

The Temple Was Completed

BIBLE PASSAGE: Ezra 4:1-7; 5:1-5; 6:1-22

MAIN POINT: God helped His people rebuild the temple.

KEY PASSAGE: Daniel 2:20-21

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How can we obey God? We trust God to give us strength to obey Him.

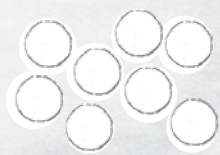
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Leader BIBLE STUDY

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Some time after the temple's foundation was laid, the work stopped. With the encouragement of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, God's people resumed the work of rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem. Approximately 15 years had passed without progress.

At this time, Darius was king of Persia. The Persian Empire was vast, so Darius appointed governors over the provinces. A man named Tattenai watched over the province that included the land of Judah.

Tattenai noticed the work of God's people, and he was concerned. He sent a letter to King Darius. "Is this

allowed?” he asked. “The people say that King Cyrus said they could rebuild the temple and the city. Please investigate this matter.”

King Darius did investigate, and Cyrus’s decree was located in the Babylonian records. Darius instructed Tattenai to allow the people to rebuild the temple and the city.

Point out to kids that God had turned the heart of the king for His people’s favor. (See Prov. 21:1; Ezra 6:22.) The people completed the temple. They dedicated it joyfully and observed the Passover.

God declared in Haggai 2:9 that the glory of this second temple would be greater than the first. This prophecy was fulfilled by the presence of the Messiah, the Son of God. Jesus said that He is greater than the temple. (Matt. 12:6)

In Christ, we find the substance of which the temple was a shadow. The Lord was not confined to a building, yet deity lives fully in Christ. (See Col. 2:9.) Jesus is our High Priest. He entered the most holy place for us. (Heb. 6:19-20) The priest offered the blood of animals, but Christ offered His own blood once and for all. (Heb. 9:25-26) He gives us access to the throne of grace. (Heb. 10:19-22)

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The Temple Was Completed

Ezra 4:1-7; 5:1-5; 6:1-22

When God’s people returned to Jerusalem, they got to work rebuilding God’s temple. They finished the temple’s foundation, but their enemies did not want them to rebuild the temple. God’s people did not want any trouble, so they stopped. God sent the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to encourage the people. So the leaders—Zerubbabel and Jeshua—started working on the temple again.

At this time, a governor named Tattenai (TAT ih nigh) saw the rebuilding had started again. Tattenai worked for King Darius (duh RIGH uhs), the king of Persia. Tattenai had been put in charge of some of the land, including Judah.

Tattenai talked to Zerubbabel and the others working on the temple. “Do you have permission to rebuild this temple?” Tattenai asked. Tattenai sent a report to King Darius. While he waited for an answer, God’s people kept building.

This is what Tattenai’s letter to King Darius said: “To Darius the king—This letter is to tell you that the people in Judah are building the temple of the great God. They said King Cyrus gave them permission to rebuild the temple. Please search the royal records to see if this is true.”

King Darius’s officials searched the royal records for Cyrus’s order. They found it—a scroll with a record from King Cyrus. This is what was written on the scroll: “Let God’s temple be rebuilt. It will be a place to offer sacrifices. Let its foundation be rebuilt.” King Cyrus had also ordered

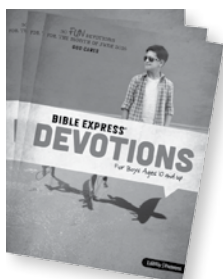
for the cost of building the temple to be paid for out of the royal treasury.

So King Darius sent a letter back to Tattenai. He gave this order: “Stay away from the workers in Jerusalem. Don’t bother them, and don’t try to stop them. Give them whatever they need. And if anyone tries to destroy God’s temple, may God destroy that person!”

Tattenai and the other officials obeyed King Darius’s order. The Jewish leaders kept building, and they finally finished the temple of God! The people celebrated and made offerings to God. They chose priests and assistants to serve in the temple.

