

25.02 Rebuilding the Temple (Ezra 4:1–24; 5:1–17; 6:1–22. Supplemental Scriptures: Haggai 1; 2; Zechariah 1–14; Psalms 125; 129; 146; 111; 112; 113; 116; 117)

✓ “*Check*” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows.

[. . .] Brackets indicate a remark to the teacher that will not be read aloud; they also show answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials. Please give credit to the sources of pictures. Likenesses of characters might change with the variety of pictures. Hopefully, this isn’t too confusing to young minds.
- Large toy blocks
- A cloth bag with money in it. However, the bag has holes so that the money falls out.

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print on colorful cardstock and cut apart.

- *Samaritans*: Assyria conquered Israel (in the north) in 722 B.C. Assyrians brought people from other nations to live in Israel to replace Israelites who had been taken out of the land (exiled). Those people from other nations married many of the remaining Israelites and influenced them to worship false gods. These intermarried people lived in the region called Samaria and were known as Samaritans.
- *adversaries*: enemies; someone who is against a person for any reason
- *taxes* and *tribute*: money paid to the government so that the government can build roads, buildings, etc., or protect and help the people

Scripture: (NKJV)

Ezra 4:1 Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the returned exiles were building a temple to the Lord, the God of Israel, 2 they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of fathers’ houses and said to them, “Let us build with you, for we worship your God as you do, and we have been sacrificing to him ever since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria who brought us here.” 3 But Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the rest of the heads of fathers’ houses in Israel said to them, “You have nothing to do with us in building a house to our God; but we alone will build to the Lord, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us.”

4 Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah and made them afraid to build 5 and bribed counselors against them to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia. 6 And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

. . . 11 (This is a copy of the letter that they sent.) “To Artaxerxes the king: Your servants, the men of the province Beyond the River, send greeting. And now 12 be it known to the king that the Jews who came up from you to us have gone to Jerusalem. They are rebuilding that rebellious and wicked city. They are finishing the walls and repairing the foundations. 13 Now be it known to the king that if this city is rebuilt and the walls finished, they will not pay tribute, custom, or toll, and the royal revenue will be impaired. 14 Now because we eat the salt of the palace and it is not fitting for us to witness the king’s dishonor, therefore we send and inform the king, 15 in order that search may be made in the book of the records of your fathers. You will find in the book of the records and learn that this city is a rebellious city, hurtful to kings and provinces, and that sedition was stirred up in it from of old. That was why this city was laid waste. 16 We make known to the king that if this city is rebuilt and its walls finished, you will then have no possession in the province Beyond the River.”

17 The king sent an answer: “To Rehum the commander and Shimshai the scribe and the rest of their associates who live in Samaria and in the rest of the province Beyond the River, greeting. And now 18 the letter that you sent to us has been plainly read before me. 19 And I made a decree, and search has been made, and it

has been found that this city from of old has risen against kings, and that rebellion and sedition have been made in it. 20 And mighty kings have been over Jerusalem, who ruled over the whole province Beyond the River, to whom tribute, custom, and toll were paid. 21 Therefore make a decree that these men be made to cease, and that this city be not rebuilt, until a decree is made by me. 22 And take care not to be slack in this matter. Why should damage grow to the hurt of the king?"

23 Then, when the copy of King Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum and Shimshai the scribe and their associates, they went in haste to the Jews at Jerusalem and by force and power made them cease. 24 Then the work on the house of God that is in Jerusalem stopped, and it ceased until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

5:1 Now the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel who was over them. 2 Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak arose and began to rebuild the house of God that is in Jerusalem, and the prophets of God were with them, supporting them.

3 At the same time Tattenai the governor of the province Beyond the River and Shethar-bozenai and their associates came to them and spoke to them thus: "Who gave you a decree to build this house and to finish this structure?" 4 They also asked them this: "What are the names of the men who are building this building?" 5 But the eye of their God was on the elders of the Jews, and they did not stop them until the report should reach Darius and then an answer be returned by letter concerning it.

6 This is a copy of the letter that Tattenai the governor of the province Beyond the River and Shethar-bozenai and his associates, the governors who were in the province Beyond the River, sent to Darius the king. 7 They sent him a report, in which was written as follows: "To Darius the king, all peace. 8 Be it known to the king that we went to the province of Judah, to the house of the great God. It is being built with huge stones, and timber is laid in the walls. This work goes on diligently and prospers in their hands. 9 Then we asked those elders and spoke to them thus: 'Who gave you a decree to build this house and to finish this structure?' 10 We also asked them their names, for your information, that we might write down the names of their leaders. 11 And this was their reply to us: 'We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the house that was built many years ago, which a great king of Israel built and finished. 12 But because our fathers had angered the God of heaven, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house and carried away the people to Babylonia. 13 However, in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, Cyrus the king made a decree that this house of God should be rebuilt. 14 And the gold and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple that was in Jerusalem and brought into the temple of Babylon, these Cyrus the king took out of the temple of Babylon, and they were delivered to one whose name was Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor; 15 and he said to him, Take these vessels, go and put them in the temple that is in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be rebuilt on its site. 16 Then this Sheshbazzar came and laid the foundations of the house of God that is in Jerusalem, and from that time until now it has been in building, and it is not yet finished.' 17 Therefore, if it seems good to the king, let search be made in the royal archives there in Babylon, to see whether a decree was issued by Cyrus the king for the rebuilding of this house of God in Jerusalem. And let the king send us his pleasure in this matter."

6:1 Then Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in Babylonia, in the house of the archives where the documents were stored. 2 And in Ecbatana, the citadel that is in the province of Media, a scroll was found on which this was written: "A record. 3 In the first year of Cyrus the king, Cyrus the king issued a decree: Concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, let the house be rebuilt, the place where sacrifices were offered, and let its foundations be retained. Its height shall be sixty cubits and its breadth sixty cubits, 4 with three layers of great stones and one layer of timber. Let the cost be paid from the royal treasury. 5 And also let the gold and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple that is in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, be restored and brought back to the temple that is in Jerusalem, each to its place. You shall put them in the house of God."

