

CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
OCTOBER19 2024

build it

Scripture Story: Zechariah 2; Ezra 6.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 48.
Key Text: Zechariah 4:6.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The remnant of Judah led by Zerubbabel faced a hostile crowd of naysayers determined to prevent the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem.

Yet, as Ezra 6 notes, God worked mightily on behalf of His beloved people. He used King Darius to enforce a long-lost decree giving Judah permission to rebuild the Temple. Through Zechariah God promised that He Himself would come to Jerusalem and make a home with them, a clear prophetic reference to the future advent of the Messiah.

Zechariah's message was designed to give hope and encouragement, particularly to Zerubbabel. God wanted him to know that his labors to build up God's Temple were not in vain, and neither are ours today. The finishing of the work would not be accomplished " 'by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty" (Zechariah 4:6, NIV).

At the center of this week's study is God's promise to help us through the challenges we face in doing His bidding. We, like ancient Judah, are metaphorically building up God's house here on earth. We labor to lead others to Him, and we labor to be like Him. In both endeavors we can do nothing without His direction and support.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Learn that the call of God to do great things is accompanied by power to accomplish the task. *(Know)*
- Experience the peace that comes from trusting God through trial. *(Feel)*
- Accept an opportunity to turn all their plans over to God. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Church, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 12: "The church is the community of believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. In continuity with the people of God in Old Testament times, we are called out from the world; and we join together for worship, for fellowship, for instruction in the Word, for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, for service to humanity, and for the worldwide proclamation of the gospel. The church derives its authority from Christ, who is the incarnate Word revealed in the Scriptures. The church is God's family; adopted by Him as children, its members live on the basis of the new covenant. The church is the body of Christ, a community of faith of which Christ Himself is the Head." (Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:3-7; Matthew 16:13-20; 18:18; 28:19, 20; Acts 2:38-42; 7:38; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:22, 23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11; 5:23-27; Colossians 1:17, 18; 1 Peter 2:9.)

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? *section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.*

After the students have had some time to rank their responses, ask them to share which parental action they ranked first on their list. Note: Many teens do not believe that they need anything from their parents, but press them for responses.

The objective of this exercise is to highlight our need for encouragement through the words and actions of our parents and, by extension, God. God, through Zechariah, was offering Israel hope in extremely difficult circumstances. That is why Zechariah's message is essential for us today.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

Olympic gold medalist Darrell Pace was to give an archery exhibition in New York City's Central Park, and the event received coverage by all the news stations. Shooting steel-tipped hunting arrows, Pace punctured bull's-eyes without a miss. Then he called for a volunteer.

"All you have to do," said Pace, "is hold this apple in your hand, waist-high." ABC correspondent Josh Howell took a bold step forward. He stood there, a small apple in his hand, a larger one in his throat. Pace took aim from 30 yards away as everyone held their breath. Then THWACK—a clean hit that exploded the apple before striking the target behind.

Everybody applauded Howell, who was all smiles—until his cameraman approached with a hangdog look. "I'm sorry, Josh," he said. "I didn't get it. Had a problem with my viewfinder. Could you do it again?"

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

How many of us would volunteer the first time, let alone the second time, with an arrow aimed at us? Yet faith in God often requires not just one, but multiple applications.

Zerubbabel and the remnant from Judah faced a daunting challenge: "Build a temple for God"—in hostile territory. Every day that the people and the builders went out to do God's will, they had to exercise an unflinching faith—especially Zerubbabel. There was no presumption in Zechariah's message. God would be the Author and Finisher of Judah's faith, and that's the message we all need as we approach daunting trials before Jesus comes!

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story *section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.*

- As a starting point, ask for a show of hands of students who have ever read from the books of Ezra and Zechariah. This will allow you to get a sense of how much background you may need to share later.
- What specific things did God do to ensure Judah's success during the rebuilding process? Was this a source of comfort to them?
- Was the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem solely commanded by God so that He could be worshipped and revered? What role did the Temple play in Jewish life? What happened at the Temple?
- What impact would the rebuilding of the Temple have on the surrounding nations? Remember, when God called Israel to be His special, prized possession (Exodus 19), God had the blessing of the entire world in mind. How was the rebuilding of the Temple a continuation of God's original plan for Israel?
- The adversity Judah faced is not unlike that which we face today as we seek to obey God's commands. Ask the students to share some of the present-day obstacles to obeying God that they face. Did the Israelites face similar temptations/challenges?
- Does God have to put us into captivity before we decide to follow Him? What role did Israel's memory of their horrific experience in Babylon play in their willingness to trust God?
- Zerubbabel faced unique challenges as the leader in God's effort to rebuild the Temple. How did Zechariah's prophecy of God's protection and blessing during the rebuilding process make him feel?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story: Exodus 19; 20; Deuteronomy 28–30; Ezra 4–6.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on

