

January 5, 2018  
Whole 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.

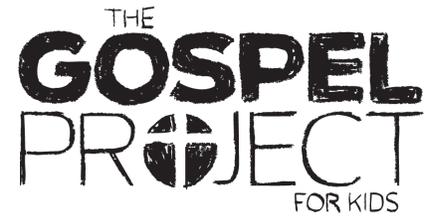
Before the people of Judah were exiled, God had spoken through the prophet Jeremiah. These are the words of the Lord: "These nations will serve the king of Babylon for 70 years" (Jer. 25:11). Then the Lord said, "When 70 years for Babylon are complete, I will attend to you and will confirm My promise 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.)

January 5, 2018  
Whole Group



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.*

January 5, 2018  
Whole Group



## Whole Group OPENING *(before Large Group...)*

### **Welcome time**

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to help new kids connect to your group. As kids arrive, ask them about the longest amount of time they have ever been away from home, or out of school. Talk to them about how it felt to go back after a long time away.

**SAY** • God’s people had been living in Babylon, away from their land and homes, for many years. But God had promised to send them home.

### **Session starter** (10 minutes) — I’d never live there!

Provide paper, markers, crayons, and pencils for the kids. Ask them to design a home that they would never want to live in. You may choose to offer other art supplies for kids to “clutter” their home. Allow volunteers to share their designs and explain the different features their awful homes would have that make them so bad.

**SAY** • In our story today, God is faithful to keep His promise to bring the Israelites back home. But their home had been destroyed, and it didn’t look like their home anymore. The people had to start to rebuild everything, starting with the temple!

**Transition to large group...**

## Whole Group LEADER *(after Large Group...)*

### **Activity choice** (10 minutes) — Rebuild

Divide the children into groups of 3-4 and provide building blocks to work together as a group to design a new home.

After they've built for about 5 minutes gather everyone together and allow groups to share their design.

**SAY • God changed the king's heart so the Israelites could go home.** God was faithful to bring them back to their land, but the world was still broken by sin. Even the land God promised them was not perfect.

The world is broken by sin even today. Thankfully, Jesus promised to prepare a place for us to live with God forever. One day, Jesus will return to gather everyone who believes in Him together and restore the earth to make it perfect and beautiful again. We will live with God on the new earth, which will be our perfect home forever. No matter how good we might think our homes are right now, they are they are nothing compared to what Jesus will restore when He returns. Jesus will fix everything broken about the world and destroy everything evil.

### **Prayer** (5 minutes)

Ask them to think about how we can know that God's promises always come true.

**SAY •** Sometimes we might feel very far from God. It can be easy for us to forget some of His promises or wonder when He will carry them out. God's timing is different from our timing, but we can look back and see all of His wonderful promises. He has always kept His promises to us, and we know that He always will.

Take prayer requests. Pray, thanking God for His faithfulness to us even though we struggle to be faithful to Him. Ask Him for strength to obey Him and trust in His promises. Praise Him that Jesus will return, and ask Him to hasten that day.