

January 5, 2019
Large Group



God Brought His People Home

BIBLE PASSAGE: Ezra 1:1–2:2; 2:64–3:13

MAIN POINT: God changed the king's heart so the Israelites could go home.

KEY PASSAGE: Daniel 2:20-21

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How can we obey God? We trust God to give us strength to obey Him.

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 70 years" (Jer. 25:11). Then the Lord said, "When 70 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, overthrew 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.)

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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.

***Christ Connection:** 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.*

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Giant timeline (1 minute)

LEADER •

SLIDE - As you know, God's people had been living in exile. They were not living in the land God had given to their ancestors long ago;

SLIDE - that's why Daniel and the other men we've learned about had to deal with the kings of Babylon and Persia. But God is in control.

SLIDE - Over the last few weeks, we have learned about Daniel and his friends and the way they obeyed God.

SLIDE - Today we will continue learning about God's people, how they followed Him, and how He was faithful to keep the promises He made to them.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • But first, let's remember our big picture question and answer.

SLIDE - *How can we obey God?*

[Allow kids to respond.] Right!

SLIDE - *We trust God to give us strength to obey Him.*

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Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Ezra 1:1–2:2; 2:64–3:13.

Show the Bible story [VIDEO](#) - “God Brought His People Home.”

LEADER • Goodness gracious! What an incredible tale of God’s faithfulness and power. God’s people had been living in exile for 70 years! But when the time was right, **God changed the king’s heart so the Israelites could go home.** Zerubbabel led God’s people back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. The temple was the place where God met with His people on earth.

When the people returned, they felt different emotions. Some of them were happy to finally be back in the land God had given them. Some were sad because they remembered what the temple used to be like. But all of them were learning to trust God and obey Him.

How can we obey God? We trust God to give us strength to obey Him. Jesus came to earth to rescue people from sin. One day, Jesus will return to restore a greater home for all of God’s people, and we will spend eternity with Him. The difference is that when Jesus returns, all the changes will be good ones, and He will take our sadness away! No one will cry when Jesus restores the world because it will be perfect.

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Key passage (5 minutes)

LEADER •

SLIDE (of *Jeremiah*) - Many years ago, God spoke through His prophet Jeremiah. God told Jeremiah that the people of Israel would be exiled and serve another king for 70 years, but God also promised that He would bring His people home. God is good, and He always keeps His promises. He was faithful to His people.

Show the key passage **SLIDE**.

Lead the boys and girls to read together Daniel 2:20-21.

LEADER • Our key passage says that God is wise and powerful. God changes times and seasons. He removes kings and allows new kings to be in charge. He gives wisdom and understanding to His people. God is worthy of our praise! Let's sing.

Lead boys and girls to **SING** "Name of God."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

LEADER • God, thank You for showing Your goodness to Your people in exile. You changed the heart of the king so that Your people could go home. You gave them strength to obey You. Thank You for sending Jesus and giving us strength to obey You too. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.