



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

4th-5th 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 return to restore 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

(No Supplies)

SAY • Hey everyone. Raise your hand if you have ever traveled anywhere. Who here has traveled out of the state of North Carolina? What about out of the country? I have an idea - let's find out who here has traveled the farthest away from where we are right now. [*Have the kids (and Small Group Leaders) say which countries they've been too farthest from North Carolina and choose the one(s) that is/are the farthest away. If time allows, feel free to ask them what it was like.*]

That's pretty far away! How did it feel to come back home? Feels pretty awesome to walk back in your house, doesn't it? That's what the phrase "Home Sweet Home" means! There is always something special about coming back home.

If I am this happy to be home, imagine how God's people felt when returning home after being away for 70 years! Some had been born in Babylon and had never even seen their home. God kept His promise to bring His people home. Right away, God's people got busy rebuilding something that was very important to them. Any guesses what it is? [*Allow kids to respond.*] They worked so hard; you would think everyone would be thrilled. Well, that was not the case. Let's hear this story.

TELL THE BIBLE STORY

(CG: BIBLE STORY PICTURE, CG: STORY POINT, CG: QUESTION 1, CG: QUESTION 2)
(Bible)

Open your Bible to Ezra 1-3 and read it aloud.

SAY • Have you ever felt disappointed when something didn't turn out like you thought it should?

There were so many feelings and emotions in this story! Some people were excited because they were getting to go home and celebrate God's keeping His promises. Some people were nervous because they were traveling to a place they had never seen but had heard stories about for years and years.

God's people had started to rebuild the temple. When the people finished the foundation, they celebrated. But some of the older people, who had seen the temple that Solomon had built, cried.

Sin has consequences. The Israelites had endured 70 years of consequences for their sin. God kept His promise to bring His people home.

QUESTION 1: What does this story teach us about God?

SAY • We can trust God to keep His promises. Our story today goes back to a promise God made to the prophet Jeremiah. God kept His promise! Many years before God’s people were taken captive, God told Jeremiah that the exile would last 70 years. God kept His promise to bring His people home.

QUESTION 2: Why were some of the people sad about the temple?

SAY • The people might have felt sad to think about the beautiful temple that had been torn down. They had memories of how their home used to be, but it no longer looked the same.

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 • After 70 years of exile, God kept His promise to bring His people home. What God says is true. He has a plan, and He keeps His promises. Sometimes you may find yourself waiting on God’s promise. Things don’t always happen right away, but they will happen at just the right time, according to God’s plan.

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 • 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 • Before we go to small groups, we’re going to have a Missions Moment. A man named 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.

PRAY AND DISMISS TO SMALL GROUPS



SMALL GROUP

Bible Passage: Ezra 1-3

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

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Christ Connection: One day Jesus will return to restore 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.

DISCUSSION

(Bibles)

SAY • The God we serve today is the same faithful God His people worshiped after they returned home. He is good, faithful, and worthy of all praise.

- What are some ways people can worship God?
- What are your favorite ways to worship God?

Distribute Bibles. Guide kids to open their Bibles to Ezra 3. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Ezra 3:11. 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.

Choose another volunteer to read aloud Ezra 3:11 again. Then lead the group to discuss the following questions.

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 tell us to trust Him and not lean on our own understanding. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Prov. 3:5-6.)

KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY

(Key passage poster – 1 per group, paper & pencils – 1 per kid, numbered cube/die – 1 per group)

Have kids sit in a circle and display the key passage poster. Lead the kids to read the key passage together. Then distribute paper and pencils. Give one kid a numbered cube. Explain that when you say “go,” kids will begin writing the key passage on their papers.

The player with the die will roll until he rolls a 4. When he rolls a 4, he shouts “Pass!” and passes the die to the player on his right. Other players pass their papers to the right and pick up writing where the previous player left off. Continue rolling and passing. The first player to finish writing the passage on the paper in front of him wins.

BUILDING A SNACK

(mini marshmallows, toothpicks, snack bags, index cards, pens – per kid)

Before the session, assemble snack bags for each kid that include toothpicks, mini marshmallows, and an index card with the words I promise to pray for you written on it.

Distribute the bags and invite kids to write any specific prayer requests they have on the back of the index card. They are welcome to sign their name but may feel more comfortable not signing. Collect the cards.

Guide kids to build a foundation (a strong square or rectangular structure) for a temple using toothpicks and marshmallows. As they work on their foundations, play music in the background. You may choose to allow kids to snack on their marshmallows as they build.

Remind kids that in Bible times, 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.

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?

If time allows, have kids complete the Journal Page provided with this session.

I PROMISE TOO... ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

(no supplies needed)

Invite a volunteer to sit in the middle of the group. Ask kids to take turns trying to make the volunteer laugh by saying, “I promise that...” and finish the sentence with something funny. For

example, kids or other adults could say “I promise to always wear socks on my hands,” “I promise to never pick my nose on Fridays,” or “I promise to do a silly dance every day.”

The volunteer in the middle must respond by saying “I believe you will keep your promise to...” and then finishing the sentence with the other person’s promise. The kid trying to make the volunteer laugh may also make funny faces or gestures, but they may not touch the person. Whoever makes the volunteer laugh will sit in the middle next, as other kids try to make her laugh. Play continues as time allows.

SAY• That was fun! There was quite a lot of laughing going on in this game! There was also quite a bit of laughing and smiling in today’s story. The Israelites were so happy that God kept His promise to bring His people home.

CONNECT WITH PARENTS/INFLUENCERS

(Older Kids Activity Page, 1 per kid)

Hand each 4th-5th grade kid an Older Kids Activity Page and encourage them to do it at home with their family this week.

OPTIONAL TAKE HOME:

(Preteen Learner Guide Option)

For 5th Graders that would like some additional God Time this week.