6 "Now therefore, Tattenai, governor of the province Beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai, and your associates the governors who are in the province Beyond the River, keep away. 7 Let the work on this house of

God alone. Let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews rebuild this house of God on its site. 8 Moreover, I make a decree regarding what you shall do for these elders of the Jews for the rebuilding of this house of God. The cost is to be paid to these men in full and without delay from the royal revenue, the tribute of the province from Beyond the River. 9 And whatever is needed—bulls, rams, or sheep for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, or oil, as the priests at Jerusalem require—let that be given to them day by day without fail, 10 that they may offer pleasing sacrifices to the God of heaven and pray for the life of the king and his sons. 11 Also I make a decree that if anyone alters this edict, a beam shall be pulled out of his house, and he shall be impaled on it, and his house shall be made a dunghill. 12 May the God who has caused his name to dwell there overthrow any king or people who shall put out a hand to alter this, or to destroy this house of God that is in Jerusalem. I Darius make a decree; let it be done with all diligence.”

13 Then, according to the word sent by Darius the king, Tattenai, the governor of the province Beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai, and their associates did with all diligence what Darius the king had ordered. 14 And the elders of the Jews built and prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. They finished their building by decree of the God of Israel and by decree of Cyrus and Darius and Artaxerxes king of Persia; 15 and this house was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.

16 And the people of Israel, the priests and the Levites, and the rest of the returned exiles, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy. 17 They offered at the dedication of this house of God 100 bulls, 200 rams, 400 lambs, and as a sin offering for all Israel 12 male goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel. 18 And they set the priests in their divisions and the Levites in their divisions, for the service of God at Jerusalem, as it is written in the Book of Moses.

19 On the fourteenth day of the first month, the returned exiles kept the Passover. 20 For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves together; all of them were clean. So they slaughtered the Passover lamb for all the returned exiles, for their fellow priests, and for themselves. 21 It was eaten by the people of Israel who had returned from exile, and also by every one who had joined them and separated himself from the uncleanness of the peoples of the land to worship the Lord, the God of Israel. 22 And they kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy, for the Lord had made them joyful and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria to them, so that he aided them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

Introduction/Review:

King Cyrus had decreed that the Jews could go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple. Under the leadership of Zerubbabel, the princely leader, and Jeshua, the high priest, the people rebuilt the altar on which they sacrificed to the Lord; then they laid the foundation of the Temple. How they loudly rejoiced (or wept) when the Temple was completed! All seemed to be going well—until—

Story:

Offer to help

The Samaritans, who had been living around Jerusalem while the Jews were in captivity and who ✓ probably were still in governing power there, came to Zerubbabel and Jeshua and said, “Let us build with you, for we seek your God as you do, and we have sacrificed unto him for many years.”

Hmmm. Sounds like a very kind offer, doesn't it? What would you answer? Probably most of us would say, “Sure. Here's a hammer. Get to work over there.” But the Bible tells us these people were adversaries, enemies of God's purpose. Did they sound like adversaries when they said, “We seek your God as you do, and we have sacrificed unto him for many years”? [No.]

Yet, Zerubbabel and Jeshua knew they served other gods and were not true friends. In fact, these two men answered them quite sharply. “You have nothing to do with us.” In other words, ✓ “You don't seek our God and sacrifice to Him as we do. You have nothing to do with us to build a house unto our God, but we ourselves together will build to the Lord God of Israel as King Cyrus commanded us.”

Efforts to discourage

After these words of confrontation, the Samaritans revealed that they were not so kind as they had first appeared, for then they began to do what they ✓probably had intended all along: They did all they could to *stop* the building of the Temple. They “weakened the hands of the people of Judah and troubled them in building” (Ezra 4:4). Another translation of this verse states that they “discouraged them and made them afraid to build” (ESV). How do you suppose they would do that? Well, maybe they could ✓stop the shipment of supplies from Tyre, threaten to break down what was already built, tell the workmen they were doing a poor job, make fun of them while they worked, or keep some of the money the king had said they could use. Although we don’t if they did any of these things, the Bible states they did hire counselors against the Israelites to frustrate their purpose.

This difficult situation continued as long as King Cyrus lived. But when Cyrus died and his son became king, things got really bad, ✓for Artaxerxes, Cyrus’s son, was not a friend to the Jews as his father had been.

Letters to tattle

As soon as Artaxerxes began to rule, those Samaritans wrote letters of accusation against the people of Judah and Jerusalem. This is what the letters said: “Those Jews who came to Jerusalem from Babylon are building a rebellious and bad city. They have set up city walls.” This was a lie, for the walls of the city had not yet been built.

“O King, if this city is built and the walls completely set up again, then the people will not pay you taxes, and that will hurt your treasury. Since you, O King, supply us with a certain amount of money to govern here, we want to be sure that you, O King, are honored. Therefore, we urge you to search your history books so that you may be reminded that Jerusalem is a rebellious city and hurtful unto past kings. In fact, Jerusalem was so rebellious it had to be destroyed. We are certain that if the city is built again, you will have no power of government over here, for they will take over the government.”

When King Artaxerxes received this letter, he ordered his servants, “Bring me our records to find out about the city of Jerusalem in Judah. Let me see them. Hmmm. I see here that Jerusalem rebelled against the kings of Babylon. Before that, I read that mighty Jewish kings ruled over all of our countries around us, and they even demanded we pay tribute to them. Hmmm. This doesn’t look good. We don’t want Jerusalem to regain power. No. The work on the city must stop until I say so. Tell the Jews to stop working!”

Command to stop

When the Samaritans received the king’s letter, they were only too happy to rush to Jerusalem and ✓wave the letter in the faces of Zerubbabel and Jeshua. “The king says to stop working!” they cried. “Stop now or you’ll be in real trouble!”

