

THE TEMPLE WAS COMPLETED

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: EZRA 6:1-22



Nothing stops God from redeeming His people.

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

God worked through Darius and the temple was completed – The Temple rebuilding was first started under the reign of Cyrus who issued an edict to rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:2-4). This may have been as a result of Daniel's great influence and some suspect Daniel may have written the decree himself. Immediately following the decree the Jews returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the foundation of the Temple (Ezra 3:11). At this point the Samaritans (The Northern tribes who broke off to follow Jeroboam) began to oppose the work. The Jews then began to rebuild their own homes more than the temple (Hag 1:3-11).

It was not until 16 years later, at the encouragement of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah that the temple work was started again, only to be opposed by Tattenai the local governor. The Jews appealed that a search be done for the original edict by King Cyrus. Darius, now the king ordered the search and the edict was found.

In this passage we see how God moved on the heart of another secular leader in an astonishing way (Ezra 6:22) Darius retrieved the decree of Cyrus and gave his own order for the temple construction. The cost for the rebuilding was paid in full! Everything needed, including the animals for the sacrifice, were provided. If the Israelites were left to themselves, they would have been unable to afford both the cost of construction and the provision of animals. Once again, God provided! He paid the price and provided the sacrifice – all of grace!

The Passover was celebrated – In a continued testimony to the ongoing plan of God, the people celebrated and remembered 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 preserved the celebration of the Passover after this rededication of the temple. God ensured the lasting ordinance of the Passover would continue until it was fulfilled in Christ.

Artaxerxes sends Ezra to teach the people - About sixty years after the Passover was celebrated, God placed Ezra on the heart of another king. Ezra was sent by the king to the people to teach them God's law. When we read the letter Artaxerxes sent with Ezra, we see just how powerfully God can work on the heart of a King to accomplish His will.

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Where is Jesus?

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

After the rebuilding of Zerubbabel's Temple, 700 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, see Revelation 21:22, just as Christ's body (the church) is God's temple, see Ephesians 2:19-22. As a part of the church we are each individually God's temple, see 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.



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ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

Bible Passage: Zechariah 3:1-5

Connecting the passage to Christ:

The scene depicted is a courtroom where the accuser is about to bring a charge against Joshua who represents God's chosen. Before Satan can even open his mouth, the Lord rebukes him. No accusation can be brought because the Lord Himself has plucked His people like a brand out of the fire. He commands that new clothes be placed upon Joshua and these clothes are called pure vestments. When the old clothes are taken away so is the iniquity taken away. Standing by the whole time is the angel of the Lord, the Son of God, who declares that He will take away the iniquity of the defiled priest.

There is only one way that iniquity can be removed and only by one person: Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross. Paul uses this imagery in Ephesians 4:22 when he tells us to put off the old self, which is corrupted by sin and put on the new self that is created to be like God in true righteousness.

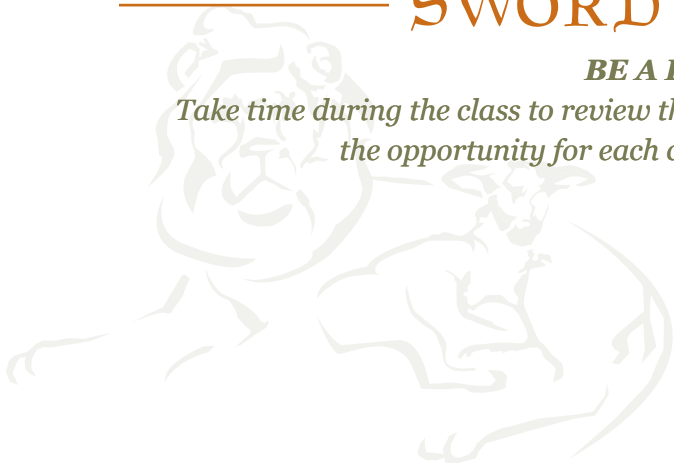
Questions for reflection:

- Who is the angel of the Lord who can remove the iniquity of Joshua? (Christ is the only one who can take away the iniquity of the people of God.)
- Who does the work to obtain righteousness, God or man? (God does the work. It is God who plucks the unrighteous from the fire like a brand and it is God who orders the clothes replaced and it is God who declares the iniquity removed. It is all of grace from first to last.)