the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

1. **The Name Says It All**. Zechariah was hand-picked by God to deliver a much-needed message of hope to ancient Judah and us today. Consider this ordained coincidence: Zechariah's name means "Yahweh remembers." He is a descendant of Iddo from a priestly tribe. Iddo means "at the appointed time." Zechariah is the son of Berechiah, and Berechiah means "God will bless."

   Put it all together and you get something like this: God remembers at the appointed time and He will bless. Or God remembers to bless at the appointed time. Many of the ancient prophets' names would summarize their message, but this connection is special. It seems tailor-made to communicate the love of God for Judah following their captivity.

   What will God remember? His covenant. God will never forget His people or His promises to them (Isaiah 49:16), and at the appointed time, He will bless them!

2. **God at Work.** The Babylonian defeat at the hands of the Persians brought about Judah's freedom. As Zerubbabel led a contingent of Judah back to Jerusalem, he was miraculously allowed to start the rebuilding of the Temple. This was not because of the generosity of the Persians.

   "In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing:

   " 'This is what Cyrus king of Persia says:

   " 'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Any of his people among you may go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the LORD, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem" ' " (Ezra 1:1-3, NIV).

   What do these verses tell us about God's willingness to reach the heathen and use them to bless His people? If God used hea-

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Open Up

Teens will often care about the subject matter when they see that it matters in real life, that it made a difference in the life of someone they know. Can you think of a time in your life when God was not the sole focus of your life? Would you feel comfortable sharing what your life was like when there was not a "place" for God?

Avoid generalizations, if possible. Think of a tangible difference that making a place for God in your life has made. Please don't reveal some deep dark secret here.

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**
  Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.
- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight *statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book* Prophets and Kings. *Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from* Out of the Story.
- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.
- **Further Insight**
  Ask them how the quote in Further Insight *conveys the point of the story in this lesson.*

then Babylon to punish Judah, why couldn't He also use heathen Persia to bless Judah?

3. **The Church.** The remnant of Judah is a symbol of God's remnant church at the end of time. The church will experience challenges and perplexities until Jesus returns, but it is not to waver or doubt God's protection or providence.

   Ellen White writes: "Human power and human might did not establish the church of God, and neither can they destroy it. Not on the rock of human strength, but on Christ Jesus, the Rock of Ages, was the church founded, 'and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' Matthew 16:18. The presence of God gives sta-bility to His cause" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 595).

   Notice, the church is not stabilized by its doctrines, its diet, or anything else. It is stabilized by the presence of God. A mere intellectual assent to truth, without the presence of God residing in the heart, will not keep us in the last days of earth's history. God was with Zerubbabel and Judah. That is why they succeeded, and that is why we, too, will succeed.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Bring several building tools to class if you can. Or, better yet, ask a fellow church member who works in the building trades to bring some of their work tools to your class.

As you prepare to close, ask them to come in and explain briefly what each tool is used for. Then, close by asking your students to think about the life that they are building. Ask them to quietly reflect on this question: What tools do they need to build a relationship with God?

Close with a prayer asking God to help everyone to draw closer to Him.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Malachi 3:6 reminds us that God does not change. His promises are so sure that once uttered they carry the same weight of blessing as if spoken today. The God who commissioned the rebuilding of the Temple by moving the heart of a heathen king is the same God who stirs our hearts to serve Him today.

The God who provided materials and means to erect the Temple wants to build a place in our hearts today. It should not be lost on us that the Temple was the first item that God commanded to be built following Judah's captivity.

To accomplish this task meant that the people would face difficulties, but God's purpose was resolute and through Zechariah He encouraged Judah to persevere. This story reminds us that our relationship with God must always be first in our lives. We must build a place for Him, that He might dwell with us until He returns to take us to a place built for us.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty and Ruin*),* chapter 48.

