

# God Always Finishes What He Starts

(No. 1202 – 3/29/21 – DR Zoom Meeting)

## I. INTRODUCTION

A. **Heb. 12:1-2** (NKJV): *<sup>1</sup>Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us **run with endurance the race** that is set before us, <sup>2</sup>looking unto **Jesus, the Author and Finisher** of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

B. Jesus is the *Author*—He’s the Creator and Source of all things (which gives Him ALL authority!)

C. Jesus is also the *Finisher*—He always completes what He starts!

1. God doesn’t rest until His work is finished:

**Gen. 2:1-3:** *<sup>1</sup>Thus the heavens and the earth were **completed** in all their vast array. <sup>2</sup>By the seventh day **God had finished the work** He had been doing; so on the seventh day He rested from all His work. <sup>3</sup>And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it He rested from all the work of creating that He had done.*

2. Jesus finished everything the Father gave Him to do:

**John 17:4:** *I have brought You glory on earth by **completing the work** You gave Me to do.*

**John 19:30:** *When He had received the drink, Jesus said, “**It is finished.**” With that, He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.*

3. Jesus will build His Church and He will not rest until it is finished:

**Mat. 16:18:** *And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock **I will build My church**, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.*

4. God began (Author) a good work in us and He will complete it (Finisher) for the day of Christ's return for His Bride:

**Phil. 1:6:** *Being confident of this, that He who **began** a good work in you will **carry it on to completion** until the day of Christ Jesus.*

- D. We are in a race, and it's the FINISH that counts in any race; Jesus our Finisher will help us cross the finish line!

1. True disciples finish what they began:

**Luke 14:27-30:** <sup>27</sup>*And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple.*

<sup>28</sup>*Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to **complete it**? <sup>29</sup>For if he lays the foundation and is **not able to finish** it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, <sup>30</sup> saying, "This fellow **began to build and was not able to finish.**"*

2. Paul finished his race:

**Acts 20:24:** *However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may **finish the race and complete the task** the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.*

**2 Tim. 4:7-8:** <sup>7</sup>*I have fought the good fight, I have **finished the race**, I have kept the faith. <sup>8</sup>Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day--and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for His appearing.*

## II. RESTORATION OF THE POST-EXILIC TEMPLE

- A. The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 605 BC, followed by the 70-year captivity of the Jews exiled to Babylon, is one of the darkest chapters in Israel's history. HOWEVER, the return of the exiles to Jerusalem and the restoration of the city and temple are some of the most amazing miracles in the Bible!

- B. Exactly 70 years later, in order to FULFILL THE WORD OF THE LORD, God moved King Cyrus of Persia in the *first year of his reign* to release the Jewish exiles and help them return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple:

**Ezra 1:1-4:** <sup>1</sup>*In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing: <sup>2</sup>This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: “The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and **He has appointed me to build a temple for Him at Jerusalem** in Judah. <sup>3</sup>Anyone of His people among you—may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the LORD, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup>And the people of any place where survivors may now be living are to provide him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem.”*

- C. This had been prophesied by Isaiah 200 years before—long before Cyrus was born or had a name!

**Isa. 44:24-28:** <sup>24</sup>*This is what the LORD says—your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the LORD, who has made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by Myself, <sup>25</sup>who **foils the signs of false prophets** and makes fools of diviners, who overthrows the learning of the wise and turns it into nonsense, <sup>26</sup>who **carries out the words of His servants and fulfills the predictions of His messengers**, who says of Jerusalem, “It shall be inhabited,” of the towns of Judah, “They shall be built,” and of their ruins, “I will restore them,” ... <sup>28</sup>who says of **Cyrus**, “**He is My shepherd** and will accomplish all that I please; **he will say of Jerusalem, ‘Let it be rebuilt,’** and of the temple, ‘Let its foundations be laid.’”*

Real prophets are 100% right all the time!

- D. God moved the heart of Cyrus and called him by name even though he did not know the Lord!

**Isa. 45:1-6** (NKJV): <sup>1</sup>Thus says **the LORD to His anointed, to Cyrus**, whose right hand I have held—to subdue nations before him and loose the armor of kings, to open before him the double doors, so that the gates will not be shut: <sup>2</sup>“I will go before you and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron. <sup>3</sup>I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, **that you may know that I, the LORD, who call you by your name, am the God of Israel.** <sup>4</sup>For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel My elect, **I have even called you by your name; I have named you, THOUGH YOU HAVE NOT KNOWN ME.** <sup>5</sup>I am the LORD, and there is no other; there is no God besides Me. I will gird you, **though you have not known Me**, <sup>6</sup>that they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting that there is none besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other;

- E. The Most High rules, and His word stands firm forever—no one can restrain His hand:

**Ps. 33:9-11:** <sup>9</sup>For He spoke, and it came to be; He commanded, and it stood firm. <sup>10</sup>The LORD foils the plans of the nations; He thwarts the purposes of the peoples. <sup>11</sup>But **the plans of the LORD stand firm forever**, the purposes of His heart through all generations.

