



UNIT 17 | SESSION 2 | JANUARY 11-12, 2020

## 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> Lesson

# The Captives Came Home

**Bible Passage:** Ezra 1-3

**Story Point:** God kept His promise to bring His people home.

**Key Passage:** “I know the plans I have for you”- this is the Lord’s declaration- “Plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope” Jeremiah 29:11.

**Christ Connection:** One day Jesus will make a greater home for all of God’s people and we will spend eternity with Him.

**Big Picture Question:** How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.

**KID CONNECT:  
10 MINUTES**

**LARGE GROUP:  
30 MINUTES**

**SMALL GROUP:  
20 MINUTES**

## LEADER BIBLE STUDY

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.)

Explain to kids 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.

## KID CONNECT

### WELCOME TIME

(VIDEO: INTRO MUSIC)

Play intro music and greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. As kids arrive, ask them what is the farthest they have traveled from home. Where did they go? What was it like being so far away?

SAY • Traveling the world can be a lot of fun. It's a great way to learn about the world God created and experience the cultures of different people, all of whom are loved by God. But it can also be great to come back home after being away. That was especially true for the Jews, who had been forced to live away from their homes for 70 years.

## LARGE GROUP

### COUNTDOWN

(VIDEO: COUNTDOWN)

Show the countdown video as you transition to Large Group. Set it to end as the session begins.

### LARGE GROUP GAME

(SFX: GAME INTRO MUSIC, SFX: AIRPLANE MUSIC)

### PAPER PLANES

(Paper, Pens, Painter's Tape)

SAY • It's game time again! I need everyone to sit with their small group. We are going to play a game called Paper Planes. Small Group Leaders – please come grab some paper and get your team to make some paper airplanes. You guys will only have a few minutes to make them. Then, you will choose 1 plane from your small group to be your Paper Plane Participant (say that 5 times fast). Put your small group's name on it with your pen and come stand behind this line on the floor.

One at a time, you will throw your plane and whichever one travels the furthest is the winner!

## WORSHIP

(VIDEO: ALIVE, VIDEO: THIS IS LIVING NOW)

SAY • Let's worship God!

## INTRODUCE THE SESSION

(CG: THEME BACKGROUND)

(Stuffed Animal)

### Leader enters holding stuffed animal

SAY • Hey, friends! How's everyone feeling today? I'm going to be honest - I'm a little tired. I just flew in from my trip this week. I've been traveling so much it seems like I haven't been home in forever! Well, maybe not forever. I guess I've only been gone for five days. But even just a few days away from home makes me homesick. Do you ever get homesick when you travel? The thing I always miss the most is sleeping in my own bed. [*Hold up stuffed animal. Play this part up since you know it's a joke.*] Mr. Bubbles here always travels with me wherever I go, but it's still nice to get home to my own bed.

You know, a five day trip away from home may seem like a long time, but the Bible story I have for you today makes it seem like the blink of an eye. You see, in this story God's people were away from home for 70 years!

## BIG PICTURE QUESTION

(CG: BIG PICTURE QUESTION)

SAY • Before we begin, let's remember our big picture question, *How is Jesus the perfect Prophet?* Does anyone remember the answer? That's right. *Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.* That means that Jesus' words, thoughts, and actions were exactly in line with what God the Father wanted. Because Jesus is God the Son, He has all power and authority. Every prophecy in the Old Testament led to Jesus, and all God's promises will come true in Jesus.

## GIANT TIMELINE

(CG: GIANT TIMELINE)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

SAY • The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah told God's people that because they repeatedly disobeyed God they would be sent into exile. Exile is when someone is forced to leave his or her country and move somewhere else. God's people were sent into exile to Babylon. The stories about Daniel in the lions' den and the three friends being saved from the fiery furnace

all happened in Babylon during the exile. Jeremiah also prophesied that the exile would only last for 70 years. At the end of those 70 years, it was finally time for God’s people to return to their homeland.

## WATCH THE BIBLE STORY

**(VIDEO: THE CAPTIVES CAME HOME, CG: BIBLE STORY PICTURE, CG: STORY POINT)**  
**(Bible)**

Show the Bible story video “The Captives Came Home.”

**SAY** • God’s people had gone through some pretty rough times during their exile in Babylon. Do you think God had forgotten about them? No way! God never stopped loving His children. They were His chosen people, and He had long ago promised that He would never abandon them. In fact, God had been using their time in exile to glorify Himself and bless the world. Many kings and people who did not know God saw firsthand His power and love for His people.

God had told His people through prophets like Ezekiel and Jeremiah that the exile would not last forever. When God makes a promise you can believe that He will always keep it. God kept His promise to bring His people home.

The Bible tells us that “the Lord roused the spirit of King Cyrus” to allow the people to return to Israel. Clearly God was at work to bring His people home. Our God is in total control. He knows all things and has the power to make anything happen that He wants. King Cyrus even demanded that the people of Babylon give silver, gold, livestock, and other valuables to the Israelites. As a result, they had the money and materials they needed to begin rebuilding the temple and their homes. God provides for His people always, and sometimes He provides in surprising ways.

## CHRIST CONNECTION

**(CG: CHRIST CONNECTION)**

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

**SAY** • During their time in exile, the people may have felt hopeless. Over time they may have wondered if God had forgotten about them or if God was really going to keep His promise. But God’s plan for His people was bigger than they knew.

Zerubbabel (zuh RUHB uh buhl) 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.