*A special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings* has been created by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Zechariah 2; Ezra 6.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 48.

build it



THINKSTOCK

key text

"So he said to me, 'This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit," says the LORD Almighty.'"

(Zechariah 4:6, NIV)

flashlight

"Throughout the history of God's people great mountains of difficulty, apparently insurmountable, have loomed up before those who were trying to carry out the purposes of Heaven. Such obstacles are permitted by the Lord as a test of faith. When we are hedged about on every side, this is the time above all others to trust in God and in the power of His Spirit. The exercise of a living faith means an increase of spiritual strength and the development of an unfaltering trust" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 594).

what do you think?

Being a part of God's people involves personal commitment. Check all of the answers below that describe God's end-time church:

___ Jesus is the head of the church and the chief cornerstone.
___ The church's beliefs are founded on the inspired Word of God, which consists of the writings of the prophets and apostles.
___ The church has a worldwide mission and message.
___ The church keeps the commandments of God and has the faith of Jesus.
___ The members of the church not only hear but also put in practice the principles of God's truth.
___ God's end-time church has the Spirit of prophecy through the writings of Ellen White.

Now read the following passages from the Bible and try to find these and other characteristics of God's end-time church: Matthew 7:24, 25; Matthew 28:19, 20; Ephesians 2:19-22; Revelation 12:17; Revelation 19:10.

How is this knowledge about the church important for us who are living in the twenty-first century?

_____

_____

did you know?

Did you know that at the time that Zechariah was given his message of encouragement to Judah, the man leading the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem had never before seen Jerusalem or the former Temple? His name was Zerubbabel, which literally means "seed of Babylon" or "born in Babylon." "Z," like many of the Judean exiles, was probably born during the captivity in what is today southern Iraq. Not only that, he was a direct descendant of King David, who was a direct ancestor of Jesus.

INTO THE STORY

"In the first year of King Cyrus, the king issued a decree concerning the temple of God in Jerusalem:

"Let the temple be rebuilt as a place to present sacrifices, and let its foundations be laid. It is to be sixty cubits* high and sixty cubits wide, with three courses of large stones and one of timbers. The costs are to be paid by the royal treasury. Also, the gold and silver articles of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, are to be returned to their places in the temple in Jerusalem; they are to be deposited in the house of God."

"Moreover, I hereby decree what you are to do for these elders of the Jews in the construction of this house of God:

"Their expenses are to be fully paid out of the royal treasury, from the revenues of Trans-Euphrates, so that the work will not stop. Whatever is needed—young bulls, rams, male lambs for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, and wheat, salt, wine and olive oil, as requested by the priests in Jerusalem—must be given them daily without fail, so that they may offer sacrifices pleasing to the God of heaven and pray for the well-being of the king and his sons."

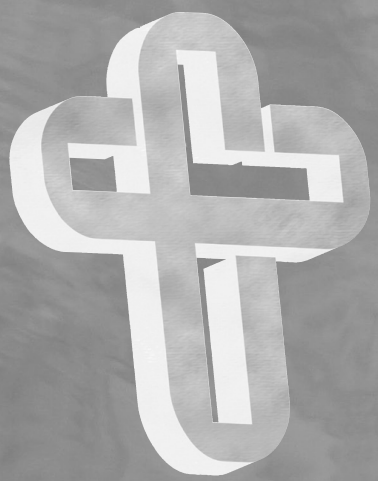
"Then I looked up, and there before me was a man with a measuring line in his hand. I asked, 'Where are you going?'

"He answered me, 'To measure Jerusalem, to find out how wide and how long it is.'

"While the angel who was speaking to me was leaving, another angel came to meet him and said to him: 'Run, tell that young man, "Jerusalem will be a city without walls because of the great number of people and animals in it. And I myself will be a wall of fire around it," declares the LORD, "and I will be its glory within."'"

(Ezra 6:3-5, 8-10; Zechariah 2:1-5, NIV)

*That is, about 90 feet or about 27 meters.



OUT OF THE STORY

The Scripture story for this week splices together the messages of two separate prophets who are writing about the same event—the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem.

What do you find unique about Ezra's message, the first part of *Into the Story*?

_____
_____
_____

What do you find interesting about Zechariah's message?

_____

Underline the promises of God that you find in these scriptures.

How did God help smooth the way for the rebuilding process? How did He help the returning exiles?

_____
_____

What do you think God meant when He stated that Jerusalem would be a city without walls, that He Himself would be a wall of fire around it? Here's a hint: Consider why ancient cities erected huge walls.

