

Going Home

Rebuilding the Temple

Foundation

Bible passage : Ezra 3

Powerpoint: ExileAndReturn-07

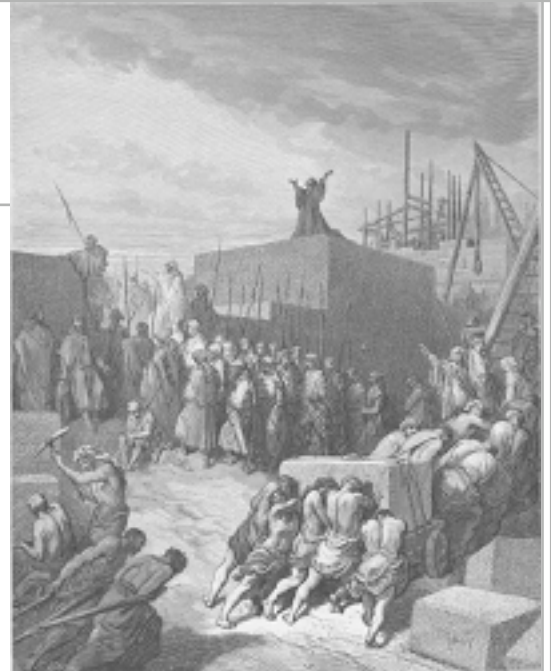
Background: A great Temple had been built in Jerusalem nearly 500 years previously during the reign of Solomon. But because because the people of Israel had kept disobeying God He had withdrawn His glory from the Temple (Ezek 10.18) and not long afterwards the Babylonians destroyed it along with the city. In unit 6 we saw how at God's command Cyrus had told people to rebuild the Temple.

Foundations Laid: Fifty years had passed and some older people who had been taken captive and then returned could still remember the first Temple. For others it was all new and when the new foundations were laid they shouted with joy (3.11-13). But the older people wept and though Ezra does not tell us why some at least were saying, as old people often do, that things were better in the past (Hag 2.3). The new Temple was not as grand but through Haggai the Lord promised that He would do greater things if they continued to trust Him (Hag 2.4ff).

Trouble: When the people of Israel had been defeated by the Babylonian most of them had been killed or taken away captive. But the Babylonians had moved other people to the land of Israel. After a while some of those people began to worship the God of Israel but in their own way. They would become the people known as the Samaritans.

Fear: Some of these people living nearby asked to help and, rightly or wrongly, the

*Illustration
by Gustave
Doré,
1866.*



Israelites refused the offer. So the others decided to try to stop the building of the temple. They made the Israelites afraid, and bribed some of the people who ruled the land for the Persians. So the work on the temple stopped.

Why did they not continue? We don't know for certain but the people don't seem to have trusted God to look after them. From things that were said later by the prophet Haggai it may also be that having just returned to the land they were

too afraid of losing the good things they had. But in any case they failed to trust.

Eventually the enemies wrote to King Artaxerxes

accusing the Israelites of plotting to reject the rule of the King and as a result the King commanded that work on rebuilding both the city and the Temple should stop.

“Then all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD”



God had enabled the people to return and rebuild the Temple but when trouble came their faith wavered.