Quoted.* (vv. 11-17)**

- Based on last Sunday's text, may we know and remember that our past doesn't define us, but we can and must be honest about our failures and short comings.

'Unexpected Blessings!'

Ezra 6:1-12

Sermon in a Sentence:

When Darius ordered for Cyrus's decree to be found, they found an interesting detail that turned into an unexpected blessing for God's people.

Intro:

- Blessings are a beautiful thing that all of us enjoy and or desire.
 - ***The Bible talks a lot about blessings how God always looks after His Children.***
 - To the Church at Rome, Paul wrote these words: 'And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.' Romans 8:28 ESV
 - ***We know that we may not always have what we WANT but the Bible makes it clear we will have what we NEED.***
 - The Apostle Paul said this to the Church at Philippi: 'And my God will supply every need of yours according to his

riches in glory in Christ Jesus.’

Philippians 4:19 ESV

- ***Some of the strongest and most powerful blessings that I have received in life are not just blessings that came from God, but blessings that came from God unexpectedly.***

- Maybe you’ve had a long, crazy day at work, so you decide to stop by the drive through on your way home. Finances may be tight but you’re just too tired to cook. You’ve already ordered and you get to the window just for the attendant to tell you someone paid for your meal.

- ***This is an unexpected blessing! You didn’t expect it, but someone (who probably didn’t even know you, decided to bless you).***

- Maybe in school you had studied really hard, and given it everything that you had for the upcoming test. You ended up not doing near as well as you should have done.

- ***The teacher decides to give you an opportunity to greatly better your grade with ‘test corrections’.***

- You were able to do much better than you did before. You received an unexpected blessing.
- Maybe while playing your favorite sport in a game you made a terrible play. An interception in football, or a turnover in basketball.

- ***After the play is over and you feel that you did terribly, you look up and see a yellow flag, a second chance. Or hear the referee’s whistle blow loudly.***

- ***Due to something else that occurred on the field or on the court, your mistake was erased and you received an unexpected blessing.***

- ***By the way, Blessings are not to become an expectation by Christians, but instead received with gratitude knowing and realizing we get to have a relationship with God.***

- In our text this morning we get to see King Darius’s reply to Tattenai’s letter.
- I’m sure the Persians as well as the Jews were not expecting what we see unfold.

- ***From the Persians perspective, they probably wanted King Darius to tell them to stop, so that there would be no potential threat.***

- (After all in their minds this ‘temple’ was starting to look like a fortress.)

- ***From the perspective of the Jews, they probably expected the worse. They had been through it. They may have been discouraged, but their rebuilding efforts***

did not reflect their potential feelings of discouragement.

- *God stepped in, and provided them with a blessing they could've have imagined. That's just how good our God is. He comes in and does the unexpected. He often does so when we are obedient to Him and His Word.*

Question to Ask:

What is the result of Darius's letter to Tattenai? How did the letter from Darius result in Unexpected Blessings for God's people?

Truth #1: *The Search Commences.* (vv. 1-2)

- With the way verse 1 was written and the way it reads, it seems that Darius got the letter from Tattenai, and was ready for a search to be made:
 - 'Then Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in Babylonia, in the house of the archives where the documents were stored.'
 - *Historically, King Darius had faced a lot of revolts and rebellions in the western area of persia during his first year as King.*
 - *He probably acted promptly to Tattenai's request as he did not want another rebellion emerging from the jews.*
 - Like Cryus, King Darius wanted the people in his empire to be content.

- They first look in Babylon because that was the capital at the time of Cyrus's decree.

- *But, they find that it is not there, so the search continues elsewhere...*

● *The Archives were found in the summer home of Persian kings. (v. 2)*

- 'And in Ecbatana, the citadel that is in the province of Media, a scroll was found on which this was written.'
- The Decree was finally found in Ecbatana.
- *Ecbatana was the summer home/retreat of the kings due to its comfortable climate and high elevation.*
 - Persian historical documents indicate that Cyrus lived in Babylon during the winter, Susa in the spring, and Exbatana in the summer.

- *Either way, the search started in Babylon and ended in Exbatana, now that they have the decree of Cryus, it would be read and Ezra included it in our Scripture text this morning...*

- The contents inside bring a 'Sure Confirmation'.

Truth #2: *Sure Confirmation.* (vv. 3-5)

- The search occurred, and now it was time to find out what was inside.

