

# First Things First

Ezra 3

Upon returning from exile in Babylon, the Jews' first priority was to reestablish the sacrificial system specified in the Mosaic Law and to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. Ezra 3 explains that *worship is at the heart of one's relationship with God. We must reestablish the priority of sacrificial worship if we want to experience revival* in our lives and in our church.

## **After returning from exile, the Jews rebuild the altar of sacrifice (1-6)**

The seventh month (late September – early October) was a significant time of year for the Jewish people. It started with the Feast of Trumpets on Day 1, and included the Day of Atonement on Day 10, and the Feast of Booths (Tabernacles) on Days 15-22.

Gathering as “one man” indicates unanimity. They had a common bond of faith in God and a common purpose to worship and obey him.

They were led by Jeshua, the religious leader, and Zerubbabel, the civil leader. They worked together to rebuild the altar.

By presenting burnt offerings even before the foundation of the temple was in place, the Jews showed their earnest desire to worship God.

One reason they began following the Mosaic Law was that they feared their neighbors, probably foreigners who had been deported by the Assyrians into Palestine. They called on the Lord to protect them.

## **The foundation of the temple is laid (7-9)**

As Solomon had done, the Jews contracted with their Phoenician neighbors to the north to provide the building materials for the temple. They spent nearly seven months gathering the necessary supplies and preparing the site.

Under Mosaic Law, Levites began their service at age 25. David had allowed them to begin some service at age 20. Zerubbabel and Jeshua continued this practice and allowed them to begin working on the reconstruction project at age 20.

## **People responded in different ways to the completion of the temple foundation (10-13)**

The people celebrated the completion of phase one of the temple reconstruction project. By praising God with all their hearts, they demonstrated that worship is at the center of community life and necessary for revival.

The older people who had seen Solomon's temple wept because it was not as grand as the former one. Others chose to rejoice because the future looked bright. Both young and old need to look up and praise God.

### **Principles to Practice**

Worship must be at the center of all we do. We must keep first things first and establish right priorities if we want to experience revival.

Rather than idolize the past or fantasize about the future, we need to celebrate what God is doing today.

“I can safely say, on the authority of all that is revealed in the Word of God, that any man or woman on this earth who is bored and turned off by worship is not ready for heaven.”

A. W. Tozer