If you had been Zerubbabel and Jeshua, what would you have done—keep on working, or stop? I confess that I would probably have stopped. In fact, that’s what the Jews did. ✓For about seven years, while Artaxerxes was king, nothing was done to build the Temple. Since that work had stopped, ✓the people concentrated on building their own houses.

Prophets to preach

But when a new king, Darius (not Daniel's Darius but a later king with the same name), began to rule, Haggai and Zechariah, prophets of the one true God, began to preach. Haggai said: “You all say, ‘It is not the right time to build the Temple.’ Is it a time, then, for you to live in your fancy houses while God’s house is wasted? Just think what has happened to you during this time you haven’t been building. Although you have planted lots of seed, you have harvested very little food. I have kept the heavens from giving you enough moisture for your crops. Although you have earned money, it’s been like putting the money into a bag with holes. [Demonstrate.]

“This is what the Lord of hosts says, ‘Think about what you are doing. Go get the wood to build *My* house,

and I will be delighted. I will be glorified. Why have your efforts yielded so little? It's because My House is wasted, and you just stay in your own houses."

Students, why did God say He had made their earnings buy little and their crops harvest little? [Because they had neglected the building of God's Temple.] They had disobeyed God ✓by not continuing to build. After all, Cyrus, in addition to God, had commanded them to build.

Zechariah, as well as Haggai, had a message from God. Much of his book predicts exact events in the life of Jesus, like Judas's giving thirty pieces of silver and that money being used to buy the potter's field and like Jesus' being called "The Branch" and His being the "Shepherd."

Zechariah also prophesied many things that have not yet happened, but he had some words of prophecy directly for Zerubbabel. He said, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts. The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also complete it.' Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you."

Students, what did Zechariah say Zerubbabel would do? [Build and finish the Temple.] You can be sure that would happen, for God had foretold it. Sure enough, after hearing Haggai's and Zechariah's messages, Zerubbabel and Jeshua got to building again—but not without trouble.

The new king, Darius, had appointed a new governor of Judah. "Who told you to build this house?" the governor asked. "And what are your names?"

Search to authenticate

The rulers of the Jews politely answered, "We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the temple that was built ✓about 500 years ago, which a great king (Solomon) built and completed. But because our fathers provoked the God of heaven to wrath, He gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, who destroyed this temple and carried the people away to Babylon.

"However, in his first year as king of Babylon, Cyrus issued a decree to build this house of God. Also, King Cyrus took from the temple of Babylon the gold and silver articles of the house of God that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple that was in Jerusalem. They were given to one whom he had made governor—Zerubbabel. Cyrus told Zerubbabel, 'Take these articles; go, carry them to Jerusalem, and let the house of God be rebuilt on its former site.' Then Zerubbabel came and laid the foundation of the house of God, but it is not finished."

That was a good short history of what had happened, all right. The elders continued: "Let a search be made of the king's records in Babylon to see whether Cyrus actually issued a decree to build this house of God, and let the king tell us what he wants to do about this matter."

Allowance to build

Darius did search the record and did find Cyrus's decree. He wrote a response to the governor that said: "(1) Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God. In addition, (2) let the cost be paid at the king's expense from taxes collected in Judah. Give this money to these men immediately so that they are not hindered. (3) More than that, whatever they need—young bulls, rams, and lambs for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil—give it to them every day without fail so that they may offer sacrifices to the God of heaven and pray for me and my sons. (4) If anyone changes this order, that man shall be hanged from timber pulled from his own house. May the God who causes His name to dwell in Jerusalem destroy any king or people who put their hand to alter this order or to destroy the house of God in Jerusalem. I, Darius, issue a decree; let it be done diligently."

What a wonderful way God answered through King Darius! Isn't that just like our God—to give far more than we expect? ✓Within four years (but eighteen years after the decree of Cyrus), the Temple was finished! Like Solomon, Zerubbabel dedicated the House of God with great joy and with sacrifices.

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:
 - Zechariah predicted specific events in the life of Jesus
 - Judas's being given thirty pieces of silver to betray Jesus
 - Those returned pieces of silver being used to buy a potter's field
 - Jesus' being called "The Branch"
 - Jesus' being the "Shepherd"
- When we have troubles and conflicts, we need to encourage ourselves in the Word of God.
- When we know we have permission, especially God's, do what He has said even if important people oppose. Jesus said, "My meat is to do the will of him [the Father] who sent me and to finish his work" (John 4:34), and "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38).
- Work hard to complete a job. Do it well.

Activities:

- Play dough: foundation and walls of a building; scrolls
- Snack: Rice Krispies[®] treat; recipe may be found at [The Original Rice Krispies Treats™ Recipe - Rice Krispies®](#). Cut into stone-like blocks.
- Have some students build wooden- or toy-block walls. Other students can act like Samaritans, taunting and threatening.
- Watch a video, "Zerubbabel and Jeshua Say 'No' to the Pretenders" at [Bible Stories for the Young : Stories \(biblestoriesonline.com\)](#). Click "Stories," and scroll more than halfway down the page.
- Sing "We're Building up the Temple." (See below.)
- Review questions: (Game: A student who answers a question correctly may put a coin in the bag with a hole.)
 1. What king had originally said the Jews could go back to Jerusalem to build the Temple and city? [Cyrus.]
 2. Who were the people living around Jerusalem while the Jews were in Babylon? Hint: Their people group name starts with an S. [Samaritans.]
 3. What did Zerubbabel and Jeshua know about these Samaritans who acted so nice? [They were enemies.]
 4. When the Samaritans sent letters to tattle on the Jews, what did King Artaxerxes do? [Ordered the work to cease.]
 5. Name one of the two Old Testament prophets who encouraged the Jews to build in spite of the king's command. [Haggai; Zechariah.]
 6. Tell about one of the two examples Haggai gave to show how God was displeased with the work's being stopped. [Money was worth little—like putting it in a bag with a hole; crops yielded very little because God stopped the rain.]
 7. When the Samaritans again sent letters to the new King Darius, what did he answer? [Let the work continue; Cyrus truly did command it to be done.]
 8. Tell one of the four things Darius commanded be done for the benefit of Jerusalem. [(1) Leave the work of this house of God alone; (2) Let the cost be paid at the king's expense from taxes collected in Judah. (3) Give the people whatever they need—young bulls, rams, and lambs for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil. (4) If anyone changes this order, that man shall be hanged from timber pulled from his own house.]

