

THE EXILES RETURN

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: EZRA 3:1-13



The STORY

Read Ezra 3:1-13 from the ESV Bible.

***Please note:** The discussion questions in the following sections are written to serve as a guide in teaching our youngest children. Three to six year olds are not going to be able to answer these questions like their older brothers and sisters. Please refer to the God's Story Preschool Curriculum Outline for additional ideas.*

After reading the story, use the following questions to involve the children in a discussion.

- What are the people trying to do? (They want to rebuild the temple.)
- What part of the temple did they finish? (They finished the foundation.)
- What did they do when the foundation was laid? (They shouted and praised God but some were sad because the old temple was more beautiful and they were sad that it was gone.)

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CRAFT QUESTIONS

Coloring sheets have been provided that exemplify today's lesson: Israelites shouting with joy with the foundation of the temple behind them. Engage the children by asking:

- Why are the people celebrating? (The people are celebrating that temple foundation was laid.)
- Did everyone celebrate or were some of the people sad? (Some of the people were sad.)
Go around and draw a tear on one of the men's eyes. Tell the children that some people were sad because the new temple was not going to be as nice as the old one.

SNACK QUESTIONS

While the children are eating the snack engage the children by asking:

- What was the temple built for? (The temple was God's house in Israel. It was where the people came to sacrifice animals in worship of God.)
- Do we have a temple building in which to worship God today? (No, we don't have a temple building to worship God today.)
- Do we have another kind of temple that is not a building? (Yes, God's Spirit comes into our hearts and lives within us. The people of Israel worshipped God through a priest. Jesus is our priest and we worship God in our hearts.)



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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 foundation of the new temple had been started the older men who had seen Solomon's temple began to weep. (Ezra 3:12-13). In Haggai 2:2-9, God speaks to Israel regarding their sadness over the new temple and how it doesn't measure up to that of Solomon. Haggai encourages Zerubbabel telling him that God's Spirit remains with His people. One day God will shake the heavens and the earth and then the glory of the house of God will be greater than even Solomon's temple.

Would the Temple of God be destroyed and rebuilt again? This shaking referred to another temple. Zerubbabel would die before the temple Haggai prophesied about would come. Jesus said to a group of Jews, "Destroy this temple and I will rebuild it in three days" (John 2:18-25).

Jesus is the new temple. When we become Christians we become a part of Christ's body – the church, and so we become a part of the new temple, see 1 Corinthians 3:16-17. God's new, most glorious temple is not man-made but God-made. The same presence of God that filled Solomon's temple fills the hearts of every Christian.

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.

