

SABBATH SCHOOL

Preteen Sabbath Instruction Program — Teacher's Outline

Level 3 • Unit 4 • Week 2

GOD GIVES EZRA A SPECIAL JOB

OBJECTIVE:

The purpose of this lesson is to teach about the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem and the role of Ezra the scribe in recording this special project of God in Ezra 1-6.

ATTENTION GETTER:

Imagine you are a merchant traveling in the land of Israel. Your caravan of camels and horses goes by an area with large stones and rubble. Seeing the remains you ask what used to be in this place. The following story is told.

Fifty years ago, a ruler by the name of Nebuchadnezzar led the armies of Babylon against the city. It was the last stronghold holding out against his army. Eventually his army broke through the walls and the city was defeated. The men, women and children who survived were forced to leave their homes and were taken to Babylon as slaves. The walls of the city were torn down and the buildings of the city were burned.

Also in the midst of this once beautiful city was the most beautiful building in the ancient world. Massive stones had been used to make the walls. Huge cedar logs had been made into planks for the flooring and walls. The inside walls were covered with gold and shone with dazzling brightness as light from the candles reflected off the golden walls.

As the army of Babylon overran the beautiful building, they stripped the gold from the walls, and took the golden bowls, trays, candelabra and cups. The gold and the golden implements were loaded onto pack animals for transportation back to Babylon. The soldiers broke down the stone walls of the building and burned the wooden portions of the building.

With the conquest of the city complete, the survivors and the treasures of the building began their march toward a new land.

The ruins are all that is left, you're told, of a once great city. You look at the hill where the most beautiful building of that time once stood, but now nothing but burnt rubble remains.

Ask: Does anyone know the name of the city that was just described? [Answer: Jerusalem.]

Ask: Does anyone know the name of this most beautiful building? It was the temple of God. It was built by King Solomon and the people of Israel as the house of the great God of the universe.

Ask: Was this house ever rebuilt? The purpose of our lesson today is to learn about the rebuilding of the temple as recorded by the scribe Ezra.

BIBLE LESSON:

Say: The book of Ezra in the Old Testament was written by Ezra the priest. Ezra was also a scribe, a person who wrote down important things. God gave Ezra a special job. That job was to record the history of a special project that God wanted to be completed by His people. God made it possible for some of His people to go back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple.

Seventy years had passed since the time when the enemy army had destroyed the temple in Jerusalem. There was a new king in the land where the people of Judah had been taken as captives. The name of this new king was Cyrus. He was the ruler of the Persian Empire. Cyrus wanted to start a special project to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.

Cyrus was not a worshipper of the true God.

Ask: Can anyone explain why and how Cyrus had this great desire to rebuild the temple of the true God? [Allow response.]

Read: Ezra 1:1-3.

Say: God put the desire into the mind of Cyrus to rebuild the house of God in Jerusalem. Cyrus then asked who, among the captive people, would be willing to go back to their homeland and complete this special project?

Ask: Can anyone tell us where the people got the money to rebuild the House of God? [Allow response.]

Read: Ezra 1:6-11.

Say: Many people in the land freely gave thousands of dollars worth of gold and silver to those who chose to go to Jerusalem so they could buy building materials and to pay workers to rebuild the house of God.

Ask: Can anyone make a guess of how many people chose to go back to Jerusalem to work on this special project? [Allow response.]

Say: Ezra 2:64-65 tells us a total of 42,360 men plus 7,337 servants went up to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple.

More than 70 years in the past the people of God had ceased obeying His laws and keeping His Holy Days. So God punished Judah by allowing them to be captured and removed from their homeland.

Ask: What do you think the people did when they arrived back in their homeland of Israel? [Allow response.]

Read: Ezra 3:1-6.

Say: The priests and Levites built an altar and offered burnt offerings to God in the manner as was written in the book of the law. They began keeping the feasts of God in their proper months. Now they were so happy to be back home again in Israel and they wanted to obey God.