Memory Verse[s]:

- Zechariah 4:6: “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.’”

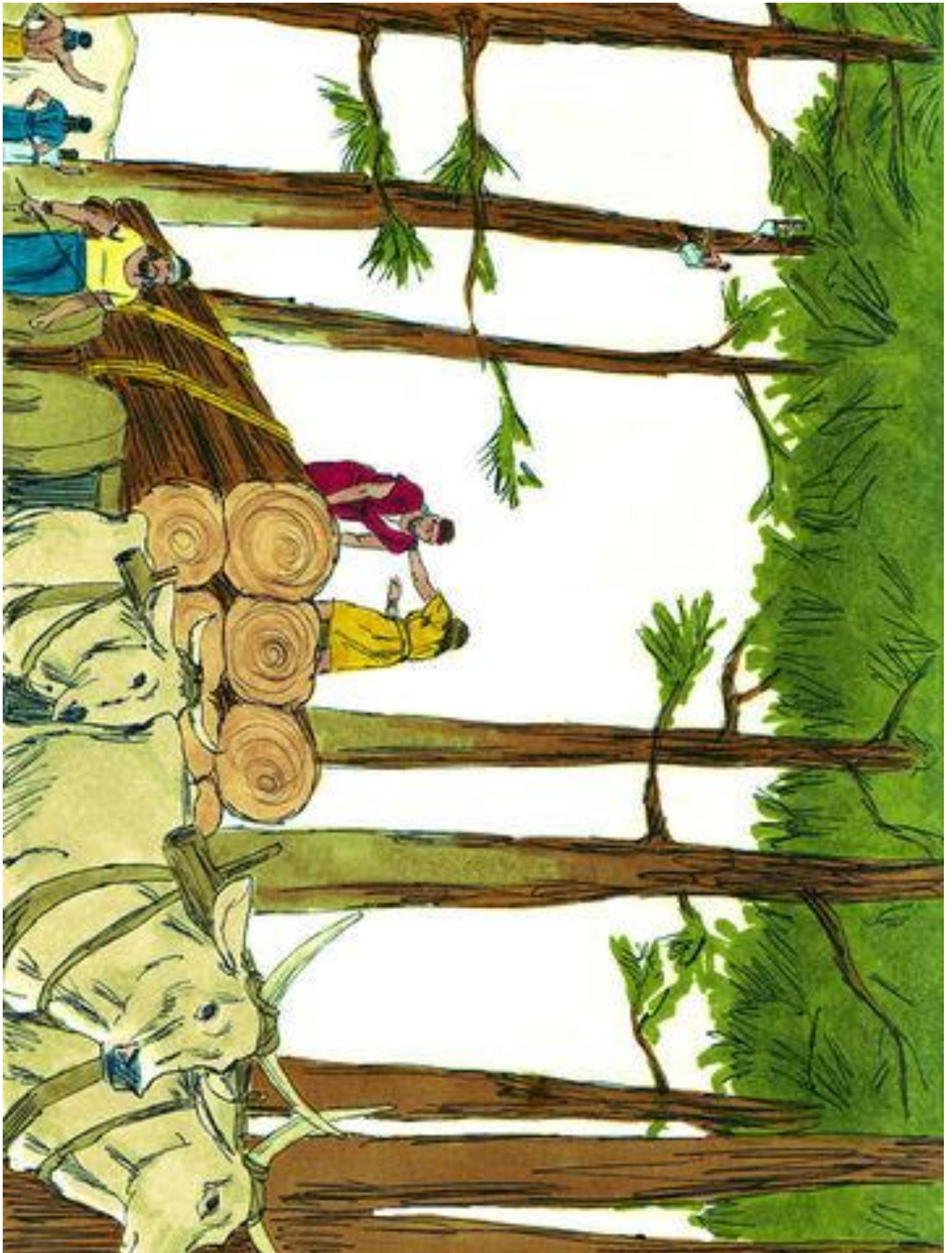
Handwork:

- Color the picture[s] or do one of the other activities found at [CURR121.PDF \(calvarycurriculum.com\)](#).
- Or, for each student print a flip book page found at [Rebuilding the Temple Flip Book \(teachusthe bible.com\)](#). Have students cut out each panel of the flip book. Staple the pages together in the correct order. “Show the students how to flip through the pages quickly to see the temple being built.”

