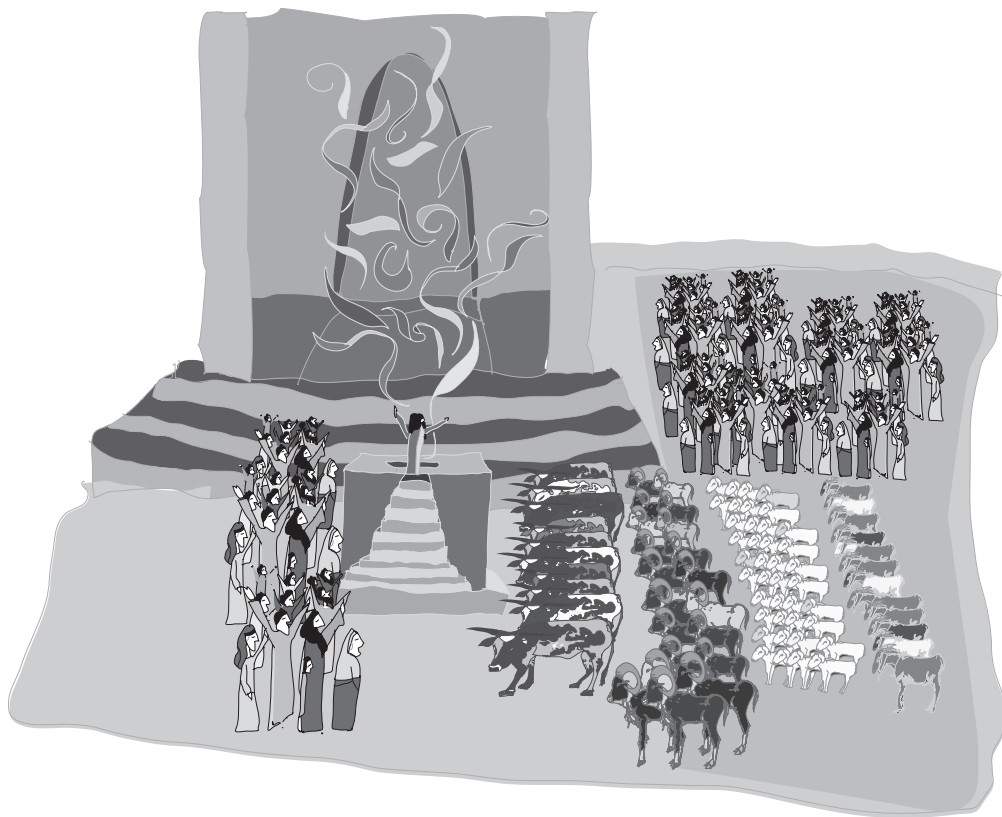


LESSON 77

The Temple Is Completed

EZRA 6–7



BIBLE TRUTH

NOTHING STOPS GOD FROM REDEEMING HIS PEOPLE

LESSON SNAPSHOT

- 1. OPENING REVIEW** **5 MIN**
 Use last week's lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.
- 2. BIBLE STORY** **10 MIN**
 Read Ezra 6 from the Scriptures or read story 77, "The Temple Is Completed," from *The Gospel Story Bible*.
- 3. OBJECT LESSON 1** **10 MIN**
 The Work of Grace
SUPPLIES:
- ✓ nine sheets of brown construction paper
 - ✓ two pairs of scissors
 - ✓ two rolls of clear tape
 - ✓ two two-inch cardboard squares for templates
 - ✓ a paper bag
 - ✓ prizes
- 4. TEACHING/DISCUSSION** **10 MIN**
- 5. OBJECT LESSON 2** **10 MIN**
 Who Did What?
SUPPLIES:
- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker
- 6. SWORD BIBLE MEMORY** **5 MIN**
- 7. ACTIVITY TIME** **15 MIN**
 The Temple
SUPPLIES:
- ✓ picture of the temple (photocopy one from a study Bible or download one from the Internet at www.itsgila.com/highlightsmodel.htm)
 - ✓ colored pencils, crayons, and paper
- 8. CLOSING PRAYER** **5 MIN**
- 9. BONUS OBJECT LESSON** **10 MIN**
 Compare the Prophecies