Ask: What is the first part of a house that a carpenter builds? [Allow response.]

Read: Ezra 3:10-13.

Say: They began rebuilding the house of God by building the foundation.

Ask: Who can describe what the foundation of a building is? [Allow response.]

Say: The foundation is the part of a building that sits on the ground or is partially buried in the earth. It is like a strong anchor that keeps the building in place and keeps it from being taken away by strong winds or washed away by flood waters. It could be large stones or big cedar logs.

When the foundation was finished, the young men sang praises to God and gave thanks for His blessings. But the old men who had seen the old house of God cried with tears and loud voices in great joy because they would again have a house for God.

Ask: God's people had enemies living among them in the land of Israel. What do you think the enemies would do about this new house of God? [Allow response.]

Read: Ezra 4:1-6.

Say: The enemy people first wanted to join the special work project. They had in their minds to

cause problems as the work was being done. They wanted to delay the finishing of the house of God and cause a work stoppage. Zerubbabel and Jeshua recognized their plan and refused to allow them to be involved.

The enemy people in the land were jealous of God's people coming back and were afraid because the king gave them favor. They wrote a letter to the new king, King Artaxerxes, accusing God's people of being a rebellious people who did not pay taxes and would cause trouble.

Say: In response to the letter, King Artaxerxes made a decree that work on God's special project would stop until he decreed it could begin again.

Say: So the special project of rebuilding the house of God was stopped until God through the Holy Spirit caused His prophets to preach to His people about obedience to the God who is over them. They then began again to rebuild the house of God without fear of their enemies.

Read: Ezra 5:1-2.

Say: The house of God, which had been destroyed, was rebuilt, and the people of Judah began to worship God as He commanded. There was great joy as the project was completed.

Ezra the priest and scribe was used by God to record details of this special project. This history in the Old Testament Church of God was written down for the people of the New Testament Church of God so that we could learn some valuable lessons about obedience to God.

God has another special project going now. He is building another house. This house is not made with stone and cedar logs. It is a spiritual house. The materials He is using are humans who through His Holy Spirit are being prepared to be part of the spiritual temple of God. Like the physical temple, it will also take time to build but when it is finished that temple will last forever.

You children are in that building process now even though you are not baptized. Someday in the future, you along with your parents, will be part of God's spiritual house when you have chosen to be baptized and are obeying God with all your might. Through the lessons you are learning from Sabbath School, church and your parents, you are helping lay down that spiritual foundation of God's house in your life. As you grow older and learn more about God, you will be helping to build the walls of God's spiritual house.

LESSON APPLICATION:

Build a model of the temple. See the details for building a model of the temple at the end of the lesson.

Music:

We will sing a song of praise to God now because He is building His house.
This song is taken from the United Church of God hymnal (page 17).

HOW LOVELY ARE THY DWELLINGS

How lovely are Thy dwellings, O Eternal Lord of Hosts!
For those who dwell in Thy house shall ever sing Thy praise!
Blest and happy is the man, who has found his strength in Thee;
He is stronger day by day, and shall in Zion dwell!

MEMORY VERSE:

Ezra 1:3 "Who is among you of all His people? May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem."

family activity

THE POINT:

The nation of Judah, God's people, had departed from obedience to God. Because God was displeased with their sinful ways, He allowed the nation to be conquered and the people to be taken as slaves to the enemy land. The enemy army had destroyed the house of God in Jerusalem. After 70 years God inspired Cyrus the king of Persia to have it rebuilt in Jerusalem. We find the story of the rebuilding of the house of God in the book of Ezra, chapters 1 to 6.

ASK ME...

Who recorded the story of the rebuilding of the house of God?

In what book of the Bible do we find that story of rebuilding the house of God?

What materials were used to rebuild the house of God?

Who was the king of Persia who wanted the house of God rebuilt?

In what city was the house of God rebuilt?