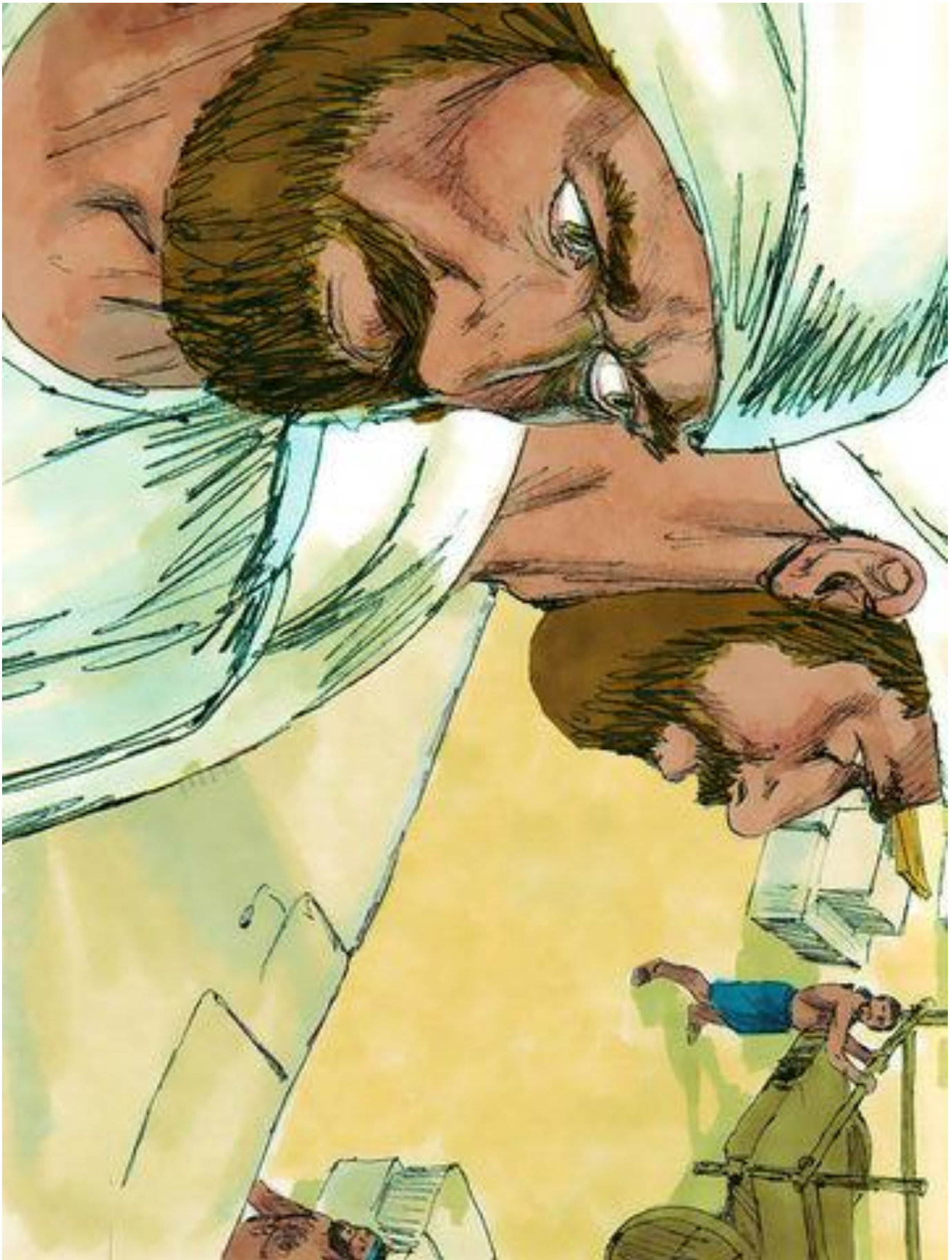
Samaritans

adversaries

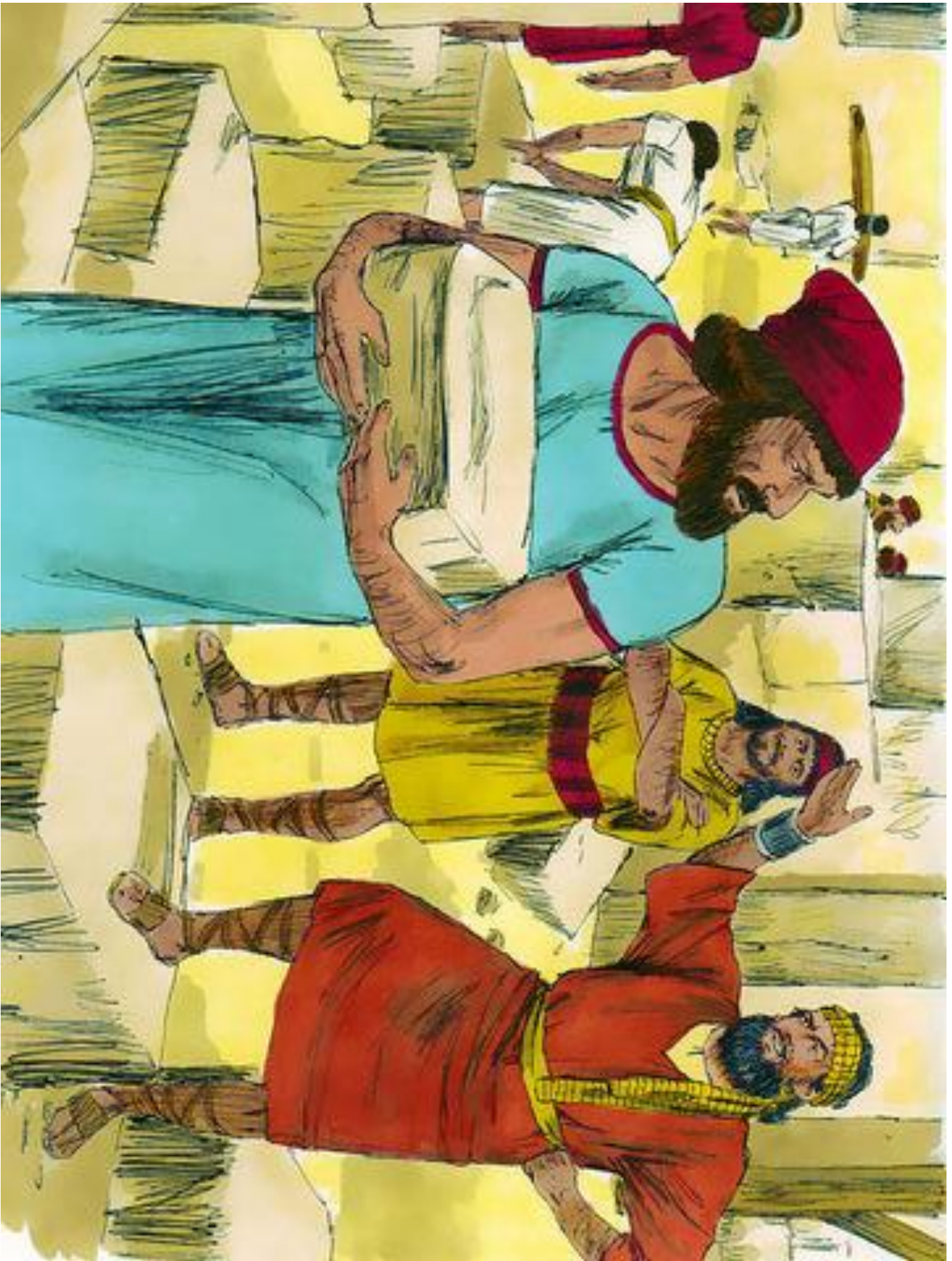
taxes / tribute



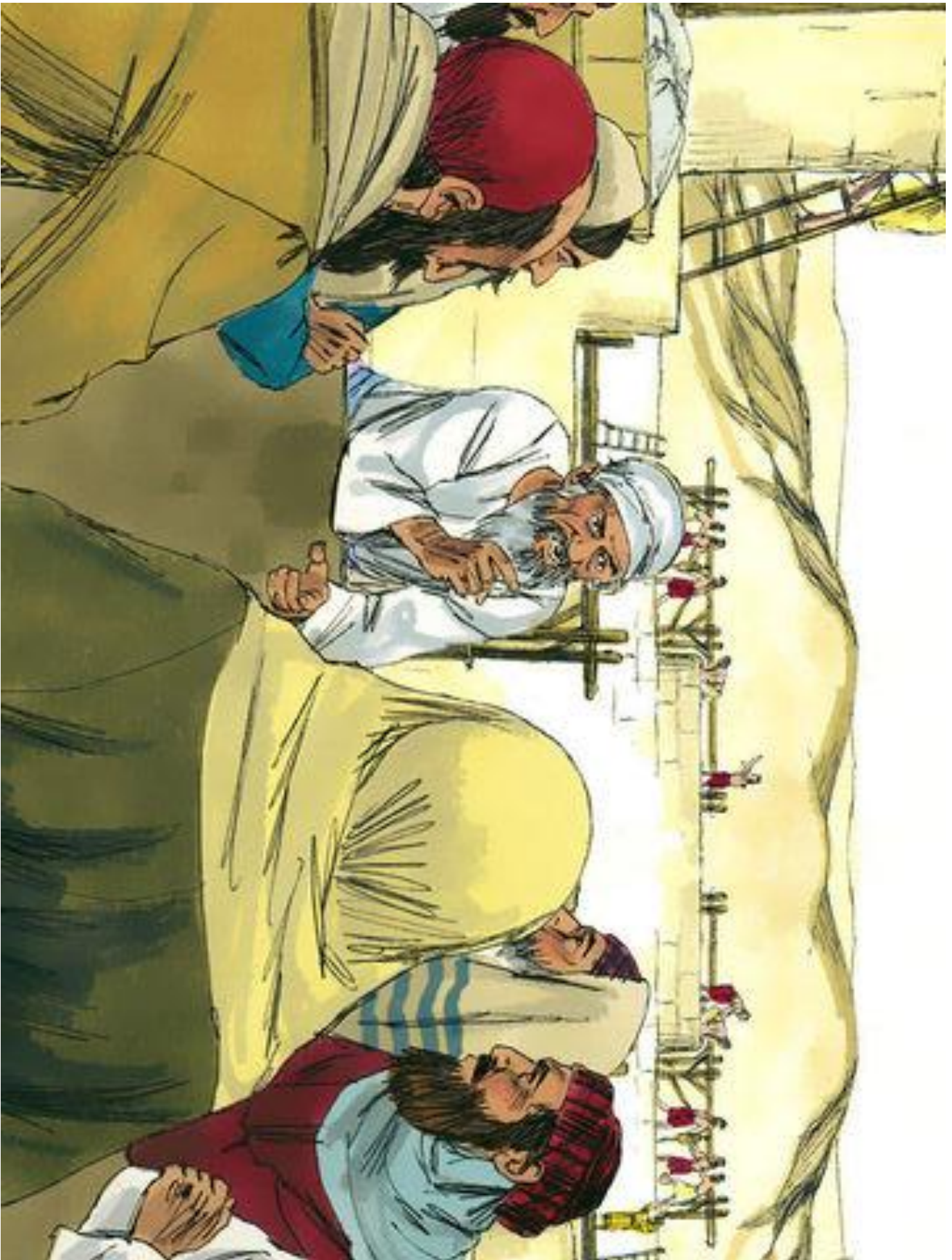
[FreeBibleimages :: Rebuilding the Temple: Part 1 :: Jews return to Jerusalem to lay the foundations of the Temple \(Ezra 1-3\)](#)



[FreeBibleimages :: Rebuilding the Temple: Part 2 :: Opposition to the Temple being rebuilt \(Ezra 4-6\)](#)



[FreeBibleimages :: Rebuilding the Temple: Part 2 :: Opposition to the Temple being rebuilt \(Ezra 4-6\)](#)