_____
_____
_____

God said that He would be Jerusalem's glory within. What do you think He meant?

_____
_____
_____

What do these passages tell us about God's love for humanity?

_____
_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"What are you, mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground. Then he will bring out the capstone to shouts of 'God bless it! God bless it!' " **(Zechariah 4:7, NIV).**

"So we say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?' " **(Hebrews 13:6, NIV).**

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea" **(Psalm 46:1, 2, NIV).**

"Then I saw 'a new heaven and a new earth,' for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband" **(Revelation 21:1, 2, NIV).**

further insight

"Human power and human might did not establish the church of God, and neither can they destroy it."—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 595

Sabbath

Read Ezra 6:3-5.

The church derives its authority from Christ, who is the incarnate Word revealed in the Scriptures. The church is God's family; adopted by Him as children, its members live on the basis of the new covenant. The church is the body of Christ, a community of faith of which Christ Himself is the Head" (Fundamental Belief 12, The Church).

Think carefully about the following question: If something happened to your church, perhaps a fire that destroyed the entire structure, what would you be determined to do along with the other members of the congregation?

_____

Now think about how the church would react if a wealthy neighbor in the community decided to rebuild the church at their own expense. Write one word to describe how you would feel.

_____

How do you think the people of God responded when they heard the decree to help them rebuild the Temple?

_____

Sunday

Read Revelation 21.

After reading the *Into the Story* and completing the *Out of the Story* questions, what is new to you in these passages?

When Zechariah saw in vision the man (angel) with the measuring line going over to measure Jerusalem's dimensions, almost immediately another angel arrived on the scene to stop the man from measuring Jerusalem. Why? Because the people and livestock of Jerusalem would overflow whatever boundaries were erected.

Do you think this promise of a new and beautiful Jerusalem bears any connection to the new Jerusalem described in today's Bible reading? Explain. _____

Monday

Read this week's *Key Text* again. The decree to allow the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem by the newly freed people of Judah was no small blessing.

Although the enemies of Judah tried to discourage Zerubbabel and his fellow workers from rebuilding the Temple and the city, they continued working, in the power of the Spirit of God.

How do you stay focused on doing what God tells you to do when others are disregarding His commands? When you are facing such difficult situations what Bible promises do you recall as reminders of God's love and desire to sustain and help you?

_____

Tuesday

Read Psalm 146:3 and Matthew 17:20.

This week's *Flashlight* quotation highlights the importance of trusting God through difficult circumstances. A little later in this same chapter of *Prophets and Kings*, Ellen White makes a very powerful statement that one might easily overlook. She writes: "The way of the world is to begin with pomp and boasting. God's way is to make the day of small things the beginning of the glorious triumph of truth and righteousness" (p. 595).

In your own words, write what you think she means by this statement.

_____

Wednesday

Read this week's *Punch Lines*. The first *Punch Line* scripture is one of the most powerful verses in all the Bible. Who is the speaker in Zechariah 4:7? What is the unmistakable message that God wants to deliver to Zerubbabel and all of Judah?

What often-quoted verse precedes Zechariah 4:7? What point do you think God was making to Zechariah, Zerubbabel, and Judah?

These two verses remind us that God is truly the "author" and "finisher" of our faith, and everything else in our lives.

Thursday

Read Ezra 4:4, 5.

The remnant of the tribe of Judah that returned from Babylonian captivity was small and seemingly insignificant. That is one of the reasons the surrounding nations targeted them for destruction once they saw them rebuilding the Temple of God.

In every age Satan has attacked those who were faithful to God. How do you respond when your faith is tried? Are you prepared to surrender your life to God regardless of the risks involved? List one or two Bible passages that will remind you that God is your trusted source of strength and help:

_____

Friday

Read Matthew 7:24-27.

God promised Judah protection as they rebuilt the Temple, as well as the resources needed to do it. Think about your future, your life, where you want to be in, say, 10 to 15 years.

Based on today's reading, reflect for a moment on this question: On what foundation are you building your house—your life?

Are you willing to give God your dreams about your future and let Him lead you as He knows best? What are you willing to give up to let God "build" your life?

_____

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings, chapter 48.

**Royalty and Ruin* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it by going to www.cornerstoneconnections.net and clicking on "Conflict of the Ages series." By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.