

General Church Education



Family Lesson: Haggai
The House of the Lord

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Family Lesson 27 - A

The House of the Lord
Haggai 1 and 2

Family Talk:
THE LORD'S HOUSE

Rev. Alfred Acton

Imagine yourself as one of the children of Israel returning to the kingdom of Judah. For seventy years your family has been away from its homeland. You were born in a foreign country, and all you know about the kingdom to which you are returning is that your grandparents called it home. Now you get back to the land, the land that is supposed to be a land flowing with milk and honey, the land you've heard about all your life as the wonderful place of the Lord. And what do you find?

As you look at the city, Jerusalem, you see the burnt shell of what once was a temple. It looks terrible. More than that, the whole land has been laid to waste. People aren't living in nice homes. Instead, they're hiding in caves. Nor are people able to grow crops, because the land has not been farmed in a long time and weeds have grown up everywhere.

The people who came back from the land in joy are afraid. They're afraid for their lives from wild animals and thieves, and they wonder why they left Babylon. Wasn't it better to stay in the slavery of Babylon than to return?

It was in such a land that the prophet Haggai spoke to the children of Israel in the name of the Lord. He called upon them to find a new strength. The children of Israel had left slavery before, and entered into the holy land and conquered it. They had the courage to obey the Lord, to follow what the Lord told them to do. And so these new captives, coming back from Babylon, must find similar courage.

What must they do first? Should they build nice homes for themselves? Should they start farming? No! Haggai said the first thing they needed to do was to look to the Lord. And if they, as a people, would look to the Lord, then they would find the courage to do all the important tasks of rebuilding their land. To begin, they had to rebuild the Lord's temple. If they put a place for the Lord in their land first, then all else could be added.

What an important message. What an important truth! Many times in your life you will feel that the things which you have to do seem to overwhelm you. You will look around and see everything apparently in shambles. And how will you ever get anything done?

The prophet Haggai speaks to you at those times just as he spoke for the Lord to the children of Israel: “Put the Lord first, and then you can find happiness.”

In the beginning of the *Arcana Coelestia*, Swedenborg, the Lord’s servant, wrote a motto which he took from the New Testament. This motto is just as important for us as it was in the New Testament, and as important as it was for the children of Israel at the time of Haggai. That motto said “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (*Matthew 6:33*).

The House of the Lord
Haggai 1 & 2
LEVEL 1 – BUILDING A TEMPLE

Materials Needed

Blocks or books
Something special

This story from the Word is about building a house for the Lord.

The Lord told the people *to “Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple . . .”* for Himself (Haggai 1:8).

A temple is a house for the Lord.

Get some blocks (or boxes) and build a temple for the Lord.

Long ago people put gold and silver in the Lord’s house.

We put the Word in the Lord’s house.

When you finish your temple, put something special in it.