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

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



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ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PASSOVER

Supplies

- a branch from a weed
- red paint
- a roll of craft paper

Prior to class, tape brown craft paper around the door post and lintel of the classroom door. Read the celebration of the Passover in Ezra 6:19-22. While that is read, have another teacher dip the branch in the red paint and mark the lintel and doorposts.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- Why does God make sure the feast of the Passover is not forgotten? (This feast, more so than any other, points to Christ and God's plan of salvation. God declared that this would be a lasting ordinance for Israel, see Exodus 12:14-30).
- What about the Passover reminds us of Christ? (The blood sacrificed for the people so death would pass over them points forward to Christ's blood shed on the cross so that we could be forgiven for our sins and eternal death would pass over us.)
- What is the most famous Passover in the New Testament? (The Last Supper meal Jesus had with His disciples before His death where He introduced the New Covenant in His blood.)



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THE WORK OF GRACE

Supplies

- nine sheets of brown construction paper
- two pairs of scissors
- two rolls of clear tape
- two 2" cardboard squares for templates
- a paper bag
- prizes for the winning team

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

Prior to class cut 60 two-inch squares out of three sheets of the construction paper. Tape six squares together to form cubes and make 10 cubes. Hide these cubes in a bag.

Ask for six volunteers to make two teams of three.

Take out a cube from the bag tell the children each team needs stack 10 2" construction paper cubes into a pyramid (like a bowling pin arrangement with four on the bottom, then three, two, and finally one on the top). This represents the building of the temple.

Tell the teams that the team who completes stacking first is the winner and will get a prize. Tell them that cutting the brown paper into two-inch squares and then taping them together can make the cubes. 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 if they say they are struggling and ask for help to beat the other team, you will help them.

As soon as they ask for help, give them the completed squares and instruct them to build the pyramid. As soon as they finish the 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.



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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 you could not receive help.)
- Even though the winning team stacked their pyramid, did they do the work? (No, ultimately you, the teacher, did all the work.)

Explain to the class that is what God does for us. All 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.

WHO DID WHAT?

In conjunction with the above activity, make a list of all the things God did to ensure the completion of the temple verses the things the Israelites did.

When the list is complete, there will be things like “build the walls” on the list of the Israelites’ accomplishments. Take time to ask the children the following questions to enhance their understanding of grace even more.

- Even though the exiles returning 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.)



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MAGIC TRICK

Supplies

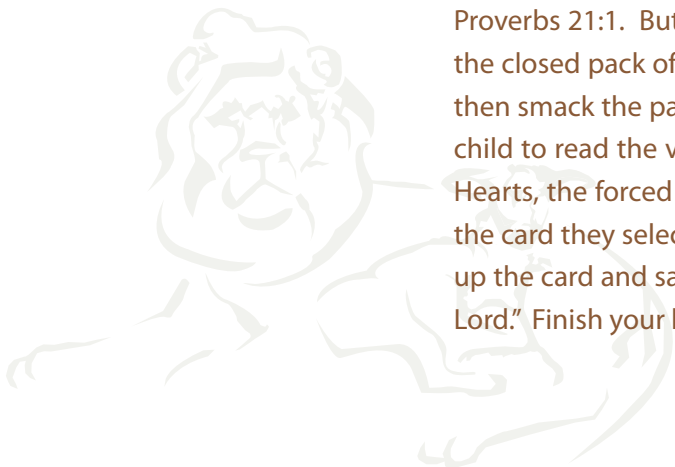
- deck of 52 playing cards

Here is a great trick to supplement this lesson which you can use to fascinate the children and make the point that the heart of a king is in the hand of the Lord, (Proverbs 21:1)

