

Ezra

The altar for burnt offerings was built with sacrifices beginning the seventh month

- Fear of the people of the land drove this action. v.3
- Reflects the fact that God is their defense. The walls of Jerusalem had not been rebuilt and would not until many years later when Nehemiah arrives on the scene.
- No work had begun yet on the rebuilding of the Temple and preparations were made to begin the work.
- Burnt offerings were an integral part of virtually every aspect of worship and service. Ezra 3:2

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- Feasts of the Lord Leviticus 23
  - The Sabbath-every seventh day
  - The Passover-fourteenth day of the first month.
  - Feast of Unleavened Bread-fifteenth day of the first month, lasting seven days with a holy convocation on the first and seventh days.
  - Feast of the Firstfruits-the firstfruits of the harvest brought to the priest and waved before the Lord on the day after the Sabbath after they have been presented to the priest.
  - Feast of Weeks-seven full weeks from the day after the Sabbath from the day the sheaf of the wave offering is presented.

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- Feasts of the Lord Leviticus 23 (cont)
  - Feast of Trumpets-first day of the seventh month.
  - Day of Atonement\*-tenth day of the seventh month.
  - Feast of Booths-fifteenth day of the seventh month and continue for seven days with a holy convocation on the first and seventh day.
- \*The Day of Atonement could not be held until the Temple was completely rebuild since it required entrance into the Holy of Holies.

# The altar for burnt offerings was built with sacrifices beginning the seventh month

- Daily offerings were prescribed by the Law of Moses. Numbers 28:1-8
- Sabbath Day offerings Numbers 28:9-10
- Monthly offerings Number 28:11-15
- Passover Offerings Numbers 28:16-25
- Feast of Weeks offerings Number 28:26-31
- Feast of Trumpets offerings Numbers 29:1-6
- Day of Atonement offerings Numbers 29:7-11
- Feast of Booths offerings Numbers 29:12-38

Work began on the Temple in the second year of the return and proceeded to the laying of the foundation.

- The two-year period before beginning the work should be viewed as preparation time rather than neglect. They did not have to come up with the finances since Cyrus had directed the support of those around them but they did have to secure the material and workmen.
- Zerubbabel the governor and Jeshua the High Priest gave leadership to the effort.
- Levites, age 20 and up, given the responsibility to supervise the work.
- Praises offered to the LORD at the completion of the foundation (1 Chronicles 16; 2 Chronicles 5:13; 7:6)
- An extremely emotional experience for all of the people.

## Rebuilding runs into resistance. 4:1-5

- These people would be what is known in the New Testament as Samaritans. The people who remained in the land had intermarried with those transplanted there by the Assyrians after the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C.
- The language here indicates that the offer to help was not sincere.
- The mention of sacrificing to “your God” betrays their lack of understanding since sacrifices could only be made in Jerusalem and by the priests who were of the tribe of Levi and descendants of Aaron. Even the bona fide priest in exile did not continue the sacrifices. Most likely they viewed the God of the Jews as one of many gods and simply the god over that land. Eventually the Samaritans build a rival temple on Mt. Gerizim which is later destroyed by the Maccabean Jew John Hyrcanus in about 120 B.C.

## Rebuilding runs into resistance. 4:1-5

- Probably for all of these reasons Zerubbabel rebuffs their request to help.
- Their true nature comes as they then used every means possible to frustrate the rebuilding of the Temple and were successful at keeping the project from completion for the next 20 years.

# Some lessons

- Opposition to what God is doing should be expected. While opposition is not a guarantee that we are doing God's work, opposition will nearly always arise in the process of joining God in what He is doing.
- We must always act with discernment at opportunities and circumstances we encounter.
- Opposition will reveal our level of trust in God.
- Opposition can and will impact the work but can never stop God's plan.