The House of the Lord
Haggai 1 & 2
LEVEL 2 – A HOUSE FOR THE LORD

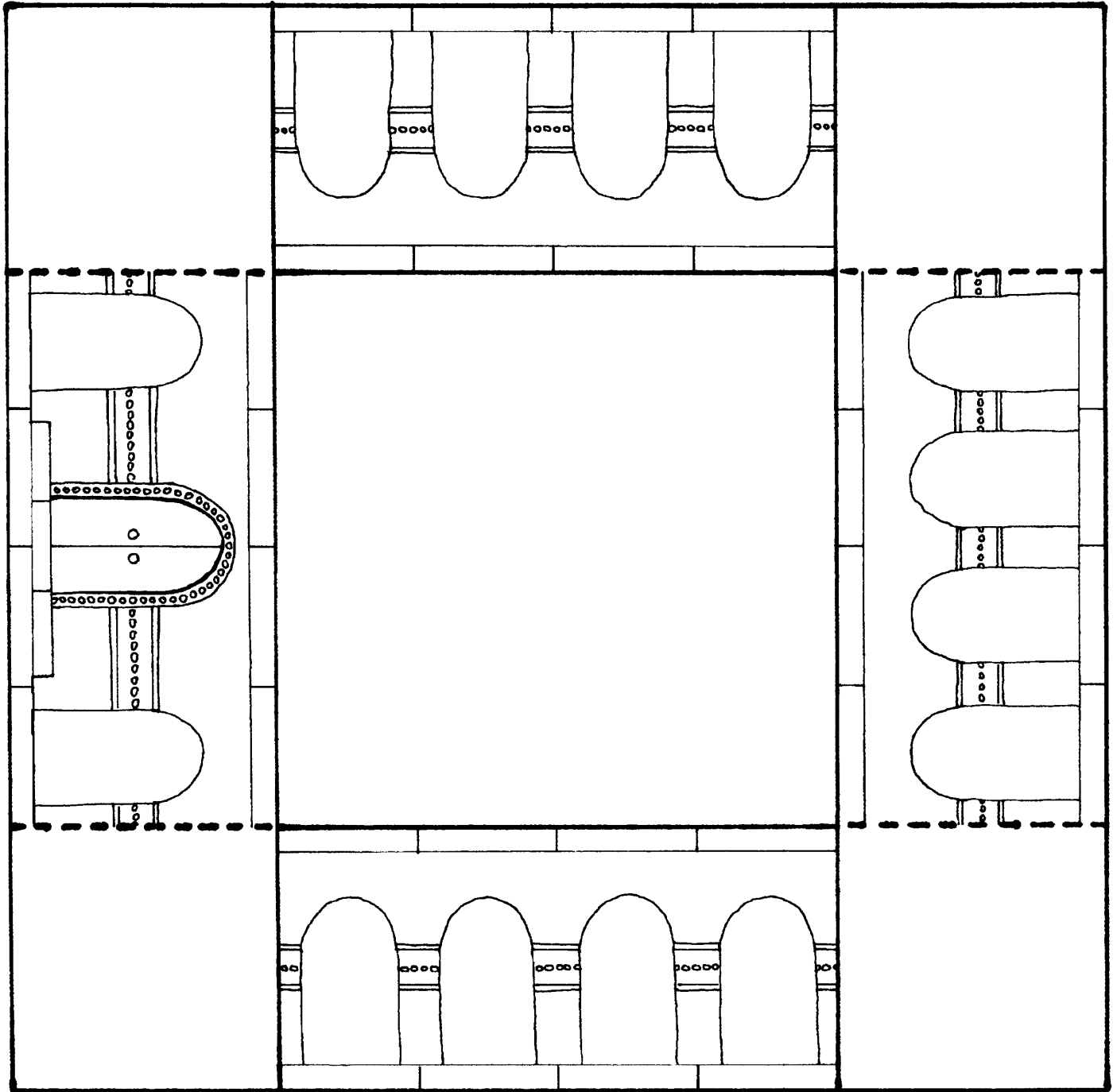
Materials Needed

Crayons
Scissors
Glue

Directions for making a model of the temple:

1. Color the temple (page 2), then cut around the outside of the temple.
2. Fold the 4 sides down along the dark lines and dotted lines.
3. Now cut along the 4 dotted lines.
4. Glue the blank corners under.

Now you will have a model of the temple
which was the house of the Lord in Israel.



The House of the Lord
Haggai 1 & 2
LEVEL 3 – THE HOUSE OF THE LORD

When Haggai gave his prophecy, the people of Judah had returned to the Holy Land from their captivity in Babylon. Although most of the people had turned to evils, there were still a few good people who could rebuild and carry on the Lord’s church on earth. These good people could keep the church alive until the Lord was born. The birth of the Lord was the beginning of a new church—the Christian Church.

The story in Haggai tells how, for a time, the people of Judah forgot to put the Lord first in their lives and forgot to rebuild the temple. Haggai was sent by the Lord to remind the people of what should come first, and to get them to rebuild the temple so the world would be ready for the Lord’s birth.

Application

- 1) **First, unscramble the words in Part A.**
Use the book of Haggai to help you.
- 2) Use the unscrambled words to fill in the blanks in Part B.
- 3) **Unscramble the sentence in Part C.**
Each number represents a letter of the alphabet—
(the letters are numbered in sequence with A as #1 and Z as #26)
- 4) Check your answers with those on page 3.

