

# Temple Restored

**Bible Background • EZRA 3:8-13**

**Printed Text • EZRA 3:8-13 | Devotional Reading • PSALM 66:1-12**

## 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

Jean thought she would never live to see this day come: an African-American woman inaugurated as Vice President of the United States. At 85 years old, she had seen and lived through her share of injustices. She also recalled horrible stories of racism from her parents and grandparents who were slaves. She read all the criticism and hate thrown at the first African American president. Jean saved her money and God made special provision for her to make it to Washington, D.C., to attend the inauguration festivities. Jean took her granddaughter, Monique, who was too young to appreciate the significance of the first Black Vice President Kamala Harris but could now, hopefully, understand the importance of this moment in history. As the President and Vice President were sworn in, Jean was overwhelmed with joy and began to cry. She reflected on the years of oppression and degradation of her people, as well as the sacrifices made to make this day possible. When the ceremony concluded, she shouted for joy and praised God for His goodness.

*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.*

## Keep in Mind

“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” (Ezra 3:11, KJV).

## Focal Verses

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**KJV** **Ezra 3:8** 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.

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### 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 subordinate to the kings of Judah. But when King Cyrus of Persia permitted the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their Temple, Jeshua assumed a major leadership role along with the Jewish governor, Zerubbabel, who remained subject to the Persian ruler. Together, the pair saw to it that an altar was erected and worship restored in Jerusalem.

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

### 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 upon to consecrate themselves and submit freewill offerings unto the Lord as well as provide the 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.

## At-A-Glance

1. The Temple Work Begins (Ezra 3:8–9)
2. The Temple Work Incites Praise (vv. 10–11)
3. The Temple Work Sparks Lament and Joy (vv. 12–13)

## 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—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 that 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 (vv. 10–11)

As the foundation of the Temple is restored, the Levitical priesthood continues in a posture of worship by donning 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 in order 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 (vv. 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 had seen the glory of the former house wept loudly as the foundation of the restored Temple was laid. Having witnessed the splendor of the former Temple and the consequences of their sins that 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).

### Search the Scriptures

Fill in the blanks.

1. “And when the \_\_\_\_\_ laid the \_\_\_\_\_ of the temple of the LORD, they set the priests in their \_\_\_\_\_ with trumpets...” (Ezra 3:10).

2. “And they \_\_\_\_\_ together by course in \_\_\_\_\_ and giving \_\_\_\_\_ unto the LORD; because he is \_\_\_\_\_, for his \_\_\_\_\_ endureth for ever toward Israel” (v. 11).

### Discuss the Meaning

1. What was the significance of having men ages 20 and older supervise the restoration of the Temple?

2. Discuss the role of praise and worship in the restoration of the Temple.

3. Why do you think the ancient men wept and shouted once the foundation was laid?

### Liberating Lesson

As a nation, particularly as people of African descent, we have seen hard times and tribulation. We have known the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat, but through it all God has been and continues to be faithful. In recent history, natural disasters such as hurricanes and tornadoes have devastated the South, and most notably affected were the poor and disenfranchised. However, as we avail ourselves to God as His instruments, He has used people as an extension of His love to be a helping hand and to restore lives to those in need. God has placed in all of us a resilience to overcome adversity by trusting in His faithfulness, so when we see the hand of God move on our behalf, a release of joy and gratitude to God must be automatic.

### Application for Activation

Reflect on a time in your life when you have seen God move on your behalf to restore you after a moment of defeat or failure. How did you feel? Recall your praise unto God, and as an act of worship, ask in prayer where He can use you to be a light in dark places to restore someone else in need.

### Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

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### Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

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**Sources:**

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"Bible Words — Phonetic Pronunciation." <http://www.betterdaysarecoming.com/bible/pronunciation.html> (accessed May 24, 2011).

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Strong, James. *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1990. 57.

Zodhiates, Spiros, Th.D. and Warren Baker, D.R.E., eds. *Key Word Study Bible*, King James Version. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1991. 625, 1602, 1663.

### Say It Correctly

Jeshua. JESH-yoo-uh.  
Shealtiel. shee-AL-tee-el.

## Daily Bible Readings

### MONDAY

A Great and Wonderful House  
(2 Chronicles 2:1-9)

### TUESDAY

Building a House for God's Name  
(1 Kings 8:14-21)

### WEDNESDAY

My Name Shall Be There  
(1 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)

## Notes

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