

## 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.

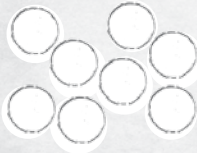
**KEY PASSAGE:** Daniel 2:20-21

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

### SMALL GROUP OPENING

(10–15 MINUTES)

PAGE 74



### LARGE GROUP BIBLE STUDY

(25–30 MINUTES)

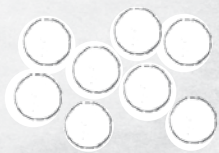
PAGE 76



### SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

(25–30 MINUTES)

PAGE 82



## Leader BIBLE STUDY

5

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)

5



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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  
ADVENTURE!**

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](http://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

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**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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## 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. As kids arrive, ask them about things they built or made that they were proud of. What about their project made them feel glad?

**SAY** • Today we will learn about how God's people finished rebuilding the temple and what happened afterward.

## Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the "Temple: Take Two" activity page. Ask them to look at the temple picture in the grid, and use it to help them draw a copy of it.

**SAY** • Today we will learn about how God's people finished rebuilding the temple and what happened afterwards.

## Session starter (10 minutes)

**OPTION 1:** Build it bigger

Form two teams of kids. Provide each team with a set of building materials (blocks, cards, toothpicks and marshmallows, or some other material). Instruct both teams to build the tallest and sturdiest building they can. Allow

- "Temple: Take Two" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

- building materials (blocks, cards, toothpicks and marshmallows, or some other material)

the kids to work together for about five minutes. Then stop them and tell them that you will come by and bump each table to see if either structure can remain standing. If one or both stay standing, allow the kids to knock them down.

**SAY** • God’s temple had been destroyed by enemies. Today we will learn how the people rebuilt it after returning to their homes. Then we will learn about a sort of temple that was destroyed and rebuilt in less than a week!

### **OPTION 2:** Temple memory game

Before class, print the “Temple Picture” printable. Show the kids the picture of the temple. Give them 60 seconds to memorize as much detail about it as they can. Then give them two minutes to draw the temple on their own paper as accurately as they can. You may compare the drawings and let the kids vote on who they think made the best re-creation.

**SAY** • In today’s story, God’s people finished rebuilding the temple. It was not exactly like the original temple that Solomon built, but it would have been very close. Thankfully, God provided detailed instructions for His temple, so the people didn’t have to try and rebuild it from memory.



- “Temple Picture” printable
- stopwatch
- paper
- pencils

## **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

*[Large Group Leader enters wearing an apron and chef's hat. He or she is covered in flour and has pizza sauce splattered on the normally clean apron.]*

**LEADER** • Hello there, kids! You are never going to believe it. I've finally finished it! Although Papa Roni's cheesy bread is top notch, the pizza sauce had become something of a joke. But I've been working on a new recipe to make the best pizza sauce in the country, and I think I've finally finished it.

As you can imagine, the foundation was tomatoes. So getting that set wasn't too difficult. But then, bit by bit, I began adding spices and seasonings and some other secret ingredients to build a delicious sauce with great depth of flavor and layers of complexity. I added the perfect amount of sweetness to cut the acidity of the tomatoes. The peppery basil and aromatic garlic pair exquisitely. A subtle

woodiness comes from using a little smoked paprika, and I even added a small kick of heat from some cayenne. I can't tell you any more, or you might go home and make it for yourself instead of getting it here. But let me just say, this ain't yo' grandma's pizza sauce. I'm so excited to finally be done with it! You know, this too reminds me of a Bible story! Come on, I'll show you!

## Giant timeline (1 minute)

**LEADER** • We learned last week that **God changed the king's heart so the Israelites could go home.** When they got there, they began to rebuild the temple, the place where God met with His people. Well, this week, our story is called "The Temple Was Completed," and I bet you can guess what happened from the name alone!

• Giant Timeline

## Big picture question (1 minute)

**LEADER** • Who can remind me of the big picture question and answer? [*Take responses.*] Good job! ***How can we obey God? 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 began to rebuild the temple, they faced some challenges. At first, they stopped working on the temple. But that is not what

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



God wanted. God sent the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to encourage the people to obey God.

Eventually the people did start to rebuild the temple again. Zerubbabel helped the people. God's people faced more challenges, but they didn't stop building this time.

Again and again we have seen that God looked out for His people. He made a way for them to obey Him. **God helped His people rebuild the temple.** When they finished, they had a place to worship God the way God wanted them to. By helping His people obey and finish the temple, God was also helping them obey and worship Him correctly!

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.

Before Jesus went to the cross, He said to the Pharisees, "Destroy the temple, and I will raise it up in three days" (John 2:19). Jesus was speaking about something amazing—His death and resurrection. When Jesus died on the cross and rose again, 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

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

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. See if any kids can say it from memory. Then sing “Name of God.”

- Key Passage Poster
- “Name of God” song

**LEADER** • Like our key passage tells us, God is wise and mighty. He is in control of time, seasons, and kings. He teaches us and gives us wisdom and understanding. Blessed be the name of the Lord!

### **Discussion starter video (4 minutes)**

**LEADER** • Have you ever worked on a project and felt like you would never finish? Have you ever done something even when people around you wanted you to give up? Think about that as you watch this clip.

- “Unit 16, Session 5” discussion starter video

Show the “Unit 16, Session 5” discussion starter video. Ask why the kid kept working despite missing out on what his friends were doing. Discuss times it may feel easier to give up than finish working. Ask the kids how hard work can glorify God.

