

# Rebuilding The Altar And The Temple

**EZRA 3:1-13**

## **MEMORY VERSE**

PSALM 136:1

“Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.”

## **WHAT YOU WILL NEED**

Several drinking straws and one large balloon per team.

Two balloons from the previous game and masking tape

Construction paper, butcher paper, scissors, markers, and glue sticks.

## **ATTENTION GRABBER**

### **Working Side By Side**

For this game you will need several drinking straws and one large balloon per team. The object is to see which team can blow up their balloon by working together.

Cut the straws into 3 equal pieces. Give each child a piece. Choose teams (number will depend on class size, 5 per team is a good number). Have the teams line up with their straws.

Give the first person in the line a balloon. The children will use the straw to blow the balloon up with one big breath. Then they will pass it to the next person who will insert their straw into the balloon and blow one big breath. It is important that they only blow one breath. They will also need to be careful not to let any air out of the balloon as it is passed. At the end of the line after everyone has had a chance to complete their blowing compare balloon size and determine a winner.

Talk to the children about how important it is to work together as a team. In today's lesson we will learn about how that God brought His people back to their homeland. We will learn how that they worked together to build the altar and the temple and we will see that God want us to be faithful to Him.

\*\*\*IMPORTANT – Save your balloons from this activity for another game later.

## LESSON TIME!

After 70 years of captivity, God's people were allowed to return to their homeland. King Cyrus released them with the permission to rebuild their temple and participate in worship ceremonies. God's judgment of His people had come to an end, but only after the people of Israel surrendered their pride and their idols.

God will not tolerate disobedience; He will discipline those whom He loves. As we have seen by studying the people of Israel, God blesses the path of obedience and disciplines those who would turn away from obedience. **God wants us to be faithful to Him.**

### EZRA 3:1-3

And when the seventh month had come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered together as one man to Jerusalem.

Then Jeshua the son of Jozadak and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and his brethren, arose and built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the Law of Moses the man of God.

Though fear had come upon them because of the people of those countries, they set the altar on its bases; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD, both the morning and evening burnt offerings.

Finally, after many years of rebellion, the people of Judah gathered together in their homeland to start rebuilding. First they would need to rebuild their lives and their relationship with God. God had taught them a lot during the 70 years of captivity. Next they would need to rebuild the temple of the Lord that the Babylonians had destroyed. The task of rebuilding the temple would be overwhelming; yet, because they knew God was with them, they were determined.

The sincerity of the people was evident in their desire to rebuild the altar before anything else was started. The Jews set up the altar as one of their first official acts. It symbolized God's presence and protection. It also demonstrated their commitment to serve God alone.

Zerubbabel sacrificed burnt offerings as the Law of Moses instructed (Leviticus 1-7). The sacrifices were very important because they demonstrated that the people who were seeking God's guidance were rededicating themselves to living as He commanded, and were daily coming to Him for forgiveness of sin. It's never too late to return to the Lord. A life of disobedience is a terrible thing, because it only brings suffering and hardship in one's life. The Jews did not want to go down that path again.

They were also afraid that they were going to be attacked by the surrounding people. Foreigners had been forced to resettle in the northern kingdom of Israel after Israel was defeated by the Assyrians and her people taken captive in 722 BC. This was a common practice of Assyrians in that day. They would control

their conquered people by resettling foreign people into the land they conquered. The Jews felt threatened because this group of people wanted to keep the land of Judah to themselves.

#### EZRA 3:4-5

They also kept the Feast of Tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings in the number required by ordinance for each day.

Afterwards they offered the regular burnt offering, and those for New Moons and for all the appointed feasts of the LORD that were consecrated, and those of everyone who willingly offered a freewill offering to the LORD.

Restoration with God starts with the heart. The people of God were restoring their worship once again and turning their hearts to God. Worship and praise came from the hearts of the people as they expressed their love for God.

The Feast of Tabernacles that they celebrated lasted seven days. During this time the people lived in temporary dwellings such as tents and booths. Their ancestors had done this years before as they journeyed through the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land. The feast would remind the people of God's past protection and guidance in the wilderness and of His continued love for them.

#### EZRA 3:6-9

From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD, although the foundation of the temple of the LORD had not been laid.

They also gave money to the masons and the carpenters, and food, drink, and oil to the people of Sidon and Tyre to bring cedar logs from Lebanon to the sea, to Joppa, according to the permission which they had from Cyrus king of Persia.

Now in the second month of the second year of their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the rest of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all those who had come out of the captivity to Jerusalem, began work and appointed the Levites from twenty years old and above to oversee the work of the house of the LORD.

Then Jeshua with his sons and brothers, Kadmiel with his sons, and the sons of Judah, arose as one to oversee those working on the house of God: the sons of Henadad with their sons and their brethren the Levites.

Now that the altar was established so that they could worship, the people set out to rebuild the temple foundation, but it would be no small task. They would face opposition from their neighbors and their lack of resources.

