

Completion, Dedication Of The Temple

Ezra 6:13-22

MEMORY VERSE

EZRA 6:16

“Then the children of Israel, the priests and the Levites and the rest of the descendants of the captivity, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

A “Learning about Forgiveness” template for each child in your class and one brown paper bag.

Drawing paper and markers.

A bowl, a towel and pitcher with water to wash hands, a table cloth or sheet, a flashlight (to represent a candle), pot-pourri (to represent incense), napkins, assorted green vegetables (lettuce), grape juice, saltine crackers, and lunch meat cut into 4 pieces.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Learning about Forgiveness

In the Old Testament, animals were sacrificed to cover people’s sin. The Bible says that the “wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). In other words, the punishment for our sin is death. God provided a way of forgiveness through His Son Jesus. But before Jesus died on the cross, God gave His people a picture of Jesus’ death through the animal sacrifices. When the innocent lamb was slain and the priest prayed, laying the sins of the people on the lamb, it was a beautiful picture of how Jesus would one day take upon Himself the punishment for our sins. We do not have to do animal sacrifices anymore; when Jesus died on the cross, He took away all of our sins forever. Now, we who come to Jesus, can know that we are forgiven and our sins are removed from us for good. The Old

Testament system was not complete; they had to continually sacrifice animals. It only foreshadowed the complete and perfect sacrifice, the Lamb of God, which was to come.

For the children to gain better understanding of this concept, have them cut out the animals from the enclosed sheet. They can color the animals if they would like. Have them think of something that they have done wrong and write it on the animal. You will have to assist the younger children. After this is done, have a volunteer go around with a brown paper bag and collect all of the animals. Explain to the children that in Old Testament times they would make an offering of the animal for a covering of their sins. Explain to the children that you will place the bag out of sight never to be remembered again. That is how God's forgiveness works. Today, we do not sacrifice animals; we come to God to receive forgiveness of sins through Jesus. Is it not wonderful that we can turn to God through faith in Jesus Christ and receive forgiveness of sin? He removes our sin forever.

God judged the sins of His disobedient and rebellious people. They spent 70 years in Babylon; while in Babylon they cried out to God and repented of their sins. God forgave them and restored them to their land. **When we ask for forgiveness, God always gives us another chance.**

LESSON TIME!

In the previous lesson, there were several people who were opposed to the Israelites rebuilding their temple. They wrote to the King Artaxerxes to convince him to stop the work. They accused the Israelites of planning to rebuild Jerusalem and their temple with the thought of rebelling against the king. Sadly, the king listened to them and ordered the work to stop.

Indeed, it must have been a discouraging time. The situation looked bleak! But the story wasn't over! Several years later, God moved King Darius to search the archives (kind of like a library); he found a decree from King Cyrus. The decree told about the time when King Cyrus gave permission for the Jews to return to their land and to rebuild the temple. King Darius decided to order that the work begin again.

EZRA 6:13-15

Then Tattenai, governor of the region beyond the River, Shethar-Boznai, and their companions diligently did according to what King Darius had sent.

So the elders of the Jews built, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they built and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the command of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.

Now the temple was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.

After those who were against God's people received the decree of King Darius, they became cooperative with the people's effort to rebuild the temple. They had no choice! For King Darius solemnly warned that there be no interference with the rebuilding of the temple. Since King Darius was the ruler of the known world, they listened!

After nearly ten years of interruption, work began again on the temple of the Lord. God's promises will always prove true. It is nothing to God to stir the hearts of kings! So, the temple was completed in the month of Adar, which is the twelfth month in the Jewish religious calendar.

EZRA 6:16-18

Then the children of Israel, the priests and the Levites and the rest of the descendants of the captivity, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy.

And they offered sacrifices at the dedication of this house of God, one hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs, and as a sin offering for all Israel twelve male goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel.

They assigned the priests to their divisions and the Levites to their divisions, over the service of God in Jerusalem, as it is written in the Book of Moses.

The Bible says that the people, "celebrated with joy!" After 70 years as captives in a foreign land, the people were not only freed, but they returned to their homes with blessing and provisions to rebuild their temple. Though they would need to trust God through opposition, hostilities, and long delays, God was faithful! Their hearts must have been filled with both joy and awe as they considered the faithfulness of their God!

