

**THE GOOD HAND OF GOD RESTORING  
AND PRESERVING HIS PEOPLE  
(A Study of Ezra, Nehemiah, & Esther)**

**Lesson Four: The Work of Rebuilding the Temple  
(Ezra 3: 7 - 4: 5 & 24)**

**INTRODUCTION:** When the first group of Jews returned to Jerusalem from captivity in Babylon, they immediately rebuilt the altar of sacrifice indicating worship of God was their first priority (Ezra 3: 1-6). Through the blood of the sacrifices they found assurance of God's forgiveness for the past sin that led them into captivity, and confidence that God's presence was with them moving forward. Attention is then turned to rebuilding of the temple with the foundation being laid within six months of their return (Ezra 3: 7-13).

**1. THE PASSION OF THE PEOPLE** - Motivated by love for God, all the returning Jews became enthusiastically involved in rebuilding the temple in a beautiful picture of sacrificial giving, teamwork, & organization, with EACH PERSON employing their gifts and talents to complete the work (3: 7-9).

*Application: He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.*            Ephesians 4: 16 (NLT)

**3. THE PATTERN FOLLOWED** - The spiritual leaders, the priests and the Levites, were given responsibility to oversee the work and the workers to ensure everything was done in accordance with the BIBLE'S BLUEPRINT for the temple (notice double mention of "oversee" in 3: 8-9).

*Application: And He gave some as apostles, & some as prophets, & some as evangelists, & some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ...*

Ephesians 4: 11-12

**3. THE PRAISE TO GOD** - In their long dark night of exile in a foreign land they were unable to find within them a song of praise to sing to God (Psalm 137: 1-4), but now they cannot stop praising God in song for His LOVINGKINDNESS in restoring His people (3: 11 with Jeremiah 33: 1-11).

*Application: Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.*

Hebrews 13: 15

#### **4. THE PARALYSIS THAT HALTED THE WORK - Two factors stopped the work on the temple:**

- **NOSTALGIA** from within - The adults old enough to remember Solomon's temple, instead of praising God when the foundation for the new temple was laid, wept in disappointment believing the new temple paled in comparison. This infected the community with a mood of gloom and futility; that the temple to be rebuilt, would never match the grandeur of the old temple or the expectations of the older adults (3: 12-13).

##### **Application:**

- God's people are never to equate spiritual **SUCCESS** with or put their trust in material blessing, nicer facilities, or greater numbers. This was one of the grave mistakes that led the Jews into captivity (Jeremiah 7).
  - If you are not careful, spiritual nostalgia will lead to longing for the past, complaining about the present, & dreading the future. This not only produces **INGRATITUDE** for what God is doing today, but creates a sideline **GRUMBLER** who discourages the faith of others and criticizes leadership (Haggai 2: 2-5, 9; Zechariah 4: 6-10; Is. 43: 18-21).
  - In running the Christian race we are not admonished to look **BACK**, but look **FORWARD** to what God has for us next (Philippians 3: 13-14).
  - Focus on Christ-like character development that is not dependent on **EXTERNAL CRUTCHES**. If my walk with God, joy in Christ, or peace with God is dependent on anything external, how authentic is it? (Philippians 4: 11-13; Ephesians 3: 14-21)
- **OPPOSITION** from without - Already struggling with discouragement from within, the external enemies of God attack through fear and intimidation. The weakened faith of the community crumbles under the pressure of the attacks and the work on the temple is halted for fifteen years (4: 1-5, 24).

##### **Application:**

- No work for God will be without opposition and every tactic will be employed by the enemy to stop God's Work (1 Peter 4: 12-14).
- Overcome **FEAR** of the enemy by **FAITH** in God (Psalms 56 & 57, 1 Peter 3: 14-15).