What kind of problems did they have during the rebuilding of the house of God?

What did the people do when the house of God was finally finished?

FAMILY TOGETHER TIME:

Read the story of the rebuilding of God's house in Ezra 1:1 through 6:18. Discuss the reasons for the destruction of the house of God and the captivity of God's people. Talk about the return of the people to their land and their renewed desire to keep God's law and His Holy Days.

MEMORY VERSE:

Ezra 1:3 "Who is among you of all His people? May his God be with him, And let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem."

BUILDING THE HOUSE OF GOD

Teacher: Go over the points below as the children are coloring, cutting the parts of the temple and pasting them together.

We have very little description of the temple's construction and appearance when it was being rebuilt during the life of Ezra. We know that it was 60 cubits high and 60 cubits wide. We also know that it was built with three rows of large stones and one row of cedar timber.

The house of God was probably shaped like a cube with three floors. It would have had three rows of stones and one row of cedar for the second floor, three rows of stones and one row of cedar for the third floor and three rows of stone and one row of cedar for the roof.

The house of God was built on a foundation of very large stones.

As we build our paper house of God, we can learn a lesson about how God is building His spiritual house—the Church.

The exact shape or appearance of the stone and cedar house is not as important as learning about the shape and appearance of the Church of God when that house is finished.

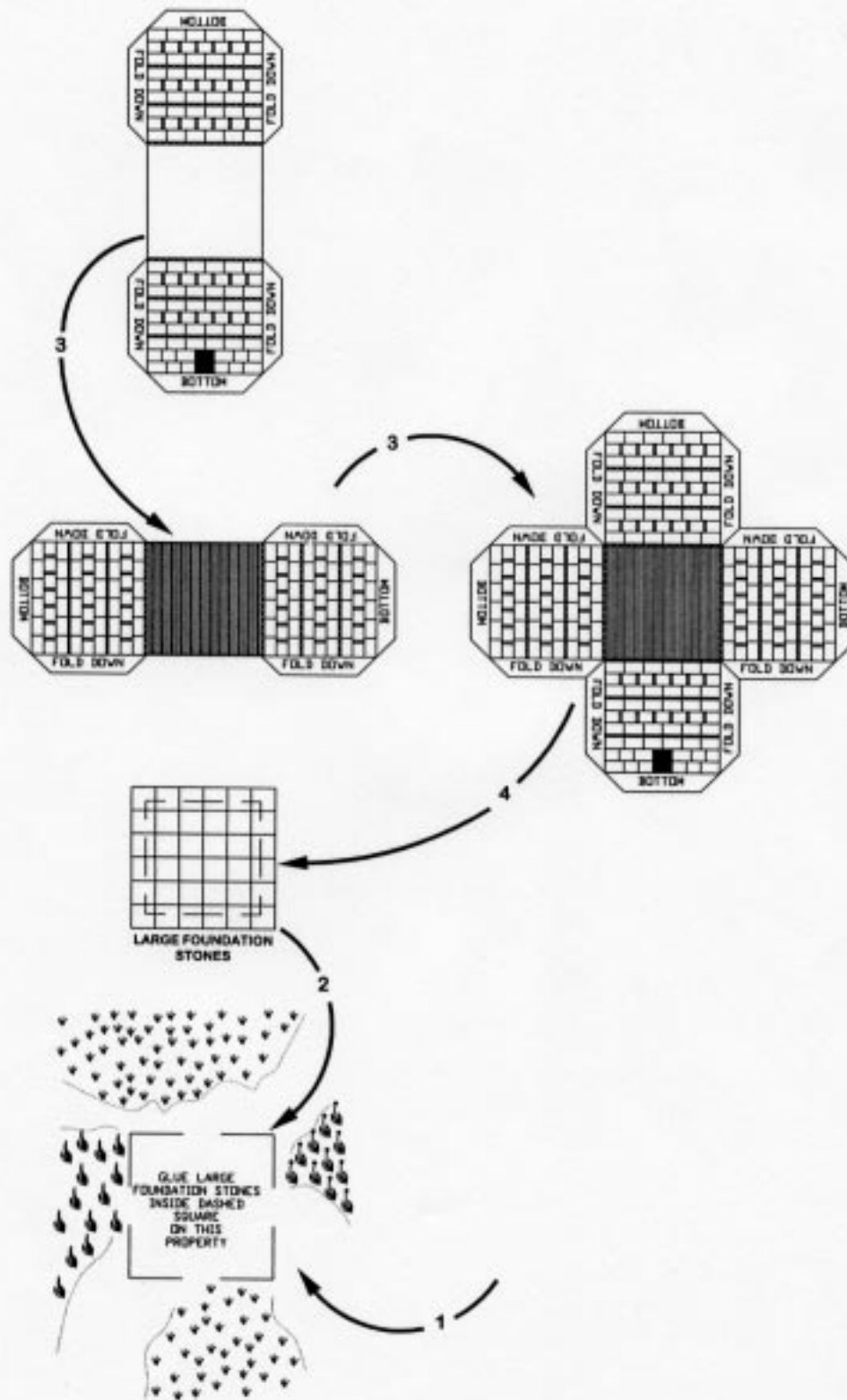
God began to build His house by preparing the earth where His house would be located. He sent prophets and messengers to teach mankind about His plan.

