

LESSON PLAN

THE TEMPLE REBUILT

Ezra 1 – 8

Lesson Memory Verse: Ezra 8:22b - “**The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek Him;** but His power and His wrath is against all them that forsake Him.” (Grades 1 & 2 memorize the portion in **bold**.)

Lesson Aim: God blesses all those who want to obey Him look to Him for His help.

Lesson Plan: Use the KEY – HE – SEE – WE – BE plan (explained in the Introductory Notes).

KEY (for Attention): The Lord's temple in the Old Testament was different than a church building today. The temple was the place where animal sacrifices were made and the blood of those animals covered the sins of the people that had faith in God. No animal sacrifices are made in a church building. It is a place where believers worship God for the perfect sacrifice that Jesus on the cross to remove all of our sins and provided us eternal salvation. It is also a place where believers learn how to live for Him.

In Old Testament days the Lord's temple in Jerusalem was very important for their salvation. They had to bring certain animals be sacrificed at the temple for their salvation. Those who did it with faith in God's command had their sins covered. They would have to offer animal sacrifices again and again to cover their sins, because the blood of animals could never remove their sins—only the blood of Jesus could remove our sins. When we put our faith in Jesus' death on the cross to remove our sins, they are gone, so we do not need to offer animal sacrifices in our churches.

When the temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers, the Jews could not sacrifice animals at the temple to have their sins covered. What did they do? Daniel prayed with faith in God toward Jerusalem where the sacrifices had been made and God was pleased with his faith. But a temple needed to be built when the Jews returned to Jerusalem about 550 years before Jesus died on the cross. This lesson will tell us about the Jewish believers that looked to God for help to obey Him.

HE (for Authority): The Lord's temple was destroyed because the people had forsaken Him and went after other gods. In our memory verse it tells us what the Lord does to those that “forsake Him” (that means to turn away from the Lord). His power and wrath are against all those that turn away from Him. He will use His power to punish them. This is a warning to all of us as well. We must not turn away from the Lord and leave Him out of our lives.

The memory verse also has a good message for us. It says that those who seek Him will have His hand upon them for good. He will protect them and help them get the victory.

SEE (for Apperception) and WE (for Application): PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scripture for this lesson. First let the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word. Our Bible story today will show us how the Lord protected and helped all those who wanted to obey Him and looked to Him for help.

I. Regathering of God's People - Ezra 1 - 2

King Cyrus of Persia allowed God's people to go back to their own land and he commanded them to build their temple. Isaiah had prophesied almost 200 years earlier that this would happen (Isa 44:28). Almost 50,000 people left Babylon and regathered in God's land (2:64-65), but most of the Jews stayed in Babylon because it looked more comfortable. This was not the right thing to do. They should have prayed to the Lord and asked for His help. Then they should have obeyed the Lord and returned to God's land. However, some Jews obeyed and carried with them the precious vessels for the temple that had been taken by King Nebuchadnezzar when he captured Jerusalem. Those who did not go back were commanded by Cyrus to give gifts to those who returned.

WE: When we are allowed to do something for God, we need to look to Him for help. With His help we will please God and we will be successful.

II. Rebuilding of God's Temple - Ezra 3

When God's people regathered in Jerusalem, they pleased God by building an altar first and offering sacrifices to Him. Later they laid the foundations for the temple as He had commanded. Most of the

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people rejoiced, but some wept. Those who rejoiced were happy because once more they were going to have a place where they could offer animal sacrifices for their sins. Those who wept were sad because the new temple was going to be so much smaller than the one Solomon had built. They had their eyes on the temple rather than on God.

WE: We need to obey God so we can do the things that please Him. We must not do anything that puts God in second place. His plan must always come first. When we do that we will rejoice.

III. Retaliating by God's Enemies - Ezra 4

When God's enemies heard that His people were building the temple of God, they said they wanted to help build it so they could worship with them. If this had been done it would have displeased God. God knows that people who worship idols cannot worship Him in spirit and in truth (Jn 4:24). They cannot worship Him until they are ready to turn away from their sins and be saved. When God's enemies were told that they could not help build the temple, they retaliated and threatened the Jews, which kept them from rebuilding the temple for many years. If these people had looked to God for help, they would not have stopped the rebuilding of God's temple, but they listened to the enemies of God and stopped doing the work that God wanted them to do. Instead they built their own houses (Hag 1:2-4). The enemies of God stopped the work of God, because the people of God did not seek the help of God. Therefore, they could not receive the blessing of God.

WE: Our actions will tell what kind of people are. If we continue to do the work of God, no matter what the enemy says or does, it will show that we are a people that look to God for strength so we can finish the job that He has given to us. If we stop doing the work of God, when the enemy threatens us, it will show that we are a people that do not look to God for power to overcome the enemy so we can finish His work.

IV. Restoring of God's Worship - Ezra 5-6

The rebuilding of God's temple had been stopped for many years, so God finally sent two prophets to stir up His people and get them back to the job of rebuilding His temple once more. The two prophets were Haggai and Zechariah. These men were successful. The people began to rebuild the temple again and finally they finished it. Now they could worship God in the right way. Now they could offer sacrifices the way God had commanded. Now God would, forgive their sins, hear their prayers and help them.

WE: We need to finish the job that God gives to us. If we finish the job that God gives us, He can lay His hand of blessing on us. If we do not finish the job that God gives us, He will lay His hand of discipline on us. He will not let us go on sinning without punishing us. He wants His people to be like His Son that obeyed in everything that He said and did, so He could say on the cross just before He died, "It is finished."

V. Returning of God's Servants - Ezra 7-8

Many, many years after the temple was rebuilt God spoke to Ezra and some other men to leave Babylon and go to His land where they were needed to deal with His people about their sins. Ezra had not even been born when the first group had gone back to Jerusalem, and this was his first opportunity that he had to go back to God's land. He asked King Artaxerxes if he and others could go, and the king said they could. The king also gave them a great gift to help the work in Jerusalem. Even with all of these blessings, there was one thing that bothered Ezra. It was protection from robbers. However, he decided that he would not ask the king for protection, but instead he would fast and pray to the Lord for His help. He then took the dangerous trip to God's land. It took him three months, but the Lord protected him better than an army, and he and his group arrived safely in Jerusalem. He prayed to the Lord for help and God graciously gave it to him!

WE: We need to trust the Lord for His power to protect us. He wants to protect us, but we must learn to sincerely ask for it with faith that He will do it.

Be (for Action): You have heard how different people trusted the Lord and obeyed Him to receive His help. This week I want you to trust the Lord and obey Him so you can receive His help. Then remember how God helped you and tell our class about it next week. If you do this for your whole life, you will be a strong servant of the Lord.