



**BK WEEKEND**

February 15 &16, 2020

## The Captives Came Home (Lesson 2)

Ezra 1 -3

Unit: Return to the Land

Unit Bible Verse: Jeremiah 29:11

**Bible Story:** Many years before God's people were taken to Babylon, God promised the prophet Jeremiah that the exile would last 70 years; then God would bring His people back home. God always keeps His promises and 70 years later, God gave Cyrus, king of Persia, who had taken over Babylon, an idea. Cyrus said, "Let all of God's people go back to Jerusalem so they can rebuild the Lord's temple. Give them gold and silver and animals. Give them gifts for God's temple." The exile was over! God's people were free to go back to their homes. God's people got ready, and their neighbors gave them gifts - gold and silver and animals and other expensive things.

Zerubbabel (zuh RUHB uh buhl) and the high priest led God's people back to Judah. Many of the people were born in Babylon; they had never seen the land God had given their parents and grandparents. In all, thousands of people went back to Judah. They settled in their hometowns and set up their houses. Then the people met together in Jerusalem to rebuild the Lord's temple.

First, the priests rebuilt the altar in the same place it used to be. They followed all the laws of God for building. When the altar was finished, they offered burnt offerings to God. They had a festival like God had told them to do, and they made sacrifices to God.

Then God's people gave money to stonecutters and carpenters who would work on God's temple. They paid people to bring cedar logs to Jerusalem. Finally, when everything was ready, the people started to work. They laid the foundation of the temple. The foundation was important; it would make the building strong.

When the foundation was finished, the priests put on special clothes, and the people praised God. They sang, "The Lord is good. His faithful love will last forever." Some of the older people remembered what the temple had looked like before it had been destroyed and they weren't happy. They cried so loud that the people could be heard far away. But the rest of the people shouted and praised God. They were so happy! The foundation of the temple was complete!

### Questions/Discussion

- 1) What promise did God keep?
- 2) How do we know that God keeps His promises?

**Christ Connection:** Zerubbabel led God's people home to fix the temple. Jesus came to earth to save God's people. One day Jesus will come back. He will fix up a greater home for all of God's people, and we will live with Him forever.

**Family Activity:** Build a pillow fort with your kids.

Take flashlights and a Bible into the fort and read different passages about God's faithfulness, such as Exodus 12:41; Joshua 21:43-45; Ezra 1:1-4. Discuss God's faithfulness to send Jesus.

**Prayer:** Dear God, thank You for always keeping Your promises. You love and take care of us. You give us everything we need. We love You! In Jesus' name, amen.



**Unit Summary:** After the Israelites' disobedience led to 70 years of exile in Babylon, God kept His promise to bring His people home to Judah. Prophets encouraged the people to rebuild the temple. The prophet Zechariah told of a future King who would come humbly on a donkey. God later kept His promise to send King Jesus. *Kids will be learning from the books of Ezra, Haggai and Zechariah.*

**Lesson Summary:** God's people had been living in Babylon for 70 years. Some of God's people had died in Babylon. Some of their children and grandchildren were born in Babylon and grew up there. But Babylon was not their home.

Before the people of Judah were exiled, God had spoken through the prophet Jeremiah. These are the words of the Lord: "These nations will serve the king of Babylon for seventy years" (Jer. 25:11). Then the Lord said, "When seventy years for Babylon are complete, I will attend to you and will confirm my promise concerning you to restore you to this place" (Jer. 29:10). The time had come for God's people to go back home.

Cyrus, the king of the Persian empire, had overthrown Babylon. Cyrus took over the kingdom, including the lands of Israel and Judah. In the following year, the Lord did something miraculous in Cyrus's heart. He prompted Cyrus to issue a decree: All the Jewish exiles are free to return to their ancestral homes.

The exile was over! God's people were free to return to their own land. They were free to live as God's special people. The first group of Judean exiles returned home under the leadership of Zerubbabel (zuh RUHB uh buhl). Zerubbabel was the grandson of King Jehoiachin, who had been taken to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. (See 2 Kings 24:8-13.)

Ezra 2:64-65 says nearly 50,000 people traveled back to Judah. When they got to Jerusalem, they began working to rebuild the temple that the Chaldeans had destroyed. (See 2 Chron. 36:19.)

**As you talk with your kids,** explain that the temple was the place where God met with His people. Jesus came to earth to rescue God's people from sin. When Jesus returns, He will restore the earth and will dwell with His people forever.

Zerubbabel led God's people back to the temple to rebuild it. The temple was the place where God met with His people on earth. Jesus came to earth to rescue God's people. One day Jesus will return to restore a greater home for all of God's people, and we will spend eternity with Him.

### **Unit Key Memory Verse: Jeremiah 29:11**

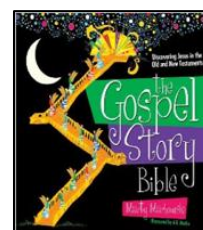
- *Age 2 – 3:* I know the plans I have for you...a hope."
- *Age 4 – 5:* "I know the plans I have for you...plans...to give you a future and a hope."
- *Grade K – 3 & Preteen:* "I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."

**Preteen Daily Readings:** This week's (**February 10**) readings are Micah 6:8, Hebrews 12:28-29, Jeremiah 20:13, Obadiah 21, 1 Corinthians 3:19-20 and Matthew 5:44.

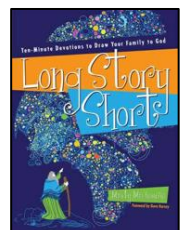
**Family Devotional:** Our desire is for kids to hear from the Bible first at home and then have the message be reinforced at church on the weekend. In addition to, or in lieu of the provided story, you can use these devotionals with your family. These can be purchased in the Berean Café.



Age 2-5, Page 150



Grade K-3, Story 76



Grade 4-5, Week 76