

1st TH1NGS F1RST 4 – Dedication

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You have almost survived the first month of 2022. You have also almost survived your first sermon series of 2022.

We have been talking about First Things First.

Week 1 Build an Altar first

Week 2 Build a foundation first

Week 3 Face you opposition first

And today we are going to tell you *dedication comes first*. In Ezra 6 they complete and dedicate the Temple of God.

Dedication Comes First

You will never build the life you want without dedication first. Great lives don't just happen. Great marriages, great careers, big dreams, healthy bodies, minds, and spirits don't just happen. Everything you desire this year requires dedication.

Israel has faced and defeated their opposition through God's help. They are now ready to build the Temple, God's House. Before we talk about the complete temple I want to talk to you about the promise. This relates directly to your finished product because God's promises extend to us.

Promise

Right in the middle of Israel's opposition God spoke through 2 prophets. Problems do not stop the promise of God. In the middle of the problem look up and open your eyes, have faith, and open your ears, because God's promise often shows up in the middle of the problem.

Ezra 5:1 Now Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the prophet, a descendant of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them.(NIV)

In the middle of your opposition, listen for the voice of God. Don't quit coming to church. Don't stop praying. Read your Bible! God wants to talk to you in the middle of trouble.

In the middle of an unfinished rebuilding project, God sent word to Israel through 2 prophets. Zechariah & Haggai. 2 of the minor prophets who spoke in major ways as Israel came out of exile.

Zechariah received visions about the importance of the temple. He gave a message that Israel should not give up because what they are doing is important.

He gave a message that even though we are in the day of small things... Big things are coming.

Perhaps you know the scripture “Don’t despise the day of small things” – that scripture was about the laying of the foundation of the Temple.

Zechariah 4:10 "Who despises the day of small things? Men will rejoice when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. "(These seven are the eyes of the LORD, which range throughout the earth.)"(NIV)

You may be in the day of small things.. You might be in the middle of struggle... but somebody needs to hear the word of the Lord! Somebody needs to remember His **PROMISE**. What you are doing is important! Do not stop! It may be small today, but you just watch what God can do.

We serve the God who took the small shepherd boy and defeated a giant.

We serve the God who took small armies and wiped-out enemies who could not be numbered.

We serve the God who took 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish and fed 5000.

We serve the God who takes the small and does huge miraculous wonders.

Haggai brought a message that harmonized with Zechariah’s message of small things.

Haggai 2:9 `The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,' says the LORD Almighty. `And in this place I will grant peace,' declares the LORD Almighty."(NIV)

This is an amazing promise. This is also a great example of a dual prophecy. Let me teach for a minute..

The former house... the older house is – Solomon’s Temple. The Temple that Solomon built. It was torn down by Babylon. The prophecy is that the (present) latter house... (called Zerubbabel’s temple) the house that will be built is going to be more glorious than Solomon’s temple.

It is a dual prophecy because it speaks to the immediate and then it also speaks to what is to come. The prophecy of Haggai 2:9 speaks to the immediate... the people who are trying to build the temple in Jerusalem... but it also spoke to what would come later and still speaks to us today. Here is how..

A More Glorious Temple

It prophesies of a more glorious temple to come. So, this not only applies to the temple being built in the book of Ezra... but it also applies to things to come.

- Jesus was the human tabernacle of God. God was in Christ. (2 Cor 5:19) The WORD became flesh and tabernacled with us

(John 1:14). Jesus is the very Temple, housing God's Spirit in the flesh. Jesus is that far glorious temple that was to come. Jesus said in three days He will tear down this temple and rise it up again... (John 2:19)

BUT GREATER THAN THAT TEMPLE IS TO COME (John 16:7)

- You are the Temple of God... God's Holy Spirit dwells in you. That is a more glorious temple.

1 Corinthians 3:16 Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?(NIV)

- The same Spirit of God that was in Christ is available for everyone! How glorious!
- If you have not experienced the GLORY of being filled with the Holy Spirit, it is for you today! Meet us in this altar and ask us about it.

As good as that is... a more glorious temple is coming!

- The Temple of Heaven will come to earth! And you can be a pillar of that Temple!

Revelation 3:12 Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming

down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name.(NIV)

This is no ordinary temple... Revelation 21:22 I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.(NIV)

You see this is no physical temple. This temple is the very presence of Jesus Christ. In this city, the New Jerusalem, the presence of Jesus will be our temple, and His presence will be everywhere! Never again will we leave the presence of this temple.