Part A:

| Scrambled | Unscrambled | Scrambled | Unscrambled |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|
| 1. ihhg script (1:1) | _____ | 6. rowfadr (2:19) | _____ |
| 2. rovegornr (1:1) | _____ | 7. pristi (1:14) | _____ |
| 3. owdo (1:8) | _____ | 8. gronts (2:4) | _____ |
| 4. nisur (1:4) | _____ | 9. yasw (1:5) | _____ |
| 5. tigens (2:23) | _____ | 10. hotprep (1:1) | _____ |

Part B: *Fill in the blanks with the unscrambled words:*

1. Haggai was a _____ of the Lord.
2. The _____ of Judah was Zerubbabel.
3. Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, was the _____.
4. The Lord's temple was in _____.
5. The Lord told the people to consider their _____.
6. The Lord said to get _____ from the mountains to build the temple.
7. The Lord stirred up the _____ of Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the remnant of the people.
8. The Lord told them all to be _____ and work.
9. After they all worked on the temple the Lord said that from this day He would bless them.
10. The Lord said He would make Zerubbabel as a _____ ring.

Part C: *Unscramble the sentence below.*

_____ 9 _____ 1 13 _____ 23 9 20 8 _____ 25 15 21
 _____ 19 _____ 1 25 19 _____ 20 8 5 _____ 12 15 18 4

**This is what the people of Judah forgot when they returned to the Holy Land.
 It is something we should always remember in our lives.**

Answers

Part A:

1. high priest
2. governor
3. wood
4. ruins
5. signet
6. forward
7. spirit
8. strong
9. ways
10. prophet

Part B:

1. prophet
2. governor
3. high priest
4. ruins
5. ways
6. wood
7. spirit
8. strong
9. forward
10. signet

Part C:

“I am with you,” says the Lord. Haggai 2:4

The House of the Lord ***Haggai 1, 2*** **LEVEL 4 - CYCLES**

Many things in life have cycles.

A day has a cycle. It begins at dawn, then has morning, afternoon, evening and night.

A year has a cycle too; it contains seasons—spring, summer, fall, and winter.

Your life goes in a cycle. You are born and then have periods of infancy, childhood, adolescence, adult life, and old age.

A church also has cycles.

- i) The Hebrew Church had its beginning with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
- ii) It progressed to the time when Moses got the Ten Commandments and built the tabernacle.
- iii) It reached its high point with King Solomon when the first temple was built.
- iv) Then it began to go down as the nation split into the kingdoms of Judah and Israel.
- v) The decline continued to captivity in Babylon.
- vi) There was a renewal with the return of the people under Ezra and the rebuilding of the temple as commanded by Haggai, our lesson for today.
- (vii) At last a final temple was built by King Herod which was destroyed by the Romans. Just after the Lord's crucifixion, the Jews rebelled against Pilate and all of the Romans who had destroyed Jerusalem and carried the golden vessels back to Rome. No new Hebrew temple was ever built in Jerusalem. The cycle of the Hebrew Church was over.

Application

On the next page is a “mandala” for you to fill in. You can either write in the cycles, or, if you like to draw, you could fill it in with pictures of each cycle.

1. In the first (smallest) circle space, write the cycles of a day.
2. In the second, write the cycles of a year.
3. In the third, write the cycles of the Hebrew church. (You could do this by drawing the four different temples if you like).
4. In the fourth, write the cycles of a person’s life.
5. In the fifth, write the cycles of our journey to heaven.

This part of the activity will require more careful thought.