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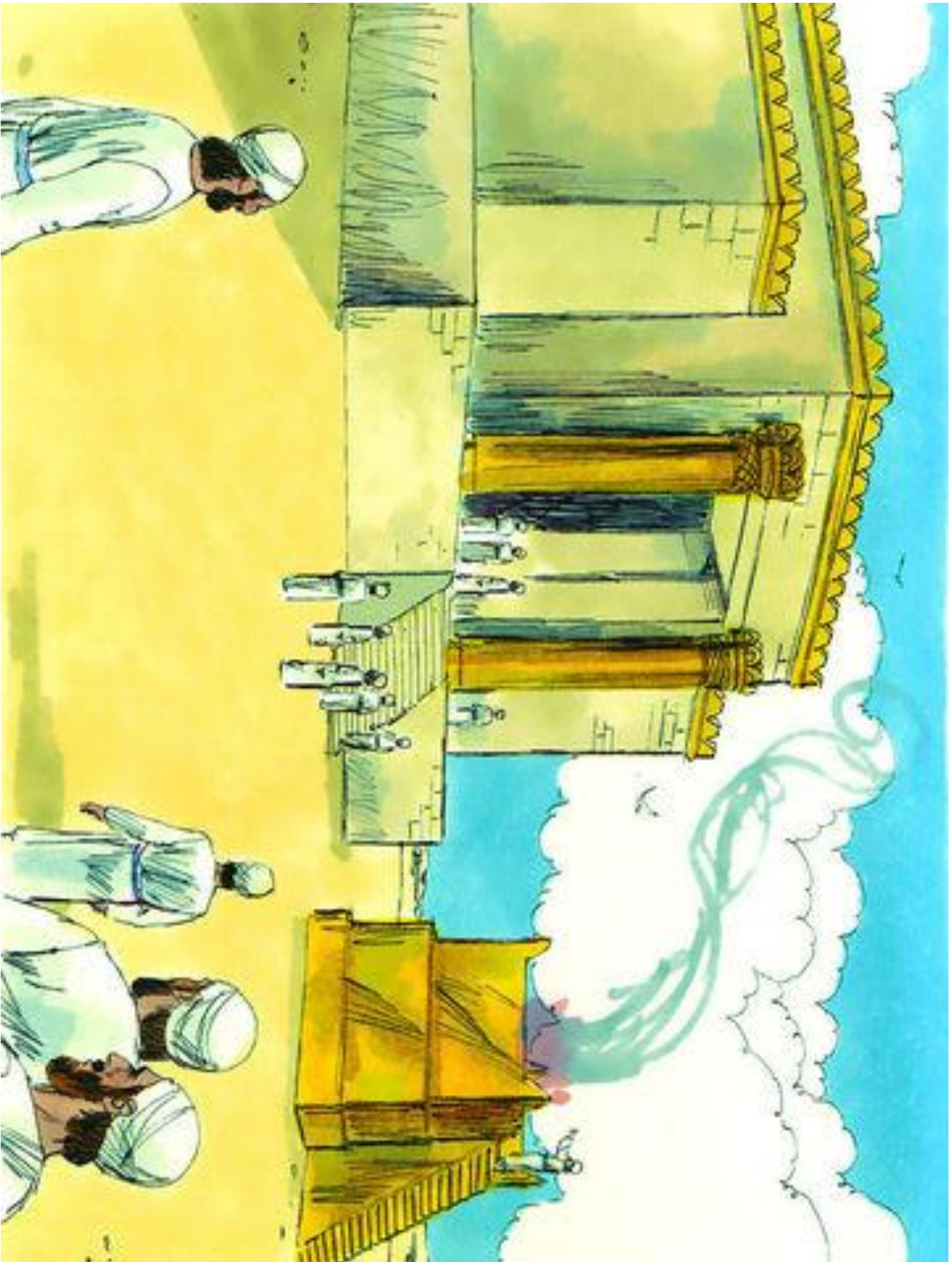


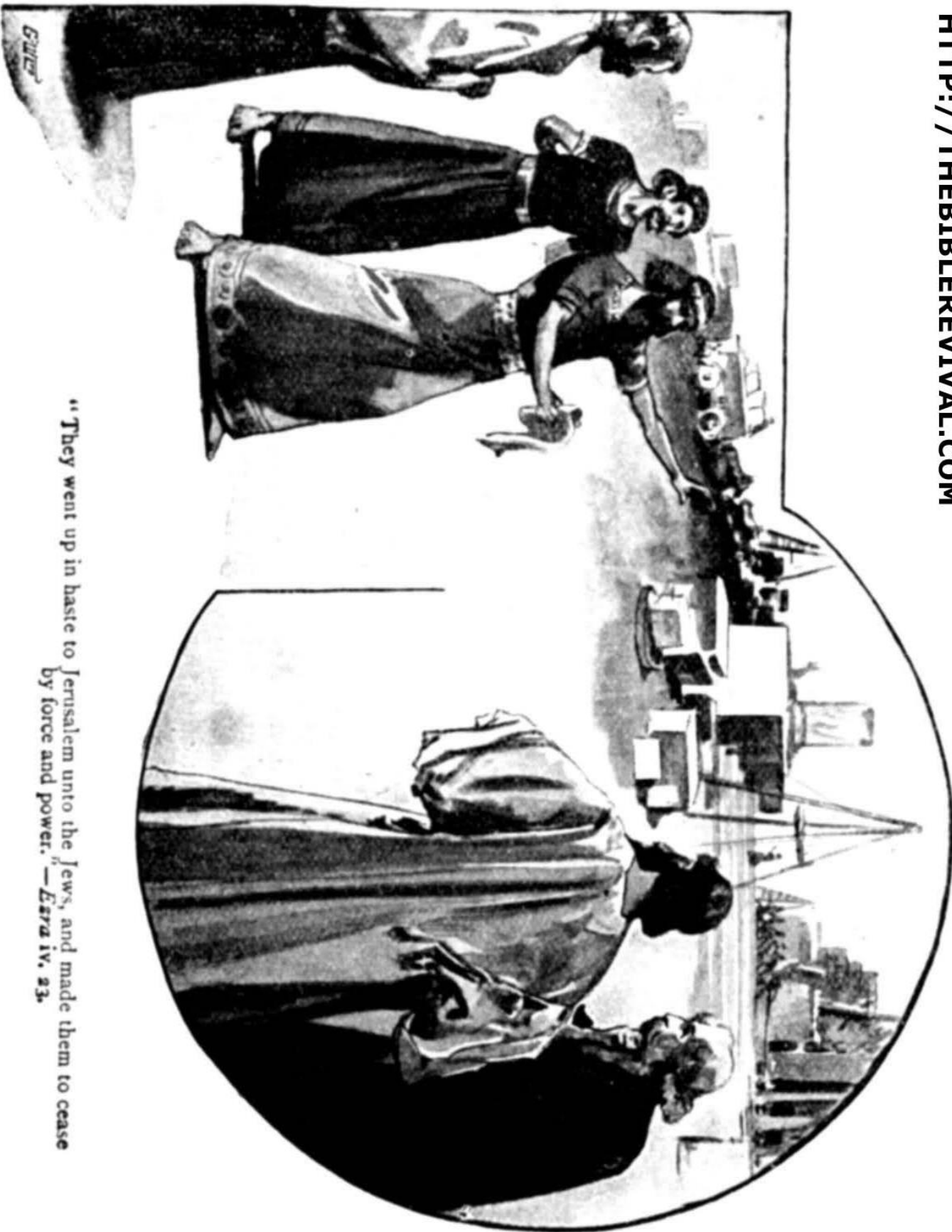
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“They went up in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews, and made them to cease by force and power.”—*Ezra iv. 23.*