They had been carried off by the Babylonians when they were relatively strong, now they were few, weak, and surrounded by enemies. If ever they needed to rely on God's power, it was now. They realized the importance of obeying God from the heart, and not merely out of habit. If we want God's help when we undertake tasks we must first check to see that our relationship with Him is firmly established. **God wants us to be faithful to Him.**

Why was the temple begun first, even before the city wall? Wouldn't the wall protect them from their enemies? Well, if God wasn't going to protect them then no wall would provide protection for them. After all, the wall stood at one time, but God allowed them to be overtaken by Babylon. Now they were trusting in God's protection and provision.

It took from September to June just to prepare to build the temple. During this time the altar was built, materials were ordered and collected, and workers were hired. It was important to take the time to make preparations if the job was going to be done well. It was important to work together because that's how God wants His people to serve together in ministry.

### **“Let's Work Together”**

The goal of this game is to work as a team and finish “your share” of the work on the foundation of the temple. You will need the 2 balloons from the previous game and masking tape.

Before class, mark out with the tape a large rectangle in the middle of the floor. Choose 2 teams and have them stand around the rectangle. Each team should stand on 2 connecting sides of the rectangle (“L” shape). Blow up the balloons and hand them to the first person in each team.

On your command the children will be passing the balloon between their legs to the person behind them, then over their head to the next person, to their left with their right hand to the next person and to their right with their left hand. They will continue passing until they get to the end of the line in their team. The first team that gets the balloon to the end of their line has to wait for the other team to get their balloon to the end. At that point the person at the end of the line will walk up to the front of their team line. Then at your command go through the same process.

Keep doing this until everyone has gone through the line. When they are done gather the children and ask them what they noticed happening (the line began to move a little each time the person from the back of the line came forward). This shows us how that working together as brothers and sisters in the Lord's body we can make progress just as the Israelites did on the temple.

### EZRA 3:10-11

When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests stood in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the LORD, according to the ordinance of David king of Israel.

And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD: "For He is good, For His mercy endures forever toward Israel." Then all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

At last the temple foundation had been finished. Now it was time to celebrate what God had given them the ability to do. Completing the foundation required great effort on the part of all involved. Everyone praised God for what had been done. God had provided the talents, abilities, strength and leadership to do the job. With a God-given desire the people remained faithful to what God had called them to do. **God wants us to be faithful to Him.**

Faithfulness is a prerequisite for any task that God calls us to do. He is faithful to give us both the desire and the power to use our gifts for Him. We should always thank God for what He has done in and through us for His glory, knowing no matter how difficult the task may seem, praise to Him will be the end result.

The people of Israel had endured great suffering because of their sinful rebellion towards God, but now united together in heart-felt praise, they sang of God's goodness and love towards them. Though the people had been faithless in the past, God still remained faithful to them, for His love endures forever.

### EZRA 3:12-13

But many of the priests and Levites and heads of the fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first temple, wept with a loud voice when the foundation of this temple was laid before their eyes. Yet many shouted aloud for joy,

so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people, for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the sound was heard afar off.

Unfortunately, sin has grave consequences. We seem to see more clearly after our prideful, cold heart has melted with humble hot zeal for the Lord. It is only then, that we can look back at what we have done in our rebellious path, to see the devastation that we have caused. So it was for some at the celebration, after the celebration had begun they could only weep.

In contrast with the joy many people experienced on that occasion, a few of the older priests, Levites, and other family heads, who had seen the former glory of the temple of Solomon (destroyed 70 years earlier), were discouraged. Both emotions were legitimate. God's work among us can stimulate us both to rejoice over the goodness of His grace and to mourn over our sins that have required Him to intervene. **God wants us to be faithful to Him.**

Our lesson ends with a celebration of shouts of joy and sobs of sorrow, which was heard from far away. Obedience is necessary with God. We must walk each day in faithfulness to do all that He wants us to do. Walking faithfully produces beautiful blessings in our life.

## **“We Need Each Other to Do God’s Work!”**

This craft will be a project you can work on together to decorate the bulletin board or wall in your classroom. You will need construction paper, butcher paper, scissors, markers, and glue sticks.

Use a large sheet of butcher paper for the background. Using construction or another piece of butcher paper (different color), cut out a large circle. In the middle of the circle write, “We Need Each Other to Do God’s Work!” Next give each child a piece of regular paper. Have them trace their hands and write their names on the hands. They can then cut out the pictures of their hands and decorate them in any other way they would like to. Next paste the hands to the bulletin board.

As you do this craft talk about the importance of working together while doing God’s work and what it means to be faithful to God.

## **PRAYER**

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to be faithful and obedient to God. Also help them to remember that if they ever do sin they have an advocate in Christ Jesus. All they need to do is to pray and ask the Lord’s forgiveness from their heart and the Lord, who is “faithful and just to forgive sin,” will forgive them. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.