In the story of completing the temple God worked through King Darius to accomplish His plan. This card trick will illustrate that point. First, you need to practice forcing a card. The attached photos demonstrate how to force a person to choose a predetermined card. You place the card you want your subject to choose on the front of the deck. Then you explain that you will thumb through the cards until your subject tells you to stop. The card facing down when they tell you to stop is the card they choose. When you remove the top half of the deck, you use your three fingers to slide the top card down into the middle of the deck, where they asked you to stop. By doing this you move the force card down onto the second half of the cards. They think they chose a card randomly but you know that you forced a particular card on them.

The Trick: Purchase two identical decks of cards. Take the King of Hearts out of one deck and keep it in reserve. Secretly slip it into a particular child's Bible at Proverbs 21:1 before the class officially begins. Use the second complete deck for your trick. Put the King of Hearts on the top of the deck and explain to your class that you want to try out a magic trick with them. Pick a volunteer and force the King of Hearts on them as described above. Show the card to everyone but tell them not to tell you what it is. Place the cards back in their box and then go about teaching the lesson telling the class that you will complete the trick later. Make a point to tell the class that God moved on King Darius and earlier Cyrus to accomplish His plan.

Towards the end of class remember about the trick just as you mention that God controls the heart of the king. Tell the child with the Bible you set up to read Proverbs 21:1. But, just before he does. Say, Oh Yes I almost forgot my trick. Take the closed pack of cards in one hand. Ask for the Bible from the child in the other, then smack the pack of cards dramatically down on top of the Bible. Then ask the child to read the verse. When the child opens the Bible they will find the King of Hearts, the forced card. Have them hold it up to the class and point out that was the card they selected, found in the Bible. Have the child read the verse, then hold up the card and say, "Certainly it is true, the heart of the King is in the hand of the Lord." Finish your lesson there and do not tell anyone how you did the trick.



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Figure 1

Hold the deck of cards with three fingers over the pack. Put the card you want the audience to choose on top.



Figure 2

Flip through the deck with your thumb, asking the audience to say "stop" at any point in the deck.



Figure 3

Tell the audience their card is the one they told you to stop on. Grasp the top half of the deck, but as you do, slip the top card back onto the back half of the deck. This "forces" the top card (that you chose) to take the selected card's position. With a little practice you can do this so smoothly no one will know!



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PRAYER

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

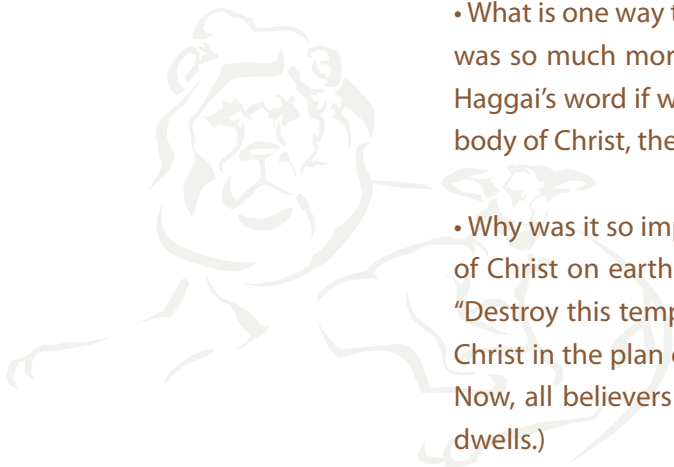
IN CLASS PROJECT

The first and second grade children can use the preschool coloring sheet and questions. Bring in an illustration of the temple to show the older children. Have them draw a picture of the completed temple with people all around celebrating.

FOR OLDER GRADES

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 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 is the image of Christ on earth prior to Christ. Jesus calls His own body the temple. He said, "Destroy this temple and I will raise it up in three days". 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.)



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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" (Isaiah 56:7).

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 for the presence of God, His house.

