

God Brought His People Home

Ezra 1-3

How did God plan to fix what sin broke?

Before He created the world, God planned to send the Messiah.

In that day they will say, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation."

Isaiah 25:9

Story Point:

The exile was over, and God brought His people back to Jerusalem.



PREPARE HEARTS

- Starter Activity and Question of the Day
- 11:00 - Kids Worship



ACTIVATE HEARTS

- Lesson Review - God Brought His People Home
- Discussion Questions
- Group Activity: Packing and Promises



ENGAGE HEARTS

- Group Game: All You Can Carry
- Share and Care Prayer Time
- Group Activity: Solid Foundation
- Group Activity: Building a Foundation

SHEPHERD GUIDE

This week, we will begin exploring the return of God's people from exile back to their homeland in Judah. After seventy years in a foreign land, God used King Cyrus of Persia to allow the Israelites to return and rebuild the temple. As they laid the foundation, they celebrated God's faithfulness with joy, though some mourned the loss of the former temple's glory. As you teach this week, remind kids that God is always faithful to keep His promises. He calls His people to worship and obey Him with joy, regardless of our circumstances. Reflect on the following main points as you prepare to lead the kids you will teach.

God keeps His promises. God's promises are unwavering, and His faithfulness is certain. No matter the passage of time or the challenges we face, we can trust that when God speaks, He will fulfill His word. His promises are a beacon of hope, assuring us that He is always at work in our lives and that His plans, though sometimes mysterious, are always for our good. Each one of God's plans leads to His glory and our flourishing.

We can be joyful in God's faithfulness. The faithfulness of God fills our hearts with a joy that transcends our circumstances. Even in times of struggle, we can find peace in the certainty that God's love endures and that He is always present with us. His constant care and protection are reasons to celebrate. He is our rock, unchanging and true, bringing us joy that springs from His eternal faithfulness.

God desires our worship and obedience. God delights in our worship, for it is the overflow of a heart that recognizes His greatness. When we walk in obedience to His Word, we reflect His love and trust in His perfect will. Our worship is not confined to songs but is woven into every act of service, and every decision made with His guidance. Through obedience, we honor Him, drawing closer to the One who created us to love and glorify Him in all things.

As you prepare to teach this week, consider this question: Which of God's promises do you hold most dearly, and why do they bring you peace or comfort in challenging times?

REMINDER: Our VIP meeting is from 10:20 - 10:30 in C1. Your supply bin will be in your classroom.



GRADES 1-2

KNOW + LOVE + FOLLOW

January 18, 2026
2nd Service

MAIN TAKEAWAYS: We want our kids to:

- *KNOW that God keeps His promises.
- *BE joyful in God's faithfulness.
- *WORSHIP God and OBEY His Word.



As you arrive and children come and go - Welcome them by name and invite them to play with you and the others. Use this time to get to know your kids - ask them about their week, about their likes and dislikes and about their school, family and friends.

Ways to connect - Play a game from the closet, color or draw together, build with legos/blocks, etc.

When most kids have arrived for 2nd service (by 10:50ish), ask them to clean up the toys and find a seat at one of the tables to begin the class.

**Option - Pen Pal Kit!!*



PREPARE HEARTS

Question of the Day:

Starter Activity

Welcome and Question of the Day

Hello! It's a joy to worship God together each week. Jesus tells us we are to love God with our heart, soul, mind, and strength. We can love God with our minds by reading His Word and thinking about what it means. Did you know God cares about our thoughts? He wants us to focus on what is good, true, and beautiful. One way we do that is by studying the Bible, and learning what God has shown us is true about Himself.

Does anyone remember our big picture question and answer? **How did God plan to fix what sin broke?** (Allow responses) Sin is anything we think, say, or do that goes against what God has said is right. Because of sin, we are disconnected from God, but God had a plan to fix it! Before He created the world, God planned to send the Messiah. Jesus is the Messiah, the promised Rescuer who would pay the price for our sin and connect us to God again!

Lately, we've heard stories about Daniel during his time in exile in the kingdom of Babylon. The time had finally come for God to bring His people back to their homeland in Judah. Today we will hear how the exile was over, and God brought His people back to Jerusalem. We'll read from the book of Ezra in the Old Testament. This book of the Bible tells the story of God's people coming back to Jerusalem and rebuilding the temple of the Lord.



KIDS WORSHIP

11:00

Kids Worship for Pre-K - 4th Grade in LG2.



ACTIVE MINDS

You can use the REVIEW VIDEO on your TV and / or use this lesson as a review of what was taught 1st service.

God Brought His People Home

Bibles,
Review Video -
Bible story on TV

Open your Bible to Ezra 1-3. You can use the Kids Sermon Outline as you go through the story.

KIDS SERMON OUTLINE:

God keeps His promises (Ezra 1): God promised that He would bring His people back to Jerusalem.