No more death... only the presence of God! No more child abuse... Only the presence of God! No more hatred and murder... Only the presence of God! Nothing to fear... Only the presence of God!

You can't leave this temple! This temple can't be destroyed! Hallelujah! The glory of this later house is greater!

A More Glorious Temple

A more glorious temple is coming!

But what does that mean? More glorious?

Solomon's temple was actually bigger in size than Zerubbabel's temple. So more glorious doesn't mean bigger in size..

Solomon's temple was more opulent and expensive. So more glorious doesn't mean more wealth.

Solomon's temple was a wonder of the ancient world. Other world rulers like the Queen of Sheba marveled over that temple. So more glorious doesn't mean more popular or having more notoriety.

At the dedication of Solomon's temple in 2 Chronicles 5, the Glory of the Lord entered the temple and filled the room with a cloud. This manifestation of God's Glory was so strong and thick that the priests could not minister. So more glorious may not mean a more dynamic manifestation of God.

It almost appears like the prophet Haggai might have made a mistake... This 2nd temple wasn't larger, more costly, more famous, or more supernaturally dynamic. How could it be more glorious?

Maybe we have a wrong idea of glory? Maybe we don't understand what makes things more glorious?

Maybe a really pretty building with stain glass windows won't ,in fact, bring God more glory..

Maybe more money in your bank account isn't more glorious..
Could it be that we are chasing after the wrong glory?

As far as I can tell, Solomon's temple had MORE of everything than the 2nd Temple except for 2 things.

The 2nd temple had more glory... and the 2nd temple had more opposition.

Moses built his portable tabernacle in the dessert after his enemies had been drowned in the Red Sea and before they crossed over into the promise land where they would fight more opposition. That first tabernacle was built with no opposition.

Solomon built his temple with no opposition. He was a world power, wealthy & wise, with a united kingdom. No one opposed Solomon.

But this Temple in the book of Ezra, had something Moses' tabernacle & Solomon's temple lacked. It faced opposition.

Now we talked last week about the opposition Ezra faced , so I won't dive into that again... Check our website for that sermon... but I do have to tell you that there is glory in dedicated temples.

There is Glory in Dedicated Temples

I am talking to people who, like Israel, have stood in the spot where a Temple use to stand, but now, only ruin remains.

There are people who stand in the place where a relationship or a marriage once stood.. perhaps you struggle to find the healing you need. You think trying again might bring shame.

You may stand in a place where your dream once stood.. You face embarrassment that your life isn't where others think it ought to be.

You might stand in a place where a happy life with a good job and a house with money in the bank once stood... You aren't sure if that life can be rebuilt.

I am here to declare the promise spoken of by the Prophet Haggai... The Glory of the latter house will be greater than the Former house.

You can rebuild! The house you build will be more glorious!

The glory is not in the building with four walls... God places His glory on the people who are dedicated to God.

Dedication in the face of opposition will only bring more glory.

More Glory in your Story

If you stay dedicated your opposition can't stop you. In fact, the work of the opposition will backfire. The opposition will only end up bringing more glory.

YOU SPEND TOO MUCH TIME THINKING ABOUT YOUR OPPOSITION! Think about the Glory you are bringing to God by

staying dedicated. Think about the Glory that is being revealed in you.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

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Stay Dedicated

Israel came out of exile and re-dedicated.

Israel dedicated when it would cost them money, time, and effort.

Israel dedicated when they faced opposition.

And because of their dedication and God's faithfulness they completed a more glorious house for God!

In Ezra 6 they dedicate that temple for God's use.

Ezra 6:14-16 14 So the elders of the Jews continued to build and prosper under the preaching of Haggai the prophet and

Zechariah, a descendant of Iddo. They finished building the temple according to the command of the God of Israel and the decrees of Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia.

15 The temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.

16 Then the people of Israel—the priests, the Levites and the rest of the exiles—celebrated the dedication of the house of God with joy.

The only times Israel fell into trouble was when they lacked dedication. You need a dedication that remains even after success has come.

Where are you today? Are you facing opposition? Are you dedicated? Are you experiencing success? Are you dedicated to rebuilding your life? Have you dedicated your life to God?

If you have never dedicated to God, you can do it today. Maybe you have dedicated to God in the past, but you know that today you are less dedicated to God. RE-dedicate today.