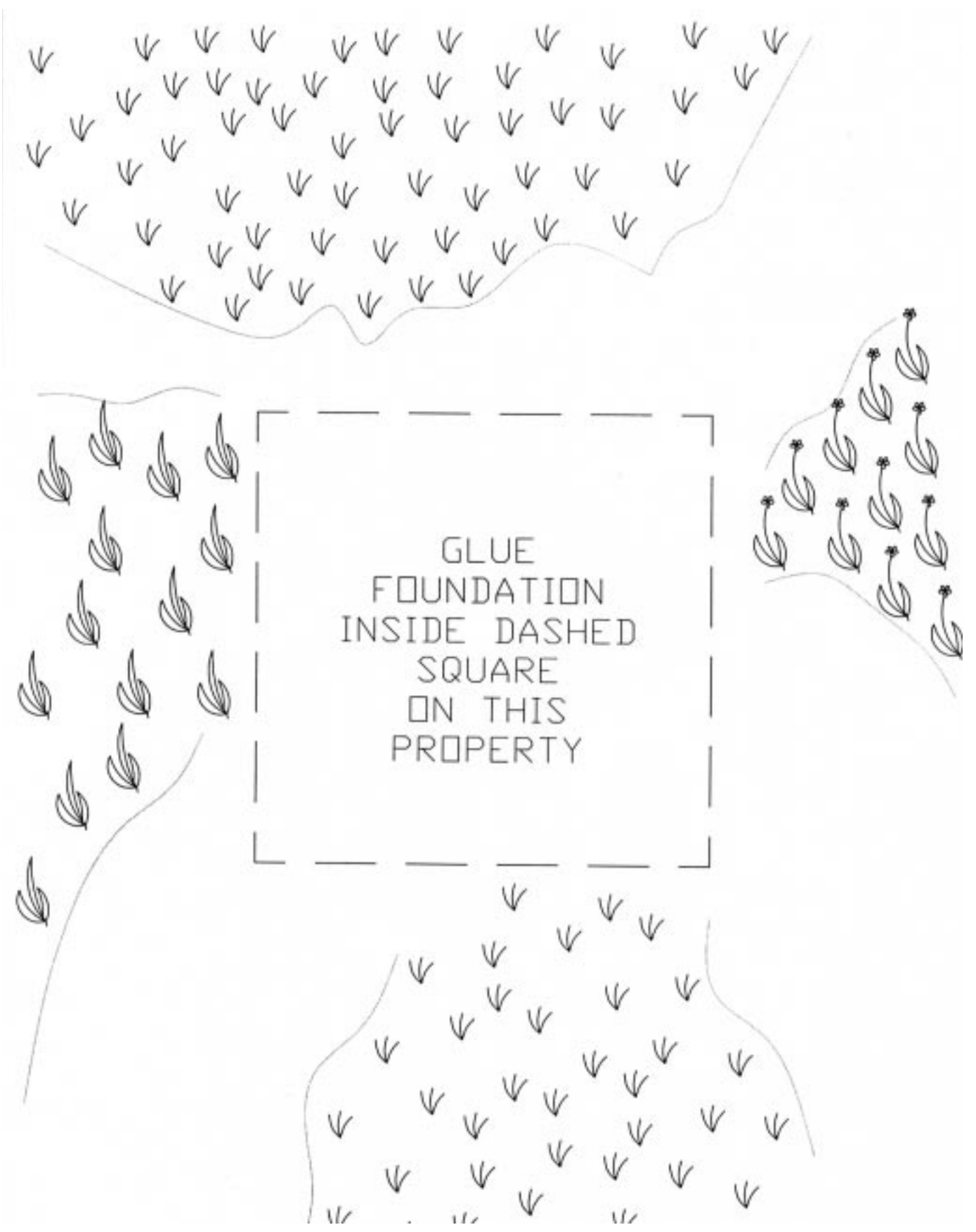
God then laid a foundation of large stones on the prepared earth. The most important stone in the foundation is Jesus Christ. The other foundational stones are the apostles that Jesus chose to teach His people whom He would invite to be part of His Church.