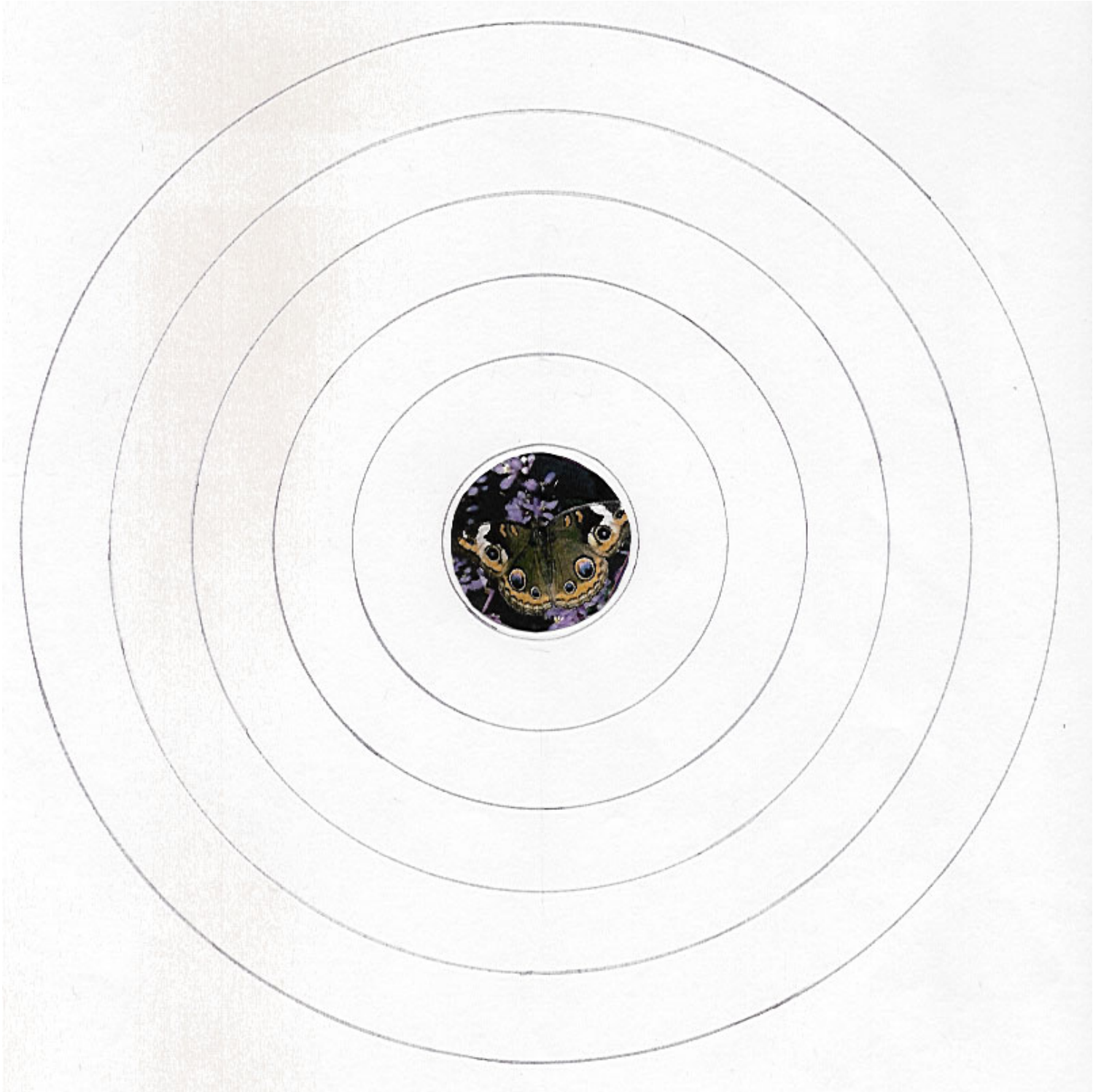
(You should probably work out your ideas on another piece of paper first, then when you are satisfied with the details and order, copy them onto the mandala.)

Here are some ideas of things to think about:

- ❖ What does a tiny baby get that is a foundation for this journey?
- ❖ What are we like—what do we love most and think about most—as we grow to each new stage.
- ❖ Think about the different ways we learn about the Lord as we progress through life.
- ❖ Think about how our qualities change as we learn to put away selfishness and become more charitable—and the steps by which this change is effected.
- ❖ What sort of person would we like to be when we reach the end of our cycle of life in this world.

We hope you enjoy filling in your mandala. If there are other cycles that you would like to include, make your own set of circles on a larger piece of paper.