TOTAL 80 MIN

PREPARING TO TEACH

TEACHING POINTS

The temple is finally complete—The rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem began under the rule of Cyrus. But the local governor and the people of the former kingdom of Israel, now a province called Beyond the River, begin to interfere with the rebuilding. After several years of this interference, all work on the temple stops.

The people of Judah return to building their own houses and working their own fields, and for about ten years no work is done on the temple. Then the prophets Haggai and Zechariah begin to speak. The people of Judah listen to Haggai and Zechariah and return to working on the temple. They also appeal to Darius, who has replaced Cyrus as king of Persia, and ask him to uphold the command of Cyrus to rebuild the temple. Darius finds the command of Cyrus and follows it. He makes sure the people of Judah have what they need to complete the temple, and he commands those opposing them to cooperate and even to help. The remaining cost of rebuilding the temple is paid by those who do not follow God. It takes many years, but the temple is at last rebuilt.

The people celebrate the Passover—Now that the temple has been finished, the people celebrate the Passover. One day, Jesus would sit in the upper room with his disciples and announce the new covenant during the Passover meal. In light of that day, God preserves the celebration of the Passover after this rededication of the temple. God ensures that the Passover would continue to be celebrated until it was fulfilled in Christ.

Artaxerxes sends Ezra to teach the people—Ezra is a scribe and a teacher who, along with many other captives, is still living in Babylon under the rule of the king of Persia. About sixty years after the Passover is celebrated following the temple's rebuilding, a new king, Artaxerxes, comes to the throne of Persia. In the book of Ezra, we find the amazing letter of Artaxerxes sending Ezra and others back to Jerusalem. This letter shows us just how powerfully God can work in the heart of a king to accomplish his will. God wanted his people in Jerusalem to learn more about his word, so he sent Ezra to teach them as well as to bring new riches to the temple.

A LITTLE BIT MORE

House of God

The house of God is just another name for the Lord's temple, the place where his presence dwells. When Jesus confronted the moneychangers in the temple he is quoted as saying, "My house will be called a house of prayer" (Matthew 21:13).

Hebrews 3:6 tells us that we are that house. The presence of the Lord first fell down upon the tabernacle, then the temple, then upon Christ. As we are united with Christ, his Spirit lives within us. All believers together form the dwelling place—the house—for the presence of God.

WHERE IS JESUS? _____

How does today's Bible story fit into God's greater plan of redemption?

Read Ephesians 2:19–22.

After the rebuilding of Zerubbabel's temple, seven hundred animals were sacrificed. At the completion of Solomon's temple 142,000 animals were sacrificed. Neither temple remains today. Those hundreds and thousands of sacrifices were temporary. Those temples were temporary.

Jesus is God's temple (Revelation 21:22) just as Christ's body—the church—is God's temple (Ephesians 2:19–22). As a part of the church, we are each individually God's temple (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

We are God's temples because the Holy Spirit dwells in us. Together we make up his church and all of us form the body of Christ. In Christ we have become the new temple of God. Only one sacrifice was made and only one was ever needed—the death of Christ on the cross.

THE LESSON

OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week's lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read Ezra 6 from the Scriptures or read story 77, “The Temple Is Completed,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

OBJECT LESSON 1 10 MIN

The Work of Grace

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ nine sheets of brown construction paper
- ✓ two pairs of scissors
- ✓ two rolls of clear tape
- ✓ two two-inch cardboard squares for templates
- ✓ a paper bag
- ✓ prizes

The object of this lesson is to illustrate just what grace does in making the impossible happen.