- F. There was great joy after the Jews returned, and the altar and foundation of the temple were laid (Ezra 3).
- G. But after a good start, opposition and trouble came, and they quit [see Nehemiah Chapters 4 and 6 also]:
1. **Ezra 4:1-5:** <sup>1</sup>When the **enemies** of Judah and Benjamin heard that the exiles were building a temple for the LORD, the God of Israel, <sup>2</sup>**THEY CAME** to Zerubbabel and to the heads of the families and said, “**Let us help you build** because, like you, we seek your God and have been sacrificing to Him since the time of Esarhaddon

king of Assyria, who brought us here.”<sup>3</sup> But Zerubbabel, Jeshua and the rest of the heads of the families of Israel answered, “**You have no part with us in building a temple to our God. We alone will build it for the LORD, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, commanded us.**”<sup>4</sup> Then the peoples around them set out to **discourage** the people of Judah and **make them afraid** to go on building.<sup>5</sup> They hired counselors to work against them and **frustrate their plans.**

- a) Deception, infiltration
- b) Discouragement, fear, frustration
- c) 2 Cor. 2:11 – we should not be ignorant!
- d) Open doors don’t mean there won’t be adversaries and opposition:

**1 Cor. 16:9** (NKJV): *For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.*

- 2. **Ezra 4:23-24:**<sup>23</sup> ... **they compelled them by force to stop.**<sup>24</sup> Thus the work on the house of God in Jerusalem **came to a standstill** until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia. **[10-16 years!]**

H. **Ezra 5:1-2:**<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua son of Jozadak **set to work** to rebuild the house of God in Jerusalem. And the prophets of God were with them, helping them.

- I. **Ezra 6:14-15:**<sup>14</sup> So the elders of the Jews continued to **build and prosper under the preaching of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah**... 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.<sup>15</sup> **THE TEMPLE WAS COMPLETED...** in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius **[in 3½ years!]**.

### III. WHAT WERE HAGGAI AND ZECHARIAH SAYING?

Not by our own efforts: by grace from start to finish!

- A. **Zech. 4:6-10** (NKJV): <sup>6</sup>So he answered and said to me: “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: ‘**Not by might nor by power, but BY MY SPIRIT,**’ says the LORD of hosts. <sup>7</sup>Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone with **shouts of “GRACE, GRACE to it!”** <sup>8</sup>Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying: <sup>9</sup>“**The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; his hands shall also finish it.** Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you. <sup>10</sup>For who has despised the day of small things?”
- B. **Hag. 1:2-9:** <sup>2</sup>This is what the LORD Almighty says: “These people say, ‘The time has not yet come for the LORD’s house to be built.’” <sup>3</sup>Then the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai: <sup>4</sup>“**Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?**” <sup>5</sup>Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: “**Give careful thought to your ways.** <sup>6</sup>You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.” <sup>7</sup>This is what the LORD Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways. <sup>8</sup>Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored,” says the LORD. <sup>9</sup>“You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?” declares the LORD Almighty. “**Because of My house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house.**”
- C. NOTE: No mention of their enemies—they had become *their own* enemies—they needed to repent!
- D. **Hag. 1:13-15:** <sup>13</sup>Then Haggai, the LORD’s messenger, gave this message of the LORD to the people: “**I AM WITH YOU,**” declares the LORD. <sup>14</sup>So the **LORD STIRRED UP THE SPIRIT** of Zerubbabel... the spirit of Joshua... and the spirit of the whole remnant of the

people. They came and began to work on the house of the LORD Almighty, their God.

Church  
in the  
Book of  
Acts

- E. **Hag. 2:1-5** (1 month later) - <sup>3</sup>**“Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing? <sup>4</sup>But now **BE STRONG**, O Zerubbabel,” declares the LORD. **“BE STRONG**, O Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest. **BE STRONG**, all you people of the land,” declares the LORD, “and work. For **I am with you**,” declares the LORD Almighty. <sup>5</sup>“This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And **MY SPIRIT** [like Zech. 4:6] **remains among you. Do not fear.**”**
- F. **Hag. 2:6-9**: <sup>6</sup>This is what the LORD Almighty says: “In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. <sup>7</sup>I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and **I will fill this house with glory**,” says the LORD Almighty. <sup>8</sup>“The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine,” declares the LORD Almighty. <sup>9</sup>**“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.

#### IV. GOD’S MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH

- A. We have an Anointed One whose anointing and decree are far superior to that of Cyrus —Christ’s decree has been issued: **“I will build My church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it!”**
- B. We need to fix our eyes on the Author and Finisher—the GOOD work He began He will also finish!
- C. No force or power can stop Him! “Who are you, O mighty mountain?” The Lord will flatten you, for it is not by might or power, but by My Spirit says the Lord!
- D. Christ is coming for a glorious Church; may the glory of this latter Church be greater than the former.  
AMEN.