Then God’s people celebrated the Passover. They killed the Passover lamb and ate the Passover meal. **God’s people were so happy** because God had changed King Darius’s heart so that he wanted to help them. **Now the temple of God was finally complete.**

Christ Connection: God’s people rebuilt the temple so they would have a place to worship God. Years later, God sent His Son, Jesus, to be with His people. Now God dwells not in the temple, but directly with His people. Because of Jesus, we don’t need a temple anymore.



**WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD’S WORD?
GET
BIBLE EXPRESS!**

Invite kids to check out this week’s devotionals to discover that because of Jesus, we no longer need sacrifices to draw near to God. Jesus has given us everything we need for life and godliness. (2 Pet. 1:3)

Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out www.lifeway.com/devotionals.

Small Group OPENING

SESSION TITLE: The Temple Was Completed

BIBLE PASSAGE: Ezra 4:1-7; 5:1-5; 6:1-22

MAIN POINT: God helped His people rebuild the temple.

KEY PASSAGE: Daniel 2:20-21

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How can we obey God? We trust God to give us strength to obey Him.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Ask kids to think about a time when they accomplished something great or finished a really big task. Did they celebrate? How?

SAY • It sounds like you have worked hard and had some great celebrations! Today, we will hear how the Israelites accomplished a great task God had given them. They celebrated and rejoiced that their work was complete and—most importantly—honored God for all He had done for them.

Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to fill in “Complete the Picture” on the activity page. Kids should copy each picture into the correct square to complete the picture of the temple.

SAY • Today, we will hear the story of God’s people working to finish constructing the temple. Some people did not want them to finish, and they tried to discourage the Israelites from working. But the Israelites trusted God to give them the strength to obey Him.

- “Complete the Picture” activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Block stack challenge

Invite three volunteers to compete in a building challenge. Give each participant a plate and five blocks. Explain that each kid should balance a plate on his head and then stack five blocks on the plate within 60 seconds.

Congratulate players who stack the blocks within the minute. Play additional rounds, allowing new volunteers to compete. If needed, adjust the time limit.

SAY • Great job, everyone! That was not easy. Today we are going to hear about a construction project that wasn't easy either. The Israelites worked hard to complete the temple, and construction took several years.

OPTION 2: Surprise party

Distribute various party supplies—noisemakers, party hats, streamers, and so forth. Announce that you have something to celebrate. As the kids' curiosity builds, remind them that last week, we learned that God brought His people home.

Encourage the kids to use the party supplies to celebrate God keeping His promise! Tell the kids that this week, they will hear a story about how God's people had something else to celebrate!

SAY • God kept His promise to bring the Israelites home. Today, we will hear how the Israelites worked hard to finish building God's temple. This construction project was not easy, and the Israelites celebrated when they finished.



- blocks, 15
- plastic plates, 3
- stopwatch or timer

- various party supplies (noisemakers, party hats, streamers, and so forth)

Transition to large group

Large Group LEADER

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Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• leader attire
• suitcase
• plane tickets

[Large Group Leader enters excitedly. Leader is wearing normal clothes, carrying a suitcase, and carrying plane tickets.]

LEADER • Mamma mia! Guess what? *[Pause for responses.]*

I was given a surprise present! Remember last week when I was looking at my family's photo album and remembering stories of how my great-great-Nonna cooked all that food for her neighbors?

And remember how I wished that I could go see Italy or how I wish I could bring her here to eat and see new people enjoying her old recipes?

Well, I can't be with Nonna, but I am going to visit Italy! My coworkers got together, and they gave me and Cousin Eddie tickets to go to Italy!

I will get to see the house where my Nonna grew up, and I'll get to learn new recipes and eat lots of ooey-goey macaroni, crispy pizza, and spaghetti with meatballs that are probably as big as my face!

Giant timeline (1 minute)

LEADER • I am also excited about our Bible story today! We are going to hear about a whole lot of excited people. God made a promise and kept it after 70 years of waiting. After many years and after lots of work—and lots of trust in God—God’s people had plenty of things to celebrate.

Point out previous stories on the giant timeline and show kids where today’s Bible story, “The Temple Was Completed,” falls on the timeline.