- *Throughout this entire situation the Jews have been honest and upfront.*
 - As we talked last week, they have shown great integrity.
- *Not only do we find confirmation of what the Jews said to Tattenai, that Cryus said that they could build, we also find additional information...*
 - This copy of Cyrus's edict here in verses 3-5 that was found in Ecbatana, is not identical with what is recorded in Ezra 1:2-4.
- *What's different from this copy of Cyrus's edict from the one in Ezra 1?*
 - New stipulations about the building.
 - It's location.
 - It's size.
 - It's materials.
 - *As I have said many times before, Scripture compliments Scripture, and does not necessarily contradict just because of a situation like the one we have here.*
- *Maybe since then, an original copy of the decree had been found and archived.*
 - Or, additional instructions may have been added to it.

- Either way, the edict of Cryus backed up what the Jews had said. Here are **3** ways in particular.

- *Specific Details. (vv. 3-4a)*

- 'In the first year of Cyrus the king, Cyrus the king issued a decree: Concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, let the house be rebuilt, the place where sacrifices were offered, and let its foundations be retained. Its height shall be sixty cubits[a] and its breadth sixty cubits, with three layers of great stones and one layer of timber.' Ezra 6:3-4a
- *Notice that one of the aspects of these specific details is that there is emphasis by Cyrus that the temple stays on the same site as the former temple.*
 - We must also keep in mind, as scholar **David Garland** put it, '*The dimensions are probably not descriptions of the temple as built, however, but specifications of the outer limits of a build the Persians would support.*'
 - As we know from Ezra 3:12 and Haggai 2:3, the second temple was not near as grand as the first.
- The specific details are given and the supplies we studied last week, are mentioned here as to be given by the Persians:
 - **Large Stones.**

- *Timbers.*
 - Next, we find an unexpected blessing, and it's a big one!
- **Surprising Detail. (v. 4b)**
 - 'Let the cost be paid from the royal treasury.'
 - **One of the reasons that the specific details are given so clearly and plainly is because if they were paying for it (which they were out of the royal treasury) then they needed to provide the parameters.**
 - Why would Cyrus and the Persians want to pay for this project to begin with?
 - *To promote good will among the joys and while imperial funding was quite regular among different cults in the persian empire, Cyrus wants the jews in his corner.*
 - Nonetheless, as we'll dive deeper in a moment, this was a big deal and an unexpected blessing.
- **Special items returned. (v. 5)**
 - 'And also let the gold and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple that is in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, be restored and brought back to the temple that is in Jerusalem, each to its place. You shall put them in the house of God.'

- The special items being returned to the new temple that were once in the old temple, is a big deal here.
 - *With Cyrus ordering the return of the temple items that Nebuchadnezzar had confiscated, Cyrus acknowledged the continuity between the two structures, even if he didn't mean to do so.*
- *The temple articles were important to their temple worship in following the Torah.*
 - While we may be tempted to view this as a small detail, it also fulfilled prophecy.
- **In Jeremiah 27:21-22, Jeremiah prophesied that these things would be taken to Babylon and later returned BACK to Jerusalem!**
 - 'thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that are left in the house of the LORD, in the house of the king of Judah, and in Jerusalem: **22** They shall be carried to Babylon and remain there until the day when I visit them, declares the LORD. Then I will bring them back and restore them to this place.'
- The sure confirmation was upheld with the findings in the archives, but God was so Sovereign and CAUSED incredible things to keep happening in this situation...

Truth #3: *A Sovereign Cause. (vv. 6-12)*

- After the search and the confirmation did in fact come through, King Darius decided to let Tattenai, the governor of the land, aware of the decision that he had made.
 - *After all this is why Tattenai sent the letter in the first place. Two reasons.*
 - #1: To verify the claim that the Jews had made that King Cyrus had made a decree.
 - #2: To ask King Darius to make the decision based on what he did or did not find, since he was in fact the king.
 - *What happens in these verses, reminds me of what happened back in Ezra 5:5.*
 - ‘The Eye of God’.
 - God’s sovereign Hand is moving and working on our behalf for our good (remember Romans 8:28 that I read at the beginning of this sermon?) even if we do not see it.
 - *The overall gist of King Darius reply:*
 - You (persian inspectors & others) are to leave the Jews alone while they work on the temple of the Lord.
 - There will be big consequences for anyone who seeks to stop them.
 - The persian bank account is going to fund this building process.