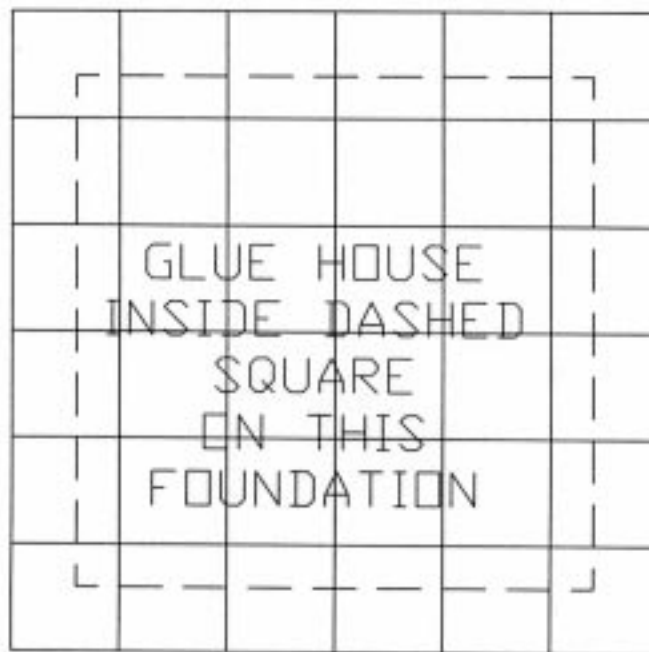
God then began to build His Church, which is His house. He invited people to be a part of His Church and these were the stones in the walls of His house. These stones were laid on the foundation stones to make the house very strong.

When Jesus and God the Father finally come to live on the earth, God's house will be finished.

1. Prepare the earth—color the grass and plants on the property sketch.
2. Lay a foundation for God's house.
 - a. Color the large stones a sand color on the foundation sketch.
 - b. Cut out the foundation and glue it to the property sketch.
3. Build the house.
 - a. Color the house a sand color.
 - b. Cut out the two house parts.
 - c. Glue house1 sketch under house sketch.
 - d. Fold the house and glue tabs.
 - e. Glue the house on the foundation sketch.







CUT OUT FOUNDATION
AND GLUE TO
PROPERTY

FOUNDATION

