

Cyrus Helps The Exiles To Return

Ezra 1:1-11

MEMORY VERSE

PSALM 122:1

I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go into the house of the LORD."

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Ten to twelve stickers (hearts would be good) and a marker.

Copies of the "Fishing for God's People" template (one for each child), crayons or markers, paper clips, tape, scissors, string or yarn, 2 - 3 yardsticks or similar length sticks, and 2 - 3 magnets.

Construction paper (various desert and landscape colors), scissors, glue, crayons and/or markers and a "God's People Return Home" template for each child.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

God's Chosen People

In our lesson today we will find that God's chosen people were now living in a foreign land. We will be learning that God called them out of this foreign country and brought them back to their own. God loves His people very much. This game will help to show us what it means to be "chosen."

You will need some stickers (hearts would be good; you will need 10 - 12 stickers) and a marker. Ask the children, "Who has any of the following letters in their names - J, B, or L?" It can be the first letter or any letter in between. Have the children raise their hands. For the younger children you will need to help with the letters.

Give the children who have these letters in their name a heart sticker. They will have the privilege of being servants for the day since they have been "called out." Have these children do the

following for the other class members: pass out papers, clean up, and allow the other children to go first for the rest of the day. Discuss with the class what it means to be “called out” from this world and how that since we are God’s special people we need to serve others and be a light in this world.

LESSON TIME!

God, through His prophet Jeremiah, had warned the people that if they continued in the sin of worshipping other gods and idols that they would go into captivity. That means that they would become slaves to another nation. They would lose their homes and have to move to another land. Sadly, God’s people were stubborn and wouldn’t turn from their evil ways. So God’s Word was finally fulfilled and judgment came to Judah.

Nebachadnezzar, the king of Babylon, came and destroyed Judah and Jerusalem. Even the temple was destroyed and the articles used in the worship of God were taken. God’s people were in captivity for a total of 70 years, serving the Babylonians. But even though they were being punished for their refusal to turn away from their sin, God had not forgotten them. God still loved His people very much. He promised that He would bring a group of His people back out of Babylon after the 70 years. This is the story we will learn about today. **God will never leave or forsake His people!**

EZRA 1:1

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying,

The first year that Cyrus became king of Persia he made a proclamation throughout his kingdom and put it in writing. God used Cyrus to fulfill His promise to His people. God had prophesied through His prophet Jeremiah that those who would be taken into captivity would return after 70 years. It was now that time.

It is interesting to note that God will use pagan kings and rulers to fulfill His plan for His people. The Lord moved the king of Persia to make this proclamation to allow the people to return back to their land. Even kings and rulers must obey His will and plan. **God will never leave or forsake His people!**

EZRA 1:2-4

Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah.

Who is among you of all His people? May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem.

And whoever is left in any place where he dwells, let the men of his place help him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, besides the freewill offerings for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.

Cyrus had been made ruler of the entire world. He tells the people of his kingdom that God had given him his kingdom and that God appointed him to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem in Judah. He also gave the order that the people of God had his permission and blessing to go home to build the temple of the Lord God. He told

their neighbors where they were living, to provide them with the money, the goods and livestock, and freewill offerings to support the rebuilding of God's temple.

God kept His word to His people to return to their land. He provided a way through the king who gave his blessings and financial support to rebuild the temple of God. Isn't God good to His people? The people had learned a valuable lesson while in captivity. It is interesting to note that when they do return to the land of Judah they were cured of idol worship.

Sometimes God will allow painful things to happen in our lives to teach us valuable lessons. When we sin, consequences will occur. The Lord allows it so that we may learn valuable lessons. Obedience is always the best way to walk. God loves us very much and wants our best. But when we turn from Him, we become captives to this world and only bad can come from that. **God will never leave or forsake His people!**

EZRA 1:5

Then the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, with all whose spirits God had moved, arose to go up and build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem.

The heads of the houses believed and trusted in God. They and others who were moved by God's Spirit rose up to return to Jerusalem.

The Lord moved upon the hearts of His people to return to their land and to return to Him. This is what revival is. Revival means to bring back to life what was once dead. Revival is when we as God's people return to Him. As we return to the place He desires us to be, we come to the center of His will and plan for our lives. God desires to use us for His kingdom. **God will never leave or forsake His people!**

Fishing for God's People

In the New Testament Jesus said that He would make us fishers of men. We are learning from our story today that **God will never leave or forsake His people**. When the time came for them to return to their land God just reached in, “fished out” His people and brought them back to Jerusalem to build the temple. This game will help us to be thankful that God “fished” us out of this world, making us His children.

You will need copies of the template (one for each child), crayons or markers, paper clips, tape, scissors, string or yarn, 2 – 3 yardsticks or similar length sticks, and 2 – 3 magnets. Using the enclosed template, have the children cut out a fish. Allow them to color and write their name on a fish. Next tape a paper clip to the front of the fish. Place all of the fish into a cardboard box.

Make fishing poles using yardsticks and string. Attach a magnet at the end of the line. Give the children each a turn fishing. As the children catch the fish have them find the person whose name is on the fish. Have them hand the fish to that person and say, “**God will never leave or forsake you!**”

EZRA 1:6

And all those who were around them encouraged them with articles of silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with precious things, besides all that was willingly offered.

All their neighbors willingly helped them with the money, goods, and freewill offerings to support them just like the king commanded. Not only did the neighbors support them, they gave the people valuable gifts.

Is it not interesting that when the people obeyed, God provided their every need? If we would only trust the Lord for everything! The Lord desires to bless His people. You probably remember from previous lessons that God's people would never have had to go into captivity if they had obeyed. They were stubborn and would not forsake their idols. If only they had obeyed the Lord, He would have continued to pour out His blessings upon them. **God will never leave or forsake His people!**

We can learn from their example. We need to remain close to the Lord. We should never go after the things that this world may have to offer. It is such a blessing to follow after the ways of God. He desires so much to bless us.

EZRA 1:7-11

King Cyrus also brought out the articles of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Jerusalem and put in the temple of his gods;

and Cyrus king of Persia brought them out by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah.

This is the number of them: thirty gold platters, one thousand silver platters, twenty-nine knives,

thirty gold basins, four hundred and ten silver basins of a similar kind, and one thousand other articles.

All the articles of