CYCLES



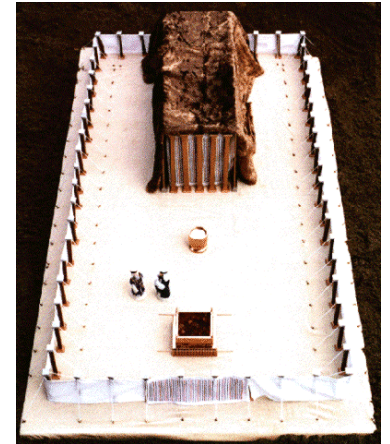
The House of the Lord

Haggai 1, 2

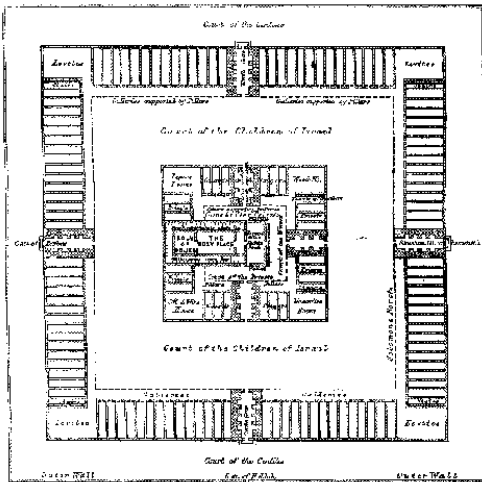
LEVEL 5 - THE ISRAELITES' TEMPLE—FROM MOSES TO JESUS

The Tabernacle

At the time when Moses was given the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, the Lord also gave instructions for building the tabernacle, or tent-church. During the time the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness, conquered the land of Canaan, and settled in the land, they used this portable church for worship.



Solomon's Temple



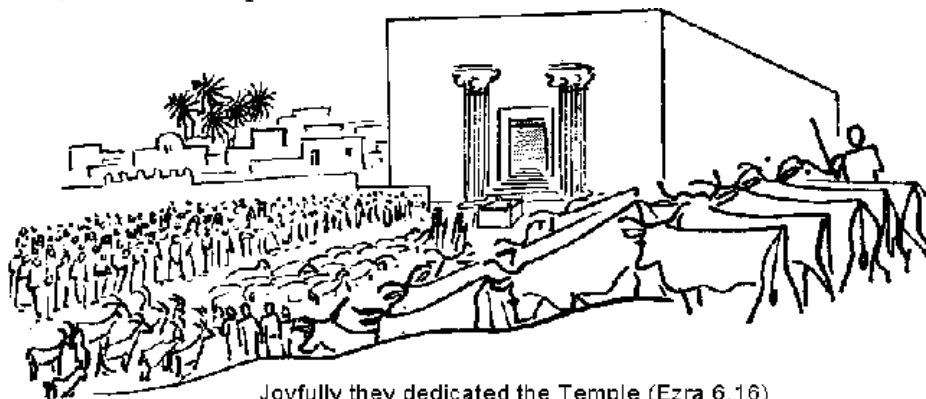
But in the time of Solomon, a permanent building was erected, using the general plan of the tabernacle, but built with stone, brass, and wood, overlaid in many parts with gold, and provided with richly ornamented furnishings. (This was about 1000 B.C.)

In 586 B.C. Babylon conquered Judah. The wall of Jerusalem was broken through and the invaders burnt the temple and broke down the walls stone by stone. Today archaeologists can find virtually nothing they can identify as this first temple. The Babylonians carried off all the furnishings and dishes. The ark completely disappeared. Legend has it that the prophet Jeremiah buried it in the temple courtyard; other legends locate it in various far-off places. But it was never recovered.

The Temple Rebuilt

The people of Judah were carried into captivity in Babylon, and after seventy years, when Cyrus became king, they were allowed to return and rebuild the temple.

Today's lesson tells of the set-backs and discouragements the people had in building this temple. Finally, however, it was completed. It is not described in the Word, but we can assume the general floor plan copied that of the tabernacle and first temple. We do know that it was a much more humble building than Solomon's temple (see Ezra 3:10-13). Josephus, an ancient history writer, says that the altar of burnt offering was of unhewn stone. And of course the Holy of Holies was empty.