• Giant Timeline or Big Story Circle

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Before we jump into today’s jubilant story, let’s remember our big picture question one last time. When I ask it, I want you all to reply in your most excited voices. Ready? ***How can we obey God?*** [Allow kids to respond.] Wow! Yes! ***We trust God to give us strength to obey Him.***

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Ezra 4:1-7; 5:1-5; 6:1-22. Tell the Bible story in your own words, or show the Bible story video “The Temple Was Completed.”

LEADER • When God’s people first began to rebuild the temple, they faced some challenges. How did God’s people react? They stopped working on the temple. But that is not what God wanted. God sent the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to encourage the people to obey Him.

Eventually the people started to rebuild the temple. Zerubbabel helped the people. God’s people faced more challenges, but they didn’t stop this time.

• Bibles
• “The Temple Was Completed” video
• Big Picture Question Poster
• Bible Story Picture Poster

Like we've seen over and over again, God looked out for His people and He made a way for them to obey Him. **God helped His people rebuild the temple.** They were able to finish the temple so they would have a place to worship God.

Years later, God sent His Son, Jesus, to be with His people. Now God dwells not in the temple, but directly with His people. Because of Jesus, we don't need a temple anymore.

When Jesus died on the cross, He changed *everything*. We don't have a temple anymore because God is always with His people. He sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in all believers. The Holy Spirit guides God's people to love and obey God.

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me (optional)

Use Scripture and the guide provided with this session to explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Assign individuals to meet with kids who have more questions.

Encourage boys and girls to ask their parents, small group leaders, or other Christian adults any questions they may have about becoming a Christian.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Daniel 2:20-21.

LEADER • Over the last several weeks, we have learned many stories of the ways God's people had to make hard choices and do hard things to obey God. We also learned about God's faithfulness.

Like our key passage tells us, God is wise and mighty. He is in control of time, seasons, and

Tip: Provide *I'm a Christian Now* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

- Key Passage Poster
- "Name of God" song

kings. He teaches us and gives us wisdom and understanding. Blessed be the name of the Lord! Lead boys and girls to sing “Name of God.”

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • Think about the biggest project you have ever completed. How long did it take? Check this out. Show the “Unit 16, Session 5” discussion starter video. Lead kids to discuss why they think the kid kept working on the project when his friends were having fun without him. Ask the following discussion questions:

- Why is it sometimes tempting to give up or stop working?
- Why is it important to work hard at whatever we do?
- How can hard work glorify God?

LEADER • God calls us to do everything for His glory. [See *1 Cor. 10:31*.] We can obey God and glorify Him no matter how hard the task. ***How can we obey God? We trust God to give us strength to obey Him.***

• “Unit 16, Session 5”
discussion starter
video

Sing (4 minutes)

LEADER • From Daniel to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, to the Jewish people and all the way until us today, we can name so many ways God has cared for His people. He is worthy of our honor and praise. Let’s take some time to sing praises to His name. Sing together “It Is Well.”

• “It Is Well” song

Pray (2 minutes)

LEADER • Well, everyone, thanks for coming to visit me in my pizza parlor. I hope that you enjoyed our time together and that you never forget the ways God

cares for His people. He showed us His love in the best way by sending Jesus to rescue us from sin!

I hope that whenever you have to make a hard choice, you remember to trust God for strength to obey Him. Maybe I'll see you around after I get back from Italy! Before we part ways, let's pray.

God, You are awesome, mighty in power, full of wisdom, and always in control. Thank You for loving us and for giving us strength to obey You. Thank You for giving us Jesus so we can dwell with You always. You are great and we love You. Amen.

Dismiss to small groups

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus.

Small Group LEADER

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Key passage activity (5 minutes)

• Key Passage Poster

Display the key passage poster. Explain that kids will need to know the key passage well to play today's game. Lead kids to say Daniel 2:20-21 two or three times. Then remove or cover the poster.

SAY • Have you memorized Daniel 2:20-21? If not, try to work on it this week. This passage is such a great reminder that God is wise and powerful. God is in charge of everything, and He deserves our praise!

Follow these steps to play a group game:

1. Instruct the kids to stand in a circle. Choose a player to begin. The first player will say the first word of the key passage.
2. Then the next player will say the second word, the third player will say the third word, and so forth.
3. When a player says the last word, the next player should turn to the next player and say the reference: "Daniel 2:20-21!" The next player is out.
4. If a player forgets a word or says the wrong word, she is also out. Begin the passage again with the next player. Continue playing as time allows or until only one player remains.

