

EZRA and NEHEMIAH

Ezra 3:1-4:5

Lesson 3

1. Why did the people build the altar before they ordered material for the temple? (see Ex. 29:43). Do you think the people had enough faith in God?
2. How many of the people took part in setting up the altar and observing the feasts of tabernacles, and making the required offerings?
3. Why would the people go to Sidon and Tyre for cedar trees? Who else in Biblical history had gone to one of these cities for similar materials (see II Chron. 2:3)?
4. Where did the money for the purchase of the materials for the temple come from?
5. Is there any significance of the work on the temple starting in the second month of the year (see I Kings 6:1)?
6. How many of the people came out for the work?
7. Compare what happens in Ezra 3:10-11 with the ceremony for the dedication of the first temple in II Chron. 5:11-13. Considering the circumstances of the dedication of the foundation of the temple, do you think an attitude of pride or of humility characterized the people on this occasion?
8. Why would there be the mixed reaction of 3:11-13 to the laying of the foundation. What might some of the feelings of the people be?
9. Read II Kings 17:24-33 and describe the heritage of the people who now offered to help Zerubbabel build the temple. How does this passage characterize their religion?
10. Was Zerubbabel wrong in refusing the offer of help from the surrounding people? Why are they characterized as “adversaries” in Ezra 4:1? What danger did they pose to the people?
11. What was the response of the adversaries to Zerubbabel’s rebuff? How successful were the adversaries in their efforts (see 4:24)?