God had heard the cries of His people while in captivity in Babylon. Though the people's years of sin and rebellion had led to God's judgment, while in Babylon, the people thought about the God they had forsaken and repented of their sins. God forgave their sins,

restored their land, and enabled them to build the House of the Lord once again. **When we ask for forgiveness, God always gives us another chance.**

God's House

For this activity, you will need a sheet of paper and markers. Have the children draw a church building. It might be a traditional looking building or another kind of building as many churches now meet in various places.

Today, we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. But, we still gather in buildings as His people did in the Old Testament times. Have the children think of ways that they can serve the Lord by taking care of the building that He has given them. Have the children list ways they can help take care of the church building God has allowed them to meet in.

Remember, the people had been gone from their special land for over 70 years – many of the people who returned to Israel were born in Babylon. They had never seen the land or the “Beautiful City” as Jerusalem was called in the days of King David. But how much they must have had heard about it! Do your grandparents ever tell you stories about the olden days?--where they used to live and what life was like? The Jewish children knew they were “strangers in a strange land.” What excitement there must have been when they heard they were being released to go back to their homeland, the place where they really belonged!

As Christians, God's Word tells us that we are “sojourners and pilgrims” (1 Peter 2:11). He is going to call us to come “home” (heaven) someday. That is something to look forward to, isn't it?

EZRA 6:19-22

And the descendants of the captivity kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month.

For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves; all of them were ritually clean. And they slaughtered the Passover lambs for all the descendants of the captivity, for their brethren the priests, and for themselves.

Then the children of Israel who had returned from the captivity ate together with all who had separated themselves from the filth of the nations of the land in order to seek the LORD God of Israel.

And they kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy; for the LORD made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

The people completed their temple in the month of Adar, the twelfth month of their calendar. The next month was Nisan, the month of their most important holiday, Passover! This was a special celebration of God's deliverance from slavery in Egypt. On the first Passover in Egypt, the people had to sacrifice an innocent lamb and spread the blood on their doorposts; the Angel of Death would "pass over" them. What a picture for us of the innocent blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God, shed to save us! While the children of Israel were being saved from bondage and slavery in Egypt, we are being saved from the bondage and slavery of our sin which leads to death!

Can you imagine having a party at church for seven days?! After 70 years of having no altar to sacrifice a lamb, no celebration of their most precious holiday--Passover, they now had the opportunity to do these things again. They celebrated with much joy! Again, the Passover is a picture of what the Lord has provided for us in salvation. God sent His Son, Jesus, to be the sacrifice for our sins. We can now have eternal life, become citizens of heaven, and worship Him. As Christians, we can celebrate God's salvation in our lives every day!

Just as God desired that the children of Israel would follow Him, God wants us to follow Him. In His great love, He has saved us. When we stumble, He picks us up. Even as we are disciplined, it is good to know--as God's Word says--**when we ask for forgiveness, God always gives us another chance.**

Passover Meal

In our lesson today the people of Israel celebrated Passover for the first time in 70 years. They were very excited to have this opportunity. As a reminder of Passover and what it represents, serve a Passover Meal in your class.

You will need a bowl, a towel and pitcher with water to wash hands, a table cloth or sheet, a flashlight (to represent a candle), pot-pourri (to represent incense), napkins, assorted green vegetables (lettuce), grape juice, saltine crackers, and lunch meat cut into 4 pieces.

Explain to the children what the elements represent and how it is a picture of the Lord's deliverance from Egypt. You may also want to compare it to the Lord's Supper in the New Testament and remind them that Jesus is the Passover Lamb, His blood being shed for our sins. The following is how the elements are represented.

Eating the greens – Rebirth and the renewal of spring.

1. Salt water – Reminds God’s people of the tears that were shed in bondage and the Lord’s deliverance through the Red Sea (Before coming to Jesus we are in bondage to our sin).

2. Grape juice – Reminds us of the blood of the Lamb that had to be applied over the doorposts (blood of Jesus).

3. Crackers – Unleavened Bread (Jesus is the bread of life, His body was broken for us on the cross).

4. Lunch Meat – Represents shankbone of lamb, which was sacrificed for the sin of the people (Jesus is the Lamb of God, come to take away the sins of the world).

For more information you may wish to consult a good Bible dictionary.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of thanksgiving that when we ask for forgiveness, the Lord will forgive us and restore us to fellowship with Him. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.

