

# SHARE THE BIBLE LESSON

## WEEK 38

### God brought about the restoration of the temple

Ezra 1:1–6:22



## DAY 1

God moved Cyrus to allow the Jews to return home •  
Ezra 1:1–2:70

### READ

Ezra 1; 2:64–70

### EXPLAIN

#### The truth of Ezra 1:1–70

God used Cyrus for His plan, but what was God's plan? To have a people of His own, who would dwell in His presence and worship Him. He rescued Israel from Egypt for this purpose (Exod 19:5–6), and 480 years after that, He provided the temple as the place where this would happen (1 Kings 6:1). At the temple God lived among His people (8:11) and His people entered His presence through prayer and worship (8:30–53). Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed the temple, but when God moved Cyrus to issue a decree for the people to return and rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:2–4), He showed that His plan had not changed. He moved the hearts of His people—especially many priests—to restore them to Himself (1:5). He even moved Cyrus to restore the original vessels Solomon had made for temple worship (1:7–11). He was undoing what Nebuchadnezzar had done (2 Kings 25:14–15), just as God said He would (Jer 27:22). So in 537 BC, Zerubbabel and 50,000 Jews, along with 8,000 animals and the holy vessels, returned and settled in Judea (Ezra 2:1, 64–65).

### ASK

1. What was God's original plan for Israel?  
*God called them to worship Him as His kingdom of priests and holy nation.*
2. How was Solomon's temple part of this plan?  
*God chose to be present and worshiped at Solomon's temple.*
3. What did God promise through Jeremiah?  
*He promised that after 70 years in exile, Cyrus would allow Israel to return to their land.*
4. How did God keep this promise?  
*God caused Cyrus to issue a decree, and He caused some Jews to decide to return.*

### DISCUSS

1. How was the return from exile like a second exodus? (Consider God's power over rulers, entrance into the promised land, possession of gold, and the overall purpose.)
2. How is Cyrus' decree an illustration of God's complete power and control over all things?

## DAY 2

God enabled temple worship to be restored • Ezra 3:1–13

### READ

Ezra 3:1–13

### EXPLAIN

#### The truth of Ezra 3:1–13

If the Jews were afraid of the enemies surrounding them (Ezra 3:3), why didn't they build walls first? Because they trusted God for protection and put worship first. They had their first holy assembly in 70 years (3:1), and they built the altar first so that they could offer the proper sacrifices and observe the proper festivals as soon as possible (3:2–6; Lev 1:3–17; 23:24–44). Working out from the altar, they next laid the temple's foundations. Again God used Cyrus (Ezra 3:7), confirming again His plan to have a people specially chosen to worship Him. Even so, this temple was not like Solomon's temple (3:12). It was smaller and less ornate, and it also lacked God's glory residing within (Hag 2:1–4; Zech 4:9–10). But it was still a sign of God's presence with His people (Hag 2:5), and a sign of an even more glorious temple to come in the millennial kingdom (Hag 2:7; Ezek 40–48). Ultimately, Solomon's temple, the second temple, and the millennial temple all point forward to the perfect fulfillment when God and the Lamb will themselves be the temple (Rev 21:22).

### ASK

1. How long had it been since Israel had gathered together for a holy assembly?  
*Seventy years.*
2. What did the people build first and second?  
*First, the altar. Second, the temple's foundation.*
3. Why did they build the altar (not walls) first?  
*To put worship of God first.*
4. Why did some men weep after the temple foundation was laid?  
*Because the new temple did not come close to the glory of Solomon's temple.*

### DISCUSS

1. Is God's purpose for you the same as it was for Israel? Why is it important to prioritize worship? How do you prioritize worship in your family?
2. When you are faced with the pressures of life, do you trust God and put worship first? Can you think of times you have let your own human activity get in the way of worship?

## DAY 3

God enabled the temple to be completed • Ezra 4:1–6:22

### READ

Ezra 4:1–5; 4:24–6:22

### EXPLAIN

#### The truth of Ezra 4:1–6:22

There are always enemies to God's people and true worship (Ezra 4:1–2). In this case, the enemies were the Samaritans. The Samaritans managed to halt work on the temple for 16 years (4:24). When the people finally resumed work, Tattenai asked the Jews if they had permission to build (5:3). Yet again, God was in control. Not only did He allow work to continue while Tattenai communicated with Darius (5:5), but He also worked through the politics to make things even better

(5:6–6:5). Through Darius, God prohibited anyone from interfering (6:6–7), and He caused the Jews' enemies to provide for all the costs (6:8–10). Blessed by God's providence and encouraged by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah (5:1), the people finished the temple in 516 BC, 20 years after it was begun (6:13–15). The people realized that the actions even of the world's most powerful kings (6:14–15) were ultimately controlled by God to accomplish His word (6:22). They also knew the appropriate response: worship. That's why they celebrated the Passover (6:19–22), because God's purpose in restoring His people is so that they will worship Him.