**LEADER** • The Bible tells us that everything we do can be an act of worship to God. [See *1 Cor. 10:31*.] When we look at our work and our play as something we do to glorify God, it changes how we view it. It’s never easy to do hard work. That’s why we call it hard! But we trust God to give us the strength to obey, and that means doing all things to glorify God!

### **Sing (4 minutes)**

**LEADER** • I have had such a good time these past weeks

- “It Is Well” song

figuring out how to get my restaurant on track. I'm so glad you all were able to join me. God is so good to us; He used all my work here to help me understand His Word better, and He helps me live more obediently every day. Will you join me in singing praise to Him?

Sing together "It Is Well."

### **Pray (2 minutes)**

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

**LEADER** • Thanks again for coming in each week. You all are the most loyal customers I've ever had! Be honest, was it the cheesy bread or the Bible stories that kept you coming back? [*Encourage kids to shout answers.*] I think the Bible stories were my favorite part too. Let's pray together.

Father, You are magnificent and wonderful in all Your ways. You alone are worthy of worship. Thank You for giving us Your Word to help us learn about You and obey You. Thank You for sending Jesus to die for us and rise again to save us from sin. Give us strength to obey 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

Invite the kids to stand in a circle. One at a time, each kid standing will say one word of the key passage. If a kid says the wrong word, she must sit. When the key passage is completed, the kid who said the last word will turn to the next kid in sequence and give him a high five. That child must then sit. Repeat this process until only one kid is left standing. See if she can say the whole key passage from memory without help.

**SAY** • God controls all things. If He makes a plan to do something, it will happen; He even used kings who didn't know Him. That's what God did with King Cyrus and Darius! King Cyrus gave permission and supplies to God's people to go home, and King Darius gave them permission to finish the temple. God uses all sorts of methods to give us strength. *We trust God to give us strength to obey Him.*

## Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

• Bibles, 1 per kid

• Main Point Poster

Distribute a Bible to each kid. Form two teams of kids. Alternating between teams, ask kids questions one at a time. Correct answers are worth a point, and incorrect answers

subtract half a point. Whichever team has the most points at the end wins.

Questions:

1. Why did the people stop working on the temple for a while? (*Enemies were opposing them, Ezra 4:23-24*)
2. When did the people begin working again? (*after Haggai and Zechariah encouraged them, Ezra 5:1-2*)
3. Who wrote a letter to King Darius about the temple construction? (*Tattenai, a governor over the land of Judah; Ezra 5:6*)
4. What did the king's letter reveal? (*Cyrus wanted the temple to be completed. Darius then supported the rebuilding of the temple; Ezra 6:1-8*)
5. What did God's people do after completing the temple? (*praised God, offered sacrifices, and celebrated the Passover; Ezra 6:13-22*)

**SAY** • God's plan can never be stopped. Many enemies of Israel wanted to stop the people from rebuilding the temple, but God used king Darius to make His plan happen. The people finished rebuilding the temple and celebrated by worshiping God.

In a similar way, the Pharisees wanted to stop Jesus from teaching people. They hated Him for telling others that He is God the Son. They killed Him to stop His teaching, but on the third day, God raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus made the way for us to be forgiven of sins and reunited with God. That was God's plan all along.

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

## Activity choice (10 minutes)

**OPTION 1:** Church stewardship

Help your kids plan a project to help take care of the place



• cleaning supplies  
(optional)

you meet for church. You could plant flowers outside, help organize a craft closet, clean the nursery toys, or make cards to thank the custodial staff and volunteers who handle such jobs weekly.

**SAY • God helped His people rebuild the temple.** Because of Jesus, we don't have to go to a temple to meet with God. However, God often provides people with places to meet and learn about Him. God wants us to take care of our things and use them for His glory. One way to do this is to keep our space clean, tidy, and beautiful so that people coming in will feel comfortable and welcome. This can bring glory to God as more people hear about Him!

**OPTION 2: Celebration!**

Provide party hats, noisemakers, and craft supplies that could be used to make decorations and instruments. (For example, two paper plates, a small scoop of rice, and tape can make a fun shaker.) Once kids complete the noisemakers and party decorations, spend some time celebrating God's goodness!

**SAY • God provided for His people by bringing them home, and God helped His people rebuild the temple.** God is a wonderful and loving God. He sent Jesus to rescue us from sin and make us right with Him. We can celebrate His goodness and love at any time, just as the Jews celebrated the completion of the temple.

- party hats
- noisemakers
- craft supplies

## Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute each child's journal. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture showing a something amazing they have seen God do in their life. Ask them about ways they can see God working in the world even today. Encourage them with stories of your own.

**SAY** • God used two kings to complete part of His plan and bring His people home. He worked through them so that His temple would be rebuilt and His name would be made great. God's plan to rebuild His temple couldn't be stopped, His plan to send Jesus couldn't be stopped, and His plan to spread the gospel around the world won't be stopped either. We can see God moving in many ways, right down to the fact that we are talking about Jesus today! God can use you for His plan too!

Make sure each child secures this week's sheet in the journal, and then collect them. Keep the journals in the classroom so they will be available every week or as often as you wish to use them.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray, asking God to use you and your group as a part of His mighty and unstoppable plans. Thank Him for His faithfulness to His people, and praise Him for being good and merciful to sinners.

- pencils and crayons
- Journal Page
- Bible Story Coloring 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.*