

## Temple Restored

Lesson Text: **Ezra 3:8-13**

Bible Background: **Ezra 3:8-13**

Devotional Reading: **Psalm 66:1-12**

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**Keep in Mind:** *“They sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. (Ezra 3:11 NKJV)*

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### Aim for Change

“By the end of the lesson, we will: **KNOW** that we should find joy in restoration; **FEEL** joy in restoration; and **PRAISE** God for restoration.

### In Focus

*“God’s Word promises that He would cause us to triumph in His name and bring us to a place of victory. In today’s lesson, we will read how God uses Jeshua, the Levitical priests, and Zerubbabel, the governor of Jerusalem, to restore the Temple of God after returning from exile in Babylon.”*

### Lesson Text

**Ezra 3:8-13~NKJV**

**8** Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, began Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the remnant of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all they that were come out of the captivity unto Jerusalem; and appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to set forward the work of the house of the Lord.

**9** Then stood Jeshua with his sons and his brethren, Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together, to set forward the workmen in the house of God: the sons of Henadad, with their sons and their brethren the Levites.

**10** And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of David king of Israel.

**11** And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a

**great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.**

**12** But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy:

**13** 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 noise was heard afar off.

## The Lesson

### **The People, Places and Times**

**Jeshua:** A high priest of Judah, Jeshua (also called Joshua) was born during the exile of the Jews in Babylon (587–538 B.C.). Before the exile, high priests had been subordinated to the kings of Judah. But when King Cyrus of Persia permitted the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their Temple, Jeshua accepted a major leadership role along with the Jewish governor, Zerubbabel, who remained subject to the Persian ruler. Together, the pair saw to it an altar was erected and worship restored in Jerusalem.

**Levites:** Descendants of Levi served as assistants to the priests in the worship system of Israel. As a Levite, Aaron and his sons and their descendants were charged with the responsibilities of the priesthood, presenting burnt offerings, and leading the people in worship.

**Background:** The book of Ezra is an account of Jewish history, which records their release from their 70 years of exile in Babylon as prophesied by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 25:11) and the return of the first wave of Jews in 537 B.C. through the second wave in 457–458 B.C. The first half of Ezra chronicles the rebuilding of the Temple after its destruction in 586 B.C. under the leadership of Jeshua, the high priest, and Zerubbabel, the governor of Jerusalem. One of the key tasks of these leaders in restoring the Temple is to reinstitute worship according to the Law of Moses by offering up sacrifices unto God. The people were called to consecrate themselves and submit freewill offerings to the Lord; and provide resources and talent to rebuild the Temple (Ezra 3:1–7). By the hand of God, the Jews also received favor from King Cyrus as he brought back the vessels of worship from the house of the Lord that King Nebuchadnezzar stole during their conquest (Ezra 1:7). Restoring worship and honor to God was very important to accomplishing the task of rebuilding the Temple and turning the people's hearts back to God since their captivity was a consequence of their idolatry.

## I. In Depth

**1. The Temple Work Begins (Ezra 3:8–9)** Jeshua, the high priest, and the Levitical priesthood set the tone for the work ahead through worship and putting God in His rightful place after years of captivity. Jeshua and Zerubbabel, governor of Jerusalem under King Cyrus' rule, led the way by appointing men 20 years old and older to supervise the work of restoring the house of God. As the first wave of Jews returned from exile in Babylon, there was no question about their first task: to restore the place where the presence of the Lord dwelled. The rebuilding of the Temple was the first step in regaining their statehood as a nation again under God's protective covering.

**Ezra 3:7;** Noted money was given to the contractors (artisans, carpenters, and masons) and food, drink, and oil given to neighboring provinces (Tyre and Zidon) to allow for safe passage of construction materials between ports in Lebanon and Joppa. King Cyrus of Persia, who was under God's orchestration, provided authorization and gave the order. As the people worshiped, God made provision for the work of the Temple to begin; physically and spiritually, the foundation was laid.”

**2. The Temple Work Incites Praise (Ezra 3:10–11)** As the foundation of the Temple is restored, the Levitical priesthood continues in a posture of worship by wearing their vestments; specifically, the Levitical priests and descendants of Asaph led the charge of praise as outlined by King David. The priest blew the trumpets as a signal of victory and the descendants of Asaph, who historically have been noted as musicians and singers, played the cymbals (1 Chronicles 15:16–19). It was absolutely for worship to accompany the repair of the foundation, and as this monumental event occurred, it evoked the people's praise to God.

Taking a page from David's psalm book, they gave thanks unto the Lord for His goodness and mercy, which endures forever (Psalm 136:1, 11). As the foundation was laid, the Children of Israel were boisterous in their praise and shouted unto God with a voice of triumph. After 70 years in captivity, many who survived did not think they would ever see their homeland again; therefore, it was a joyous occasion to witness a new beginning; God's restoration at work in their lives.

When we think of the goodness of the Lord and all that He has done for us, it should evoke praise in our heart as well. Throughout God's Word, we see examples of His loving-kindness to restore and redeem His people. In fact, God's very nature is one of mercy and grace. The greatest example of God's grace is His redemptive work through Jesus Christ our Lord to accomplish His original intent to commune with humanity.

**3. The Temple Work Sparks Lament and Joy (Ezra 3:12–13)** While there was great joy in the repair of the Temple’s foundation, it was also met with sadness. In verse 12, the King James Version uses the term “ancient men” to accentuate that the tribal fathers who seen the glory of the former house wept loudly as the foundation of the Temple was laid. Having witnessed the splendor of the former Temple and the consequences of their sins had led them into captivity in the first place. These elders may have grieved, but at the same time, they recognized the goodness of God and longed for His presence again. The praises and lamenting were intertwined and not discernible between the two because both were loud.

There are times in worship where you may be in awe of the presence of God and His goodness, but also there is a realization of your sinfulness. We are bound in this realm and limited in our level of experience of God’s presence. However, as our spirits yearn to be in His matchless presence, the Holy Spirit (who gives us a foretaste of what’s to come) makes intercession for us “with groans and moans that are too deep to discern (Romans 8:18–27). Regardless of the context of our cry, we can be confident that our Father hears our heart and cares about the cry (Psalm 34:17)”

## **II. Take Aways**

## **III. Closing Prayer**



**Our Read-Ahead for: 09 July 2023**

## **Temple Restored**

**Monday:** A Great and Wonderful House (2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 2:1-9)

**Tuesday:** Building a House for God's Name (1<sup>st</sup> Kings 8:14-21)

**Wednesday:** My Name Shall Be There (1<sup>st</sup> Kings 8:22-30)

**Thursday:** A House of Prayer (Matthew 21:10-16)

**Friday:** Make a Joyful Noise to God (Psalm 66:1-12)

**Saturday:** Lead Me in Your Righteousness (Psalm 5)

**Sunday:** Tears of Joy (Ezra 3:8-13)