



Week 2

Ezra 3-4

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Construction of the Temple part 1

Day 1- Ezra 3-4

Read Ezra 3-4 in your Bible.

- Pray as you read, asking the Holy Spirit to guide you in understanding, praise, confession, thanksgiving, and petition in light of the truth you are reading.
- Underline/highlight key words, phrases, and verses that stand out to you.

Day 2- Ezra 3:1-6

1. How is the people's unity of heart and purpose expressed in verse 1?

2. In Babylon, God's people had been surrounded by myriads of pagan temples and shrines. They had not been able to offer sacrifices because this could only be done in Jerusalem. Now many years later, back in Jerusalem where do they turn for instruction in regard to the altar and sacrifices according to verse 2?

3. According to verse 3, what were the people feeling and what did they do about it?

For Discussion: Does obedience bring safety? Why or Why not?

Picture and Ponder: “When you respond to danger by worshiping, you not only declare, you *celebrate* God’s power to protect you. When you respond to intimidation by worshiping God, you brandish God’s truth, which overcomes the lies and insinuations of the enemy. When you respond to temptation by worshiping, you relish the satisfaction that only God gives, of which temptation is but a cheap imitation.”- James M. Hamilton Jr.

4. Verses 4 and 5 tell us how the people resumed proper worship to the One True God. Why do you think the Festival of Booths would be especially meaningful to these returning exiles? (Remember the Feast of Booths was a celebration reminding the people of God’s faithfulness and protection to their ancestors when he brought them out of Egypt and they lived in the wilderness forty years.)

Day 3- Ezra 3:7-13

5. What happened when the foundation of the temple was laid according to verses 10-11?

Digging Deeper: Verse 10 tells us that their praise and singing was according to the directions of King David. Look up 1 Chronicles 16:4-36 and read David’s directions and Song of Thanks. How were the exiles experiencing verses 34 -36 of David’s song? Read the song again and reflect on God’s wondrous works in your life.

6. In the midst of joyful praise and thanksgiving, who is weeping?

7. Even though God had restored them, sin had cost them dearly and that was most clear to those who had lived the longest. What had sin cost them? (Think about: the grandeur of Solomon's temple with all the wealth and resources Solomon had, the quantity of people living in the promised land, the Ark of the Covenant is not mentioned as being there.) What impact does this have on you?



At this point in redemptive history the people are seeing prophecies partially fulfilled which brings joy and thankfulness for what God has done, but it also brings a sense of disappointment and longing for the complete fulfillment that was prophesied that they still looked forward to. On this side of the resurrection we look back and see how Jesus is the glorious fulfillment of the true and final temple- the facilitator of relationship with God and God himself dwelling with us. Through Jesus, God lives with us, his redeemed people! This was the true longing that was not yet fulfilled for the people of Ezra's day.

Does this bring shouts of joy to your heart? Do you long for the presence of God? If not, talk to him about it, he already knows. Spend time in conversation with him, responding to what he has said in his Word. And remember we still look forward to that final fulfillment when God will wipe away every tear and there will be a new heaven and earth with Jesus as the glorious temple (Rev. 21:4,22).

Day 4- Ezra 4:1-5, 24

8. The people who came and offered help to Zerubbabel in verses 1-2, had been sacrificing to God as they claimed, but they also had continued to worship their idols (2 Kings 17:33). Why were Zerubbabel and the other leaders wise to refuse their help?

For Discussion: How have you ever compromised your principles so as not to offend people, or compromised to do what seems logical to the eyes of the world?

9. What kinds of opposition did the people face as they began to build the temple according to verses 4-5?

Scholar's Note: In Hebrew, "to discourage" means literally "to weaken the hands"; "to make afraid" means "to terrify" and often describes the fear aroused in a battle situation.
–Expositor's Commentary



We can tell that the people who approached Zerubbabel with offers of help were not true worshippers and servants, but adversaries because of their hateful response in verses 4-5. If they had truly desired to serve and worship God in his temple they would have been glad the work was getting accomplished even if they could not have a part in it. This episode cautions us to examine our own hearts in regard to worship and ministry.

Reflect on how you respond when...

- something at church is not according to your preference?
- someone else is asked to do something you really wanted to do?
- you are not given the credit you think you deserve?

What is ruling your heart, is it the desire for influence, importance and control or for God to be glorified?

10. According to verse 24, what was the effect of the discouragement, fear and frustration experienced by the returnees?

Day 5- Ezra 4:6-23

This section of the chapter takes place during the return under Ezra, which was around 80 years after Zerubbabel. By the time Ezra came to Jerusalem the temple had been completed for 50 years. The opposition recounted in these verses was what the people endured during the rebuilding of the city and the wall. Ezra purposefully includes this account here to emphasize the ongoing opposition the returning exiles faced over the years and God's power to help them overcome it.

11. From the information in verses 9-10, list the categories of people that are against the Jews.

12. In verses 13-16, what threats do the accusers say will come about if the city and walls are rebuilt?

For Discussion: Why is faithfulness and obedience to God regarded as a threat by the world?

13. How did King Artaxerxes respond to the letter according to verses 21-23?
How does verse 23 describe the way the people were stopped from rebuilding?

Digging Deeper: Look up John 15:18-19. Why should believers not be surprised or dismayed when we are opposed by the world?



King Artaxerxes was the king that Nehemiah served as cupbearer. The events in verses 21-23 were probably the catalyst that spurred Nehemiah to return to Jerusalem. The situation looked very bleak to the people in Jerusalem, but God was preparing someone to come to the rescue. Jesus tells us in John 16:33 that in this world we will have trouble, but then he tells us to take heart- which means have courage, be brave, be confident, be of good cheer because he has overcome the world. We know Jesus has already won, but until that victory is made evident to the world, we need to act the way Jesus told us to act in the face of opposition and adversity.

- What does confidence, cheer and bravery in the face of hostility show to the world about God?
- How do you respond when facing opposition because of your faith?
- Maybe you haven't faced much opposition because of your faith. Why might that be true?
- What can you do to prepare for a time when you may face hostility?

Spend time now thanking God that you are secure because of Jesus' victory. Confess to God your fear or failure to show him to the world. Ask for strength and help from the Holy Spirit to be a witness of God's grace and truth wherever you are.

One Thing: Look back over this week's study. Pick one thing that God impressed on you, convicted you about, or something new that you learned and write it here.

How will knowing this impact the way you think and act?