

## Notes on Ezra Chapter 3

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### III. Laying of the Foundation of the Temple – Chap. 3

#### A. The Sacrificial Offerings Restored

##### Verses 1-3

1. When did vv 1-6 occur? What special events occurred in that month (see Lev. 23:23-44)?
2. Who took the lead in these events? Where else do we read of them, and what do we know about them?
3. What did they build? For what purpose?
4. What offerings did they begin with (v3)? Give **b/c/v** and describe these offerings.

The events here occurred in the “seventh month.” Cf. this to v6. This appears to mean the seventh month of the year, which would occur in the fall of the year. That would fit the events described, since several important acts of worship were commanded to occur in that month. Lev. 23:23-44 says this included the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of the Tabernacles (which is mentioned here in Ezra 3:4). [Cf. Num. 29; Neh. 7:73; 8:1.]

The first group of exiles who returned were now settled in the land (2:70). Their first acts, even before they began work on the temple itself, were to restore the spiritual worship and praise of God. This is proper because, without proper honor to God they had no way to ask and receive His blessing on their efforts.

They were led in this work by Jeshua and Zerubbabel. Jeshua was the leader of the priests, presumably the High Priest (see on 2:2; 3:8; Neh. 12:1,8). Zerubbabel led the government and appears to be the appointed governor (see also on 2:2; 3:8; etc.).

They built the altar as a place to make their burnt offerings as the Law of Moses required. This is described in Deut. 12:5,6 and many other passages. God had commanded that, when they entered the land, He would designate a place where they were supposed to worship Him and offer their sacrifices. This was done, of course, on an altar. Israel here erected an altar so they could have a place to offer sacrifices.

They did this though they feared the people of the land. We will see that the people were a real threat to them (chap. 4). Re-instituting the worship of God would likely alienate these people. But at the same time, they needed to worship God, and the altar gave them a means to request His care and protection against the people.

So they built the altar and began the regular offerings, including the morning and evening offerings. These were required every day of the week, as described in Num. 28:2-8.

##### Verses 4-6

5. What feast did they keep (v4)? List other **b/c/v** regarding this feast.
6. Describe this feast and explain its purpose.
7. What other service did they offer (vv 5,6)? Give other **passages** regarding the new moons and explain them.
8. Application: What lessons should we learn from the fact these returning exiles began by offering correct worship?

They also kept the Feast of Tabernacles. This is mentioned in Lev. 23:33-44 (Deut. 16:13-17; cf. Neh. 8:14ff). This feast required the people to build booths to dwell in for a period of seven days as a remembrance of their travels in the wilderness after God freed them from Egypt. Many offerings were associated with each day of the Feast of Tabernacles, as listed in Num. 29:12-38. The returned exiles carefully observed these daily offerings.

And from that time on they offered all the regularly required sacrifices. These included the ones required at the beginning of each month (the New Moons – see Num. 28:11-15). They also kept all the appointed feasts that God had commanded. 2 Chronicles 2:4.

All this began with the first day of the seventh month (see v1). The people willingly offered a freewill offering to the Lord (Num. 29:39). And all this was done before they had even laid the foundation of the temple.

Likewise we, if we want God's blessings on our lives, must purify our worship and praise to Him. If we seek to restore our worship and service to Him, we must be sure we offer the honor that pleases Him.

## B. The Foundation of the Temple Laid

Verses 7-9

9. How did they obtain logs? Find the places mentioned on a map.

10. Who else had obtained logs similarly, and for what purpose? Give **b/c/v**.

11. When did they begin work on the temple? Who oversaw the work? (Think: Why them?)

The people then began the work of rebuilding the temple. They had to hire the workers (masons and carpenters) who had the required skills to do the work. They also had to purchase the necessary materials. They ordered cedar logs from Lebanon, and paid the people of Sidon and Tyre to bring them to the sea at the seaport of Joppa (see MAP). This would then require transporting them overland to Jerusalem. They paid for these provisions by sending food, drink, and oil. This is like what happened when Solomon built the first temple – 2 Chron. 2:10,16; cf. 2 Samuel 5:9-11. The funds for the work were apparently part of what King Cyrus had authorized in 1:2 (cf. 6:3).

The work began in the second month of the second year after they had left Persia, at the direction of Zerubbabel, Jeshua (see v2) and the rest of the priests and Levites (cf. 1 Chron. 23:24). The Levites, in particular, were the ones who oversaw the work, all of them from age twenty and up being involved. They, of course, were the tribe of the priests and, as such, they had been appointed as a tribe to care for the temple and the worship there.

In particular, the Levites were directed in this work by Jeshua, the High Priest and others named Kadmiel and Henadad (along with their families), who were apparently among the Levites. Also included were some among Judah. I know nothing else about these specific men.

Verses 10,11

12. What did they build first? What did they do when it was complete? (Think: How do we know they used instruments? Are similar statements found regarding New Testament worship?)

The building began, naturally, with the foundation. When this had been completed, a ceremony was conducted to praise God for the work accomplished thus far.

Priests were dressed in their priestly apparel having trumpets. Along with Levites, the sons of Asaph, they led the people in singing, praising God, and giving thanks to His name. This was done as had been ordained by King David (see 1 Chron. 6:31ff; the sons of Asaph are specifically mentioned as being part of this work in 1 Chron. 25:1ff).

They sang praise to God, giving thanks to Him for His goodness and mercy toward Israel. Then the people gave a great shout, praising God, because the foundation of the house was laid.

Note that the use of instrumental music (trumpets and cymbals) in worship is here, as elsewhere, expressly described and authorized in the Old Testament. If God still wants such instruments today, why are there no such passages in the New Testament that clearly describe them and authorized their use in our worship today? Instead, every New Testament passage says simply to sing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; etc.).

For further information, see our articles on instrumental music in worship at our Bible Instruction web site at [www.gospelway.com/instruct/](http://www.gospelway.com/instruct/).

Verses 12,13

13. Describe the different reactions of the people.

14. Application: When we accomplish work for God, how should we react? Who deserves the glory? Why?

The people shouted in praise to God, but many of the older men who had seen the first temple, wept aloud when the foundation of this temple had been laid. So the weeping of the people mingled with the shouts of joy, and the noise could be heard from far away.

It is not clear whether the people who wept did so for joy or sorrow. It could be that the new temple did not compare in glory to the original one, yet that is not stated and would seem to be hard to tell just by looking at the foundation. (Haggai 2:3 refers to such an idea, however this came much later in the reign of Darius, and could well refer to the progress of the building after much more than just the foundation had been built.)

Often the greatest expression of joy is found, not in shouting aloud, but in weeping for joy. Those who were old enough to have seen the original temple, to have gone into captivity and suffered through it for many years, would surely be the ones most deeply moved now to return to Judah and see the new temple beginning construction. Tears of joy would surely be appropriate.

Another possibility is that the people wept in sorrow for the sin that had led to the destruction of the temple.

Note that it is good for God's people to praise Him and give Him honor and glory for any good we accomplish. Remember that it is His work being done through us. These people could never have built the temple had God not empowered it — they surely had been unable to do so for many years while in captivity. So we will accomplish good for God only with His blessings. Let us remember that we are able to do the work only because He blesses us, and that any good done is really a blessing He gives. So let us give Him glory.

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