- *In 3 specific ways, we see the Sovereign Cause of God to allow all of this to fall into place.*

- *Stay Away. (vv. 6-7)*
 - “Now therefore, Tattenai, governor of the province Beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai, and your[b] associates the governors who are in the province Beyond the River, keep away. 7 Let the work on this house of God alone. Let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews rebuild this house of God on its site.’
 - *The tension that would have been left after verse 5 is quickly relieved in verses 6-7.*
 - *King Darius is very clear, concise and direct with his response.*
 - *King Darius makes three statements in these 2 verses (2 statements are negative and 1 is positive) that quickly give his answer:*
 - #1: ‘Keep Away’ (v. 6b)
 - In the Aramaic language this is a technical legal term, which literally means ‘to be distant from there’.
 - I don’t think this means that the persian inspectors couldn’t go to Jerusalem at all, but they were pretty much told to mind their own business.

- #2: 'Let the work on this house of God alone' (v. 7a)
 - *King Darius does not want anyone or anything to interfere with the work of the rebuilding of the temple.*
 - *While King Darius was heavily influenced by the decree of Cyrus that was found, I also believe that God Himself strongly moved in His heart.*
 - *We must never underestimate what God can do in someone's heart. Even someone who does not know Him.*
- #3: '(Let) the Jews rebuild this house of God on its site'
 - *This would certainly be the first part (and not the last) of King Darius's letter where the Jews probably erupted in excitement. The Sovereignty of God was all over this situation.*
 - 'On its site'
 - Back in Ezra 5:15, in Tattenai's letter the phrase is found, and when Babylonian Kings, like

Nebuchadnezzar and others rebuilt temples, they looked for the areas, and outlines of other temples.

- *While this temple wouldn't be as large as Solomon's for reasons we've discussed in this series, it would be relatively close to the original temple.*
- Notice also, that King Darius opens up with this: *'Let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews rebuild this house of God on its site'*
 - King Darius still wanted the actual work and supervision of the project to remain in the hands of the governor of the Jews and Jewish leaders.
 - *It could have been easy for Darius to be so kind and say 'we'll build it for you'*
 - *But this wasn't God's will because God didn't call the Persians to build it. He moved in Darius's heart for certain pieces to fall into place, but He (GOD) called His people to do this.*

- For us at FBCG, God has CALLED US as the believers here to be about this building project. We can't expect the government to save us. Can God use the government, yes, but we've got to do this in accordance with His Will.
- First we see that King Darius said 'Stay away', secondly...
- ***Sovereign and Unseen Hand of God. (vv. 8-10)***
 - 'Moreover, I make a decree regarding what you shall do for these elders of the Jews for the rebuilding of this house of God. The cost is to be paid to these men in full and without delay from the royal revenue, the tribute of the province from Beyond the River. **9** And whatever is needed—bulls, rams, or sheep for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, or oil, as the priests at Jerusalem require—let that be given to them day by day without fail, **10** that they may offer pleasing sacrifices to the God of heaven and pray for the life of the king and his sons.'
 - ***These verses portray King Darius as a generous king.***
 - Other historical documentation concerning him tends to back this up.
 - One scholar, ***Charles Fensham said 'He had a special interest in restoring specific cults in his empire and contributed to the restoration liberally.'***

- (Liberally in this context means large or generous amounts)
- ***His generosity over groups of people in his empire reached the ears of the Greeks and the Egyptians.***
 - Even for this time it was an ancient (old school) way of thinking that as long as a King didn't anger a specific God, his nation would be taken care of.
- ***This goes to show that just because a government leader makes a decision that helps or benefits Christians, doesn't mean he or she are necessarily doing it for the right reasons.***
- Certainly the bombshell news of verse 8 is this: 'The cost is to be paid to these men in full and without delay from the royal revenue,'
 - ***As we just saw, the original decree mentioned extending financial and material support. Whether the original did or not (some scholars disagree on this), Darius could have made whichever decision he chose.***
 - ***He chose to give the funds to the Jews. Again, I truly believe that this is the Hand of God.***
 - When I read this I can't help but think of Ephesians 3:20, '***Now to him who is***

able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,'

- God is able to do so much more than we think He can and what we give Him credit and Praise for doing!
- *Now I am not saying that the President of the United States is going to hand us a check for the cost of our new building .*
 - *What I am saying is that God can do the impossible through unexpected blessings.*
 - God can and does provide for us as we seek to obey His will.
- In verses 9-10, King Darius goes an extra step, not just financially, but in providing animals for the sacrifices.
 - 'And whatever is needed—bulls, rams, or sheep for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, or oil, as the priests at Jerusalem require—let that be given to them day by day without fail, **10** that they may offer pleasing sacrifices to the God of heaven and pray for the life of the king and his sons.'
- *Darius carefully listed out the supplies that would be needed for the daily sacrifices to be practiced according to the Jewish law.*

- Tattenai was to deliver these items and they were to be given to them day after day, without fail!