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

Provide Bibles and guide kids to locate Ezra 4–6. Remind them that the Book of Ezra is in the Old Testament, between 2 Chronicles and Nehemiah. Encourage them to use the table of contents in their Bibles if needed.

SAY • Today, we heard a story about how God gave His people the strength to obey Him and finish the work He wanted them to do. When the Israelites completed the temple, they celebrated!

Stand up and find a partner. When I ask a question, turn to your partner and tell him or her the answer. After each question and answer, switch and find a new partner. When I ask the big picture question—**How can we obey God?**—I want everyone to shout out the answer together and then let out some cheerful shouts of joy to God.

Ask the following review questions:

1. In what city did God's people build the temple?
(*Jerusalem, Ezra 5:2*)
2. What two prophets encouraged the people to keep building?
(*Haggai and Zechariah, Ezra 5:1*)
3. What governor was in charge of the land of Judah?
(*Tattenai, Ezra 5:3*)
4. Who was the king of Persia at this time?
(*Darius, Ezra 6:13*)
5. What did King Darius tell Tattenai to do?
(*Do not bother the workers, and give them whatever they need; Ezra 6:6-9*)
6. What feast did God's people observe?
(*Passover, Ezra 6:19*)
7. **How can we obey God? We trust God to give us strength to obey Him.**

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.



LOW PREP

- cleaning supplies
- flowers (optional)

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Church beautification project

Before small group, plan a “beautification” project for kids to complete as an act of service to the church and as an act of worship to God. Consider these ideas:

- Pick up trash around the outside of the building.
- Organize a closet.
- Wash/sanitize toys in the nursery.
- Plant flowers.

Encourage kids to sing songs of praise while they work and give thanks to God for the space He has given your church.

SAY • The Israelites in today’s story worked hard for many years to build the temple. When they finished, they praised God and worshiped Him in the temple. We don’t need a temple to meet with God today, but let’s thank Him for a place we can gather with other believers to worship and study His Word.

OPTION 2: Make tambourines

Lead each kid to follow these steps to make a tambourine:

1. Punch 10 holes around the edge of a plate.
2. Knot a 6-inch length of ribbon through each hole.
3. Tie a jingle bell onto every other piece of ribbon.
4. Use colored permanent markers to decorate the face and back of the tambourine.

Invite kids to shake their tambourines. Encourage them to take their tambourines home as a reminder of today’s story.

SAY • God’s people celebrated after they finished their work. They celebrated the completion of temple, and they celebrated God’s faithfulness. **God helped His people rebuild the temple.** He gave them strength to obey Him.

- disposable plastic plates
- hole punches
- ribbon, 6-inch lengths
- jingle bells
- colored permanent markers

We can celebrate God, too, for the many way He cares for us. God cared for us in the greatest way by sending His Son, Jesus, into the world to rescue us from sin. Jesus died on the cross and rose again. When we trust in Him, God forgives our sin and gives us eternal life so we can be with Him forever. Today, God does not dwell in the temple but directly with His people through the Holy Spirit. Because of Jesus, we don't need a temple anymore.

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils.

SAY • The Israelites brought many possessions and animals to make offerings and sacrifices to God. They praised and worshiped Him for who He is and because **God helped His people rebuild the temple**. In our daily lives, we can honor and celebrate God in many ways.

Encourage kids to list in their journals things they could offer God or ways they could honor and praise Him. Allow volunteers to share some of their ideas with the group. Then close in prayer, thanking God for His Word and for sending the Holy Spirit to dwell with everyone who trusts in Jesus.

As time allows, lead kids to complete “Better Than a Temple” on the activity page. Kids should write the missing words on the wall to review what today’s Bible story teaches about Jesus: *God’s people rebuilt the temple so they would have a place to worship God. Years later, God sent His Son, Jesus, to be with His people. Now God dwells not in the temple, but directly with His people. Because of Jesus, we don’t need a temple anymore.*

- pencils
- Journal Page
- “Better Than a Temple” activity page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week’s Big Picture Cards for Families to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.