Prior to class cut sixty two-inch squares out of three sheets of the construction paper. Tape six squares together to form a cube. Make ten cubes and hide them in a bag.

In class, ask for six volunteers to form two teams of three.

Take a cube out of the bag and tell the children that each team needs to stack ten two-inch paper cubes into a pyramid (a row of four on the bottom, followed by a row of three, then two, and finally one on the top). This represents the building of the temple.

Announce that the team who completes their pyramid first is the winner and will get a prize. Tell them that they can make cubes by cutting the brown paper into two-inch squares and by taping six squares together. A total of ten cubes are needed to complete the task. Give each team three sheets of paper, one template, one pair of scissors, and a role of tape.

Give them the starting signal. Let them struggle for a moment and then announce to one of the teams that they can feel free to ask for your help.

As soon as they ask for help, give them the premade cubes. When they finish their pyramid jump up and down wildly shouting, “You did it, you did it!”

The other team will complain, especially when you give the prizes to the team you helped.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- How did the winning team accomplish their goal?
(You, the teacher, helped them. Dismiss any word of cheating by saying you never made a rule saying they could not receive help.)

- Even though the winning team built their own pyramid, did they do the work?
(No, ultimately you, the teacher, did all the work.)

Explain to the class that this is what God does for us. Anything that we accomplish is only by the hand of God. Zerubbabel may have built the temple, but it was only by the grace of God that he was able to complete the task.

TEACHING/DISCUSSION 10 MIN

Using the teaching points, teach through the lesson for today.

OBJECT LESSON 2 10 MIN

Who Did What?

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker

Make two lists side-by-side on the whiteboard. On one side, list all the things God did to ensure the completion of the temple. On the other side, list the things the Israelites did. When the lists are complete, there will be things like “build the walls” on the list of the Israelites’ accomplishments and items like “God moved on the heart of Cyrus” under the list of the things that God did. Use the following questions to help the children think through all that God did.

- Even though the returned exiles did the work of construction, who kept their enemies at bay while they worked?
(God protected them during the construction.)

- Who kept the Israelites healthy?
(God kept them healthy.)

- Who caused their hearts to continue beating?
(God did.)
- So, even though God used the Israelites to complete the rebuilding, who should get all the glory?
(God should get all the glory. It was his plan in action that allowed for anything at all to be accomplished.)

WORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

Take time during the class to review the WORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITY TIME 15 MIN

The Temple

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ picture of the temple (photocopy one from a study Bible or download one from the Internet at www.itsgila.com/highlightsmodel.htm)
- ✓ colored pencils, crayons, and paper

Bring in an illustration of the temple to show the children. Have them draw a picture of the completed temple with people all around celebrating.

CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

Pick several children to pray prayers based on the day's scripture passages.

BONUS OBJECT LESSON 10 MIN

Compare the Prophecies

Compare the prophetic word of Haggai 2:1–9 with the account of Ezra 6:1–12.

- What similarities do you see?
(They both encourage the rebuilding work to continue. Part of the shaking out of the treasures of the nations [Haggai 2:7] could refer to the financing for the rebuilding of the temple by Cyrus and Darius.)

- What from Haggai's prophecy doesn't seem to fit the present situation and rebuilding of the temple as described by Ezra?

(It doesn't seem possible that the latter glory of this house, the new temple, could be greater than the former, Solomon's temple.)

- What is one way to reconcile the difference since we know that Solomon's temple was so much more glorious than Zerubbabel's temple?

(We can easily reconcile Haggai's word if we understand the latter glory of this house to be describing the body of Christ, the living temple of the Lord not made by human hands!)

- Why was it so important for God to restore the temple?

(The temple foreshadowed Christ on earth. Jesus calls his own body the temple. He said, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up" [John 2:19]. The temple foreshadows Christ in the plan of God. The temple is the place in which God's presence dwells. Now, all believers together make up the living temple of Christ where his Spirit dwells.)