Joyfully they dedicated the Temple (Ezra 6:16)

“Empty” worship

The Holy of Holies being empty was very significant. It represented the fact that the worship of the people was “empty.” The church became more and more corrupt, until, in the time of Christ, only a few simple good people remained to receive the Messiah.

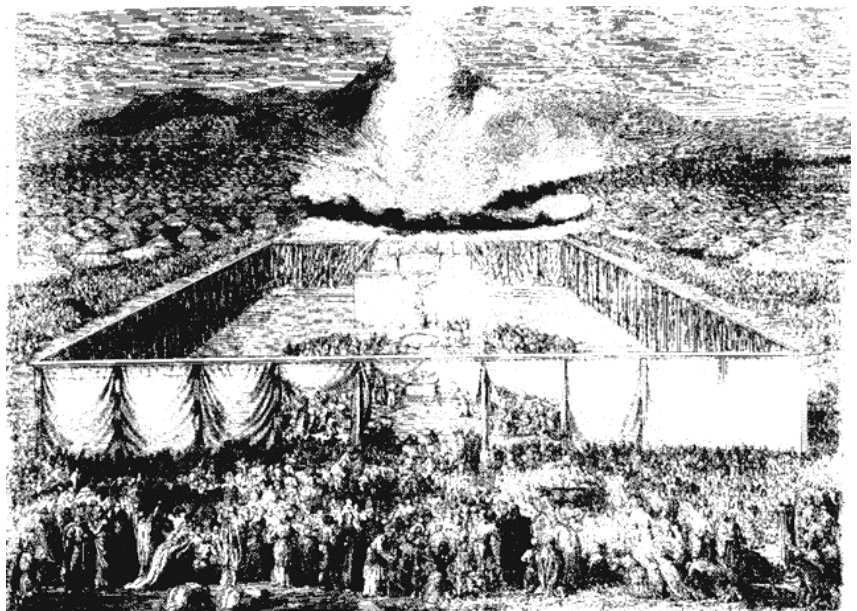
The priests and teachers had become corrupt and greedy. Palestine was ruled by several different countries: Babylon, then Persia, Egypt and Syria. In the time of Antiochus, king of Syria, temple worship was so profaned that pigs (forbidden to the Jews) were sacrificed to Zeus within the temple walls. At one point the Jews, under Judas Maccabeus, revolted, took control of Jerusalem and purged the temple of all pagan idols and worship. The temple was rededicated and this event is still celebrated by the Jews as Hanukkah. The Maccabeans ruled for about a hundred years, and then Jerusalem was conquered by Rome.

The Temple Reconstructed by Herod

Under King Herod the Great, the temple underwent a complete reconstruction which involved major alterations in the walls and fortifications of the hill. If you look at a map, you will see that the temple complex was perched on a hill. The east side of the temple area was at the edge of a steep cliff which dropped into the Kidron Valley. Herod apparently wanted to demolish the second temple and build one which would be identified with his name. However, he knew that the Jews would not tolerate this, so he began a reconstruction which would seem to be a simple process of repairing various sections of the old one, with services and functions going on as usual. When he was finished, however, the temple was really a completely different building. It was dedicated in 12 B.C., though in fact was not finished until after Herod’s death. It was this temple to which Mary and Joseph took the infant Jesus, “to do for Him after the custom of the law,” and it was here that Simeon, the priest, blessed the Baby Lord (See *Luke 2:27-32*).

The Temple was the focus of worship

From the portable tabernacle, to the splendor of Solomon’s temple, to the rough attempt at restoration, and finally to Herod’s rebuilding, the temple was a central focus of the worship of the Israelites.



The Focus of Your Life



Building your own temple

What is the focus of your life?

What can you use to build a house of the Lord in your life?

Where should it be?

What should it have in it?

How will it be both portable and permanent?

- 1) Think about these questions. Write your answers on the pages provided, or use the questions for discussion with your parents or group.

Here are some suggestions for other activities:

- 2) Make a collage drawing or painting showing the history of the temples.
- 3) Make a collage drawing or painting of all the things you need to have or do in your life to become a “temple” for the Lord.
OR
Do this with quotes from the Word instead of pictures.