We can be joyful in God's faithfulness (Ezra 2:68-70): Once they arrived at the Lord's house in Jerusalem, the families gave offerings to God to celebrate.

God desires our worship and obedience (Ezra 3): The people rebuilt the temple and praised God.

God, through the prophet Jeremiah, promised that He would bring his people back to Jerusalem after 70 years of captivity. Just as God promised, King Cyrus of Persia issued a decree, saying:

"The Lord has given me all the kingdoms of the earth. He has appointed me to build him a house in Jerusalem in Judah. Any of his people may go to Jerusalem to build the house of the Lord, the God of Israel. Give your silver, gold, and livestock to them so they may bring these gifts to Jerusalem and offer them to God."

God's people prepared to go to Jerusalem and build the Lord's house. All their neighbors supported them with gifts of silver, gold, livestock, and valuables. King Cyrus also gave back some of the riches that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple of God.

A few months after they arrived in Jerusalem, Jeshua the priest, Zerubbabel, and their brothers began to build the altar of God so that they could sacrifice burnt offerings on it morning and evening according to the law of Moses. They also celebrated all the festivals and holy days as the Lord commanded in the law. Then, they began to buy the supplies needed to rebuild the temple.

Two years after God's people arrived in Jerusalem, Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and their brothers appointed the Levites to oversee the work on the Lord's house. Once they had laid the foundation of the temple, the priests led the people to praise God with trumpets and cymbals. They sang, "The Lord is good. His faithful love to Israel endures forever." All the people gave a great shout of praise.

While most people were happy, some of the older priests remembered the first temple. This new foundation was not as magnificent as the original temple, and they wept loudly. The people could not tell the difference between those who were weeping loudly and those who were shouting for joy.

CHRIST CONNECTION

Just as God promised, He brought His people back from exile to Jerusalem. One day, God will bring all His people together—all who trust in Jesus to save them from sin. There will be no crying that day. The people will worship Him in the new heaven and new earth.

What did you hear in this story? [Allow responses.] Just as God promised, He brought His people back from exile to Jerusalem. The exile had lasted seventy years. Then God moved King Cyrus to declare that the Jews could return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. **What did Cyrus give to the Jews?** [Read Ezra 1:2-4.] He said the Jews could take silver, gold, goods, livestock, and offerings for the temple. The people began rebuilding the temple of the Lord so they could worship Him. [Read Ezra 3:10-11.] The people responded with praise to God for His goodness and mercy toward them.

This story is about more than just God bringing His people back to Jerusalem. It points us forward to an even greater homecoming. One day, God will bring all His people together—all who trust in Jesus to save them from sin. God will give all His people a new home in His kingdom. Before He created the world, God planned to send the Messiah. He will restore all of creation to how He created it in the beginning. There will be no crying that day. God will renew the bodies of those who follow Jesus, and there will be no pain, sickness, or death. The people will worship Him in the new heaven and new earth.



Discussion

Discussion questions listed here

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

Why did the people begin to rebuild the temple? Explain that the temple was the place where God's people offered sacrifices for their sins, worshiped Him, and prayed to Him. Remind kids that the temple represented God's presence among His people.

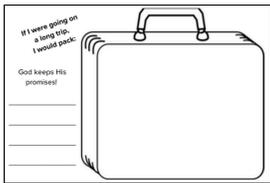
How did we see God work through people to accomplish His plans? Discuss how God's will for the temple to be rebuilt came through King Cyrus' decree. Even though Cyrus was a king, God was in control of everything. Remind kids that God also moved the people's hearts to give gifts for the temple, providing for His people's needs as the altar and temple's foundation were rebuilt.

Some people were sad because they missed the old temple. How can we respond when situations don't turn out like we hope? Tell kids that because we live in a broken world, we will experience times when we are disappointed, sad, uncertain, or even afraid. We can honestly confess our feelings to God, knowing He loves and cares for us. And we can ask Him to help us trust Him and remember that He is faithful no matter what. Even when we face struggles, those who trust in Jesus have the joy of their salvation.



Packing and Promises

- Suitcase worksheet
- Pens/pencils
- Colored pencils
- Markers



Pass out the suitcase worksheet and writing utensils to the class. In table groups, or as a whole group, have the children discuss and draw what they would pack in their suitcases if they were going on a long trip. Come back together to discuss:

We can think of quite a few items we would want to take on a long trip. In the Bible story from the book of Ezra, the Jews were not just going on a trip. They were going home after living for seventy years in Babylon. The exile was over, and God was bringing His people back to Jerusalem. They likely took their clothing and other belongings, but we heard about some other unusual items they carried with them. What other things did they take with them to Jerusalem? [Allow responses. Read Ezra 1:6-7.] King Cyrus sent them back with gold, silver, other goods, livestock, and even the special items from the temple of the Lord that Nebuchadnezzar had taken. All these things were to be used to help the people rebuild the temple.

