

Joyful Worship Restored

Lesson Text: **Ezra 3:1-7**

Bible Background: **Ezra 1:1-3:7**

Devotional Reading: **Matthew 23:29-39**

Keep in Mind: *“They kept also the feast of tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required.” (Ezra 3:4~KJV)*

The people followed the rules for celebrating the Festival of Shelters and offered the proper sacrifices each day. (Ezra 3:4~CEB)

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: **KNOW** that we should celebrate and express thanks to God for His goodness; **DESIRE** to praise God for His goodness; and **PRAISE** God for His goodness.

In Focus

Today’s lesson is about how believers should ask God to help us maintain Joyful worship of Him, who is worthy to be praised.

Lesson Text

Ezra 3:1-7~NKJV

1 When the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem.

2 Then stood up Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God.

3 They set the altar upon his bases; for fear was upon them because of the people of those countries: and they offered burnt offerings thereon unto the Lord, even burnt offerings morning and evening.

4 They kept also the feast of tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required;

5 And afterward offered the continual burnt offering, both of the new moons, and of all the set feasts of the Lord that were consecrated, and of every one that willingly offered a freewill offering unto the Lord.

6 From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt offerings unto the Lord. But the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid.

7 They gave money also unto the masons, and to the carpenters; and meat, and drink, and oil, unto them of Zidon, and to them of Tyre, to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea of Joppa, according to the grant that they had of Cyrus king of Persia.

Contemporary English Version- Ezra 3:1-7

1 During the seventh month^[a] of the year, the Israelites who had settled in their towns went to Jerusalem.

2 The priest Joshua son of Jozadak, together with the other priests, and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and his relatives rebuilt the altar of Israel's God. Then they were able to offer sacrifices there by following the instructions God had given to Moses, the man of God.

3 And they built the altar where it had stood before,^[b] even though they were afraid of the people who were already living around there. Then every morning and evening they burned sacrifices and offerings to the Lord.

4 The people followed the rules for celebrating the Festival of Shelters and offered the proper sacrifices each day.

5 They offered sacrifices to please the Lord,^[c] sacrifices at each New Moon Festival, and sacrifices at the rest of the Lord's festivals. Every offering the people had brought voluntarily was also presented to the Lord.

6 Although work on the temple itself had not yet begun, the people started offering sacrifices on the Lord's altar on the first day of the seventh month of that year.

7 King Cyrus of Persia had said the Israelites could have cedar trees brought from Lebanon to Joppa by sea. So they sent grain, wine, and olive oil to the cities of Tyre and Sidon as payment for these trees, and they gave money to the stoneworkers and carpenters.

The Lesson

The People, Places and Times

The Feast of Booths (*or the Feast of Tabernacles or Sukkot*). This celebration is a harvest festival that lasts for one week. Jeshua is a descendant of Jozadak, who was the high priest at the time Judah went into exile. Zerubbabel was appointed governor of Judah either by Darius or his predecessor, Cambyses, about 525 B.C. The altar was built on old foundations, underscoring the continuity with the first Temple. The text notes the reinstatement of sacrifices was not accompanied by the laying of the Temple's foundations. Fear of reaction by neighboring people accounted for this delay.

Background: Throughout the history of Israel, we see a pattern where one ruler obeyed God and his successor would disobey and lead the nation into a path of unrighteousness. In the historical era prior to our lesson, King Josiah sought to cleanse and restore true worship among the people of Israel. He rebuilt the Temple and led the people in obeying the Law of Moses to follow all the required feasts and sacrifices and the Passover.

Jehoiakim's father, [King Josiah](#), had returned Judah to the Lord by tearing down idol shrines and restoring obedience to God's Law ([2 Kings 23:19–25](#)). After Josiah's death, his son [Jehoahaz](#) was made king by the people. Jehoahaz did not follow in the footsteps of his father but "did evil in the sight of the Lord" ([2 Kings 23:32](#)). Jehoahaz only reigned three months before he was taken into captivity by the king of Egypt, who replaced Jehoahaz with his brother Eliakim ([2 Kings 23:26](#); [2 Chronicles 36:5](#)). The Egyptian king renamed the 25-year-old Eliakim "**Jehoiakim**."

Jehoiakim *was* twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And he did evil in the sight of the Lord his God. The people disobeyed God, and the chief priests defiled the Temple. The Lord sent prophets to warn them, but the people mocked and misused them. God's wrath against them became unquenched. The king of Chaldees came and slew them unmercifully: young, old, men, and women alike. The king took everything of value in the land and removed everything from the Temple before he burned it and destroyed the wall of Jerusalem. Those who remained were taken into captivity for 70 years, the time God appointed."

I. In Depth

1. Worship Restored (Ezra 3:1–5) The Children of Israel gathered in Jerusalem after their release from Babylon to find their city and Temple in ruins. Jeshua and the other priests worked to restore the altar to observe the customary feasts with the people. Over time, the morale of the Children of Israel suffered after their bondage, and their spirits were in ruins like their precious Jerusalem: broken and, in many ways, desolate.

The Feast of Tabernacles, which they celebrated, is like our Thanksgiving. It commemorates the 40 years they worshiped in tents while in the wilderness. As with all required feasts and observances, it came with a promise and restoration of God’s covenant with His people. Worshiping God is the best way to re-establish joy after emerging from a difficult time.”

2. “The Temple Restored (Ezra 3:6–7) The Temple of God represents a special place, and the things inside had a special meaning. The Children of Israel endured many transitions while serving their God. They carried the Ark of the Covenant, they served Him in a tent, and they built a beautiful Temple; so His presence could continually dwell among them.

The people were moved as they watched Jeshua and the other priests rebuild the Temple to its original order. The skilled tradesmen gave their time and skill to restore the Temple. King Cyrus of Persia preserved the pieces which belonged in the Temple and returned them when the Children of Israel returned to Jerusalem. He also gave a grant to help with its completion.

More important than the dedication of the people to rebuild the physical Temple was their renewed spirit, the true Temple, figuratively speaking. What good is a temple if no one comes to make sacrifices to God? The Children of Israel in the past failed to see the significance in observing the required sacrifices. They didn’t make sacrifices for quite some time before going into captivity. After deliverance from their captors, the Children of Israel longed for those old traditions; their significance “no doubt, brought new meaning to their hearts.

It is important that we, too, recognize the significance of God and the Temple where His presence dwells.”

II. Take Aways

III. Closing Prayer



Our Read-Ahead for: 02 July 2023

Joyful Worship Restored

Monday: Jesus' Lament over Jerusalem (**Matthew 23:29-39**)

Tuesday: The Coming Judgment (**Jeremiah 7:30-8:3**)

Wednesday: Jerusalem Falls to the Babylonians (**2nd Kings 24:1-12**)

Thursday: The Destruction of Jerusalem (**2nd Chronicles 36:15-21**)

Friday: Rebuild a House for God (**Ezra 1:1-8**)

Saturday: The People Respond (**Ezra 2:64 -70**)

Sunday: Restoring the Worship of God (**Ezra 3:1-7**)