DAY 3 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

**ASK** 

1. Who discouraged the Israelites from building the temple?  
*The Samaritans.*
2. How did God overcome the opposition?  
*He caused Darius to make the Samaritans pay for the temple.*
3. How did God display His sovereign power in the Jews' return and rebuilding of the temple?  
*God used three of the world's most powerful rulers to fulfill His word (Cyrus, Darius, Artaxerxes).*

4. How does Israel's return and new temple encourage us today?  
*It shows us that we can trust God to make us His special people to worship Him forever.*

**DISCUSS** 

1. What are some ways God's people are opposed today? Why must you be careful to worship and serve only with other genuine Christians?
2. What were you saved for (1 Pet 2:9–12)? (Hint: it is more than just getting out of hell or getting into heaven.)

**DAY 4***Jesus and the Samaritan woman • John 4:1–26***READ** 

John 4:1–26

**EXPLAIN** **The truth of John 4:19–26**

Have you heard of Samaritans before? Who were they? The Samaritans were born from Jews left in the land who married Gentiles brought into the land after the fall of the northern tribes. They worshiped of the true God with worship of pagan gods (2 Kgs 17:26–34), so Israel's leaders wisely refused to unite with them in worship (Ezra 4:2–3). But centuries later, Jesus, a Jew, was willing to cross all social and religious boundaries in order to speak to this sinful Samaritan woman (John 4:7, 16–18). The woman asked Jesus to clarify a disagreement between Samaritans and Jews: Is God to be worshiped on Mount Gerizim (Samaritans) or in Jerusalem (Jews) (4:20)? Jesus answered that He was beginning a new era of worship. In the past, worship was focused around a chosen place (4:21). But now true worshipers worship God in spirit and truth (4:24). Through Christ and the Holy Spirit dwelling within believers, true worship depends not on a place but upon the state of your heart (4:24). So through Christ, all people, whether Jew, Samaritan, or Gentile, can be united in pure worship.

**ASK** 

1. Who were the Samaritans?  
*The children of Jews and Gentiles who married together and mixed their religions together.*
2. Why did Israel's leaders reject the Samaritans' offer to help rebuild the temple?  
*In order to protect the purity of their worship.*
3. Where did the Samaritans worship?  
*Mount Gerizim.*
4. How can Jews and Samaritans now worship together?  
*When they are united in Christ and worship in spirit (a right heart) and truth (according to the Bible).*

**DISCUSS** 

1. When you go to church, are you actually worshipping? What are some things you can do before church to ready your heart and mind for worship? Can you worship outside of church?
2. True believers are one in Christ. But what are some differences between you and your fellow Christians that can cause you wrongly to look down on them?

## DAY 5

God and the Lamb will be the temple • Revelation 21:22–27

### READ

Revelation 21:22–27

### EXPLAIN

#### The truth of Revelation 21:22

Christians worship in spirit and truth, not at a particular place (John 4:21, 24). So does the temple matter anymore? Yes, because it stands for God's purpose from beginning to end. The temple is wherever God is with His people, a place of holiness and worship. This is how it was in Eden before sin. This is how it was with the tabernacle and Solomon's temple, and Zerubbabel's temple also represented God's presence with His people. Today God is present in the "temple" of individual Christians (1 Cor 6:19) and the church as a whole (1 Cor 3:16). Someday there will also be a glorious temple in the millennial kingdom (Hag 2:7; Ezek 40–48). But after that, God's original purpose will be completed when Eden is made new (Rev 22–5). When you enter heaven, you will enter the ultimate temple. It will not be a physical structure; rather, God and the Lamb will themselves be the temple (21:22). And since His presence will completely fill the New Heaven and New Earth (21:3), the whole place will be filled with His holiness and the worship of His people forever.

### ASK

1. What is God's purpose for mankind from beginning to end?  
*To worship in His presence in perfect holiness.*
2. What are the different temples mentioned in the Bible?  
*Eden, the tabernacle, Solomon's temple, Zerubbabel's temple, Jesus (John 2:19), Christians, the church, the millennial temple, the temple in heaven (Rev 11:19), God and the Lamb in the New Creation. In all these God was or is present with His people..*
3. Who will be in the final temple?  
*Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life (Christians).*

### DISCUSS

1. How is God present among His people right now (John 14:16–17)?
2. Are you amazed that God desires to spend eternity with us? How should you respond (Pss 15:1–2; 27:4–5).

## NEXT WEEK

### God guided Israel to repentance

Ezra 7:1–10:44