Does God keep His promises? Yes! What promise did God keep to His people? [Allow responses.] God had promised through the prophet Jeremiah that He would bring His people out of exile after seventy years, and they would once again live in the special land He had given them. Seventy years is a long time to be away from home. God does not always do things in the timing that we would like. There might be things you are praying for right now that you wish He would do right away. God always does things at the exact right time, even though it might not be what we want. During those seventy years God was preparing His people to return home soon and worship Him. When they finally arrived, they were thankful to God and praised Him! They were excited to build the temple and set up the altar so they could offer sacrifices to Him once more.

Discuss real life examples of how God keeps His promises in our own lives.

- His presence is always with us, He gives peace and comfort, He gives strength and endurance, He provides for our needs



All You Can Carry

- 4 bins/baskets
- Beanbags/balls

Form two teams. Give each team a bin/basket filled with beanbags or balls and instruct the teams to line up near their bin/basket. At the opposite end of the room, place another bin for each team. Kids will run relay-style, grabbing two handfuls of the beanbags or balls, then run down and drop them in the other bucket. If beanbags or balls end up on the floor, they go back in the starting bucket. The team to get all their table tennis balls to the other bucket wins.

SAY: Great job! We've learned that the exile was over, and God brought His people back to Jerusalem. But they didn't return empty-handed. King Cyrus gave a decree that they were to take back many items to help in their rebuilding efforts. God moved the king's heart to help the people return to their home and have a place to worship the one true God. God proved His faithfulness in keeping His promise to His people.

In our game, your team worked together to transport all the beanbags/balls. In an even greater way, we got to see how God's people worked together to rebuild the temple and the altar. One person could not have done the job by themselves. It took a large community of people, gathered together with one purpose, to complete the task. When they began offering the sacrifices, the people gathered to worship God together too. They offered praise and thanksgiving for how God had helped them.

Why do you think praising God is important? How does praise impact our relationship with God? [Allow responses.] When we praise and thank God, we remember that everything we have comes from Him, and He is at work in our lives, helping us and guiding us to live for Him. The more we praise God, the more we see His blessings!



Share and Care Prayer

Spend some time as a class sharing about:

- Our Global Partner Family of the Month (**The Geesey Family**)
- Ask for specific prayer requests that any of the kids have to share about something going on in their own lives.

Have the class sit in a circle as you share and care for one another's needs. Ask for and share requests with one another. Review and follow up with any prayer requests from the chain made the week before. Use the Global Partner of the Month spotlight sheet (In the Pen Pal Kit) to talk about prayer requests from the Geesey Family.



Solid Foundation

- Brick worksheet
- Cross cut-outs
- Glue
- Markers
- Pens/pencils

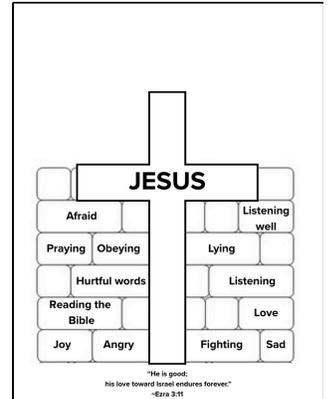
Explain that for any building to stand tall and strong, it must have a solid foundation. The people rebuilt the temple's foundation using the materials God provided. We want to build our lives on Jesus - the Savior God provided. But many times, we try to build our lives on our own.

Ask: **What are some things, problems, worries that we tend to build our lives on?** (Discuss responses and make a list on the board, such as: getting along with others, cheating, lying, fighting, hurtful words, listening and obeying, being lonely, afraid, angry....)

Pass out the brick worksheet and colored pencils.

Have the children circle some of the words that resonate with them on the individual bricks on their worksheet.

Then, pass out a cross to each child. Have them write the name "Jesus" across the top. Have them paste the cross on top of their bricks to represent Jesus being the foundation of our lives. Talk about when our lives are built on Jesus, we can stand firm and secure, knowing He will always be faithful no matter what we face. Then have the children find the words on the bricks that describe building our lives on Jesus. Have them color those bricks so they stand out!



Building a Foundation

- Cups
- Cardboard box

Divide the class into 4 or 5 groups. Give each group a stack of cups. Have them work together to build the tallest, strongest foundation that will hold a small cardboard box (filled to make it heavy) to represent the temple.

Give them 3-5 minutes to make their foundation and then test their designs to see which ones can hold the box.

Ask the class, "When the Israelites returned to Jerusalem, what did the Israelites do as they laid the foundation for the temple? (They praised God and thanked Him for keeping His promises. Some also cried as they remembered how it wasn't as good as the original temple.)"

Remind the kids that we also can praise God and be thankful for what He has given us. Pray together, praising God and asking for His continued guidance and wisdom in our lives.