- *Imagine the faces of the Jews who would've been nervous when Tattenai returned (and rightfully so).*

- But once they heard the sounds and smells of the animals, would have been in shock at what had been decided by Darius.
- *When looking at this list that Darius told Tattenai had to be fulfilled and replenished, we must pause and realize we are under the New Covenant because of what Christ Jesus did for us on the Cross.*
 - When we come into this place and worship we do not have to worry about physical sacrifices or turning the nursery into an animal pen.
 - But what we should be doing is rejoicing in Christ that He was GREATER than all these offerings and He fulfilled them.
- *We are reminded in Romans 12:1-2, that real worship is when you and I truly dedicate ourselves to the Lord in the way that we live, daily.*

- ‘I appeal to you therefore, brothers,[a] by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.[b] **2** Do not be conformed to this world,[c] but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.’
- ***We also can’t miss this small detail in verse 10:***
 - ‘that they may offer pleasing sacrifices to the God of heaven and pray for the life of the king and his sons.’
 - ***Darius asks that they pray for him and his family.***
 - ***This is by no means a Yawhewistic confession, it is simply Darius trying to ‘cover his basis’ since he is probably polythesistic (believes in multiple false gods).***
 - Did you know that you and I are also told in the Bible that we are to pray for our leaders? Even if we don’t agree with them?
 - ‘First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings

be made for all people, **2** for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.’ 1st Timothy 2:1-2

- ***The Sovereign and unseen Hand of God is so powerful.***
- ***Striking Threat. (vv. 11-12)***
 - ‘Also I make a decree that if anyone alters this edict, a beam shall be pulled out of his house, and he shall be impaled on it, and his house shall be made a dunghill. **12** May the God who has caused his name to dwell there overthrow any king or people who shall put out a hand to alter this, or to destroy this house of God that is in Jerusalem. I Darius make a decree; let it be done with all diligence.’
 - ***To support the seriousness of his decree, Darius makes it clear that if you mess with the Jews in the rebuilding of the temple, there will be severe consequences.***
 - Darius pretty much says there in verse 11 that anyone who would go against his decree and oppress the Jews, would be ‘impaled’ on a beam from his own home.
 - ***Other OT passages mentioned the hanging or fastening of a criminal on a***

structure (see Genesis 40:22, Genesis 41:13, Numbers 25:4) but none are quite as graphic as Darius's threat here.

- This threat by Darius actually sounds similar to one of Nebuchadnezzar's threats in Daniel 2:5.
 - 'The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, "The word from me is firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you shall be torn limb from limb, and your houses shall be laid in ruins.'
- The Bible and ancient eastern scholar, *Charles Fensham* describes the punishment that Darius is mentioning here by saying *'One side of a beam was sharpened and the other side planted in the ground. The sharp point was inserted under the chest of a person and pushed through his esophagus and lungs. He was then left to hang until he died.'*

- The phrase 'May the God who has caused his name to dwell there' is very reminiscent of Deuteronomy 12:5.

■ *This seems to give further indication that a Jewish scribe helped Darius prepare his decree. (Hence why he had an accurate list of what they needed for sacrifices).*

- Darius was almost speaking prophetically, though he didn't realize it. As Daniel had prophesied in Daniel 7:23-27, God would end up doing this very thing.

■ *Darius had made it clear, the Jews were to rebuild the temple, no one was to stop them, and it would be paid for.*

Conclusion:

- *Do you remember just a few moments ago when we saw King Darius in his generosity?*

- He provided a huge unexpected blessing for the Jews, and just kept it up not just with the finances but with the animals and protection for them! Strongly threatening anyone who would go against them.

- *Many of us love to GET unexpected blessings. Some of us may even pray for them.*

- But how many of us give unexpected blessings to others? Even people that we don't know?

- *Whether that be paying for someone's gas at the pump, paying for someone's groceries, or paying for someone's meal.*

- *We've got to change our mindset as a people from what we can GET to what we can GIVE.*

- In our text this morning we saw that the people of Israel received unexpected blessings and then used those unexpected blessings for HIS Glory in the temple.

- *With the blessings we receive, expected and unexpected, how are we using them to give God glory in our lives?*

- Truth #1: *The Search Commences.* (vv. 1-2)
- Truth #2: *Sure Confirmation.* (vv. 3-5)
- Truth #3: *A Sovereign Cause.* (vv. 6-12)