## MISSIONS MOMENT

**(VIDEO: KAREN PEOPLE OF MYANMAR)**

**(No Supplies Needed)**

SAY • God kept His promise to bring His people home. God always keeps His promises. Adoniram Judson was a missionary to Burma—now called Myanmar—a long, long time ago. He isn't alive anymore, but God is still being faithful to the people who live there. Let's learn more about the Karen (kah-REN) people who live in the same place where Adoniram Judson worked.

Show the missions video “Karen People of Myanmar.” Close by saying a prayer that people all over the world would hear about Jesus.

## KEY PASSAGE

**(CG: KEY PASSAGE)**

**(Bible)**

Show the key passage slide. Open the Bible and lead the kids to read Jeremiah 29:11 together.

SAY • Jeremiah the prophet wrote these words to the exiles in Babylon; the exile would not last forever. Hundreds of years later, these words still comfort believers who are going through hard times. Jeremiah's words remind us of a similar promise we have through Jesus. God has planned for Jesus to return someday. When He does, all evil will be destroyed and everyone who has faith in Him will live forever in God's kingdom.

## PRAY AND DISMISS TO SMALL GROUPS

## SMALL GROUP

**Bible Passage:** Ezra 1-3

**Story Point:** God kept His promise to bring His people home.

**Key Passage:** “I know the plans I have for you”- this is the Lord’s declaration- “Plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope” Jeremiah 29:11.

**Christ Connection:** One day Jesus will make a greater home for all of God’s people and we will spend eternity with Him.

**Big Picture Question:** How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.

### KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY

(1 key passage poster per group)

Invite the kids to sit in a circle. Begin a pat-pat-clap-clap rhythm as you say the key passage. The kids should imitate the rhythm and repeat the phrases as you say them. Give the kids an opportunity to create their own rhythms to go along with the verse and let them lead the rest of the class.

SAY • You are doing a great job memorizing our key passage. Jeremiah was a prophet, and so is Jesus. *How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.* Let’s keep working on our key passage this week, and when we come back together next week we’ll see if anyone can say it from memory!

### ROLL LUMBER

(pool noodle pieces – 1 piece per kid)

Form two teams of kids within your group and instruct them to line up on one side of the room. On the opposite side or a reasonable distance from your group, place two piles of pool noodles, one per team. When you say go, the first kid from each team will race to the pile of noodles, grab a noodle, and roll it back to her team. Then the second kid on each team will do the same. The first team to get all their noodles to their side wins. Adapt the distance of the relay for your classroom.

SAY • The Israelites paid the people in Lebanon for lumber to rebuild God’s temple. The people had to work hard to get all the necessary building materials, but they knew that the work was worth it. They were desperate to have a place to worship God.

Thankfully, we no longer need to go to a temple to worship God. Because Jesus died on the cross for our sins, we can worship God anywhere. The Holy Spirit lives inside of believers, so in a way, our bodies are the temples!

## DISCUSSION

### (Bibles)

Distribute Bibles. Guide kids to open their Bibles to Ezra 1–3. Explain that the Book of Ezra is in the Old Testament. No one knows for certain who wrote it, but some believe it was the scholar and scribe named Ezra. The events in this book happened between 450 and 500 years before Jesus was born.

Choose a volunteer to read aloud Ezra 3:11.

SAY • After the people praised God, they gave a loud shout. Let’s hear you give a shout after I say “The Lord is good. His faithful love will last forever.” Ready? The Lord is good. His faithful love will last forever. [*Encourage kids to shout and cheer.*]

God kept His promise to bring His people home. God’s people returned home to rebuild the temple. They laid the foundation and praised Him. God is faithful, He has a plan, and we can trust Him.

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

What promise did God keep for His people? *Prompt kids to recall that God kept His promise to bring His people home. God spoke this promise to the prophet Jeremiah more than 70 years before the exile.*

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Jer. 29:10.)

How do we know we can trust God to keep His promises? *Point out that over and over again, God not only makes promises, but He keeps them. Many of us make promises but are guilty of not keeping our promises. God isn’t like us. He is always faithful. We can put our trust in Him.*

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Heb. 10:23.)

Will you trust God when things don’t make sense? Why? *Emphasize that there will be times in kids’ lives when things just don’t make sense. They may not know why something happened or didn’t happen. Remind kids that God’s Word tells us to trust Him and not lean on our own understanding.*

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Prov. 3:5-6.)

## REFLECTION AND PRAYER

### (Journal Page - 1 per kid, pencils)

Ask the kids the following questions:

What does this story teach me about God?

What does this story teach me about myself?

Who can I tell about this story?

Make time for prayer requests and pray for your group. If time allows, have kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session.

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY: BIBLE STORY CHARADES

(8-10 index cards per group, pencils, markers)

Ask for volunteers to act out a story from the Bible while the others guess which story or person it is.

Write descriptions of Bible stories on index cards for volunteers to read. Use this list or choose other Bible people your group would know: *God created the world; Noah built the ark; David defeated the giant Goliath; Jonah was swallowed by a fish; Jesus was born; Jesus died; Jesus rose to life.*

SAY • When missionaries don't know the language of the people, they can act out Bible stories to teach people about God. Missionaries can use actions, pictures, things in nature, and even sounds to help people understand the stories from the Bible. God helps missionaries communicate His love to others even before they have learned the new language. Like the prophets told the people God's words, we can tell people about God.

## CONNECT WITH PARENTS/INFLUENCERS

(Older Kids Activity Page, 1 per kid)

Hand each 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> grade kid an Older Kids Activity Page and encourage them to do it at home with their family this week.