GILLEY

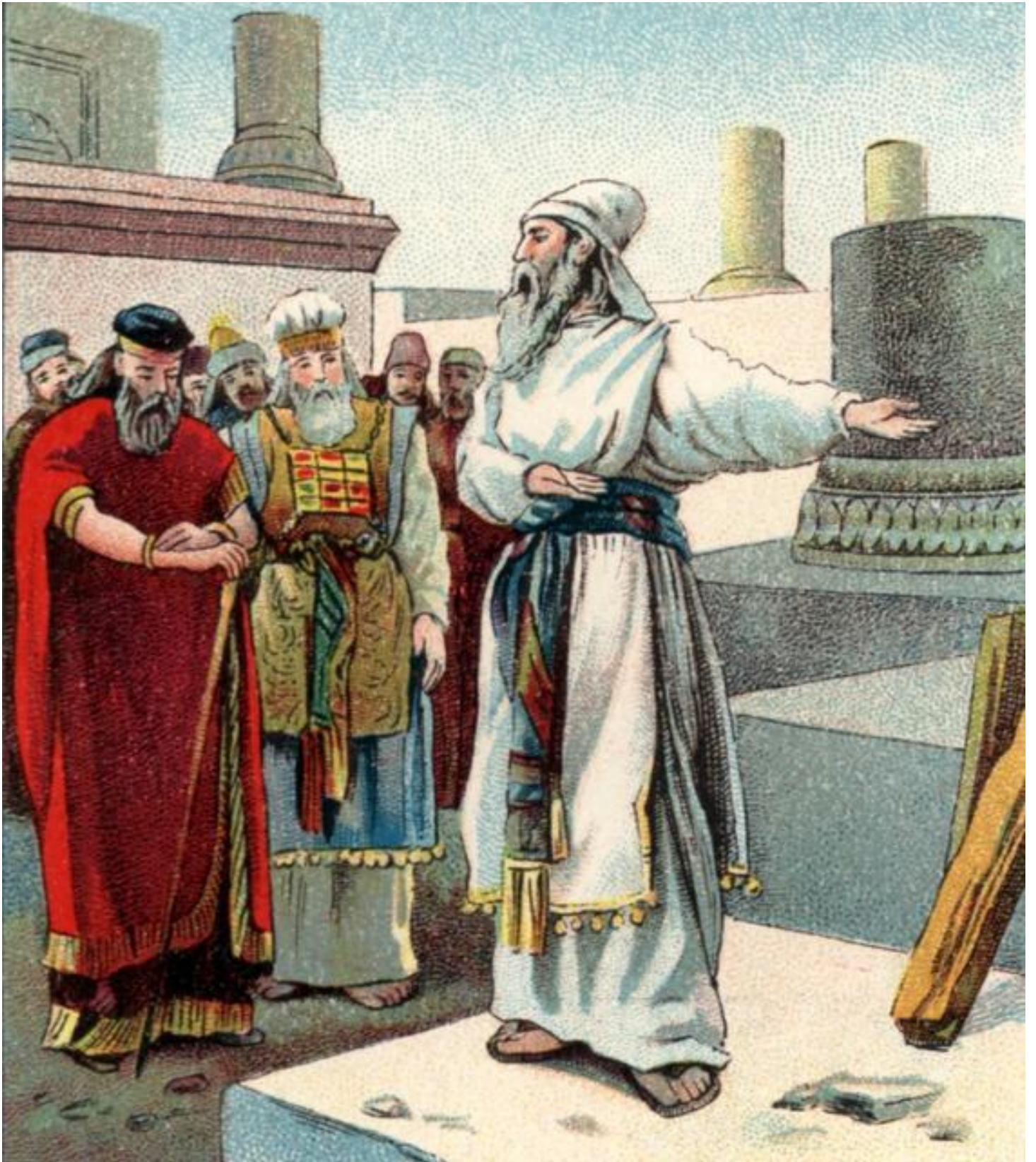


"Then spake Haggai the
Lord's messenger."
—Hag. i. 13.

C.J. STANILAND.



"Built with great stones."—*Ezra* v. 8. (A bit of the wall of Solomon's temple.)



(unknown resource)

BUILDING UP THE TEMPLE

J. M.

J. OWEN LONG

We're ^① build-ing up the Tem - ple, ^① build-ing up the Tem - ple, ^② Build-ing
Melody in large notes

up the Tem - ple of the Lord; Say, ^③ broth-er, will you help us?

^④ Sis-ter, will you help us? ^② Build-ing up the Tem-ple of the Lord. Lord.

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MOTIONS: ① Place hand over hand, ascending. ② Point up. ③ Point to a boy. ④ To a girl.

From *Salvation Songs for Children*, #4, Child Evangelism Fellowship, 1951.

1. Leave the work alone.
2. Pay for it with tax money.
3. Supply sacrifices.
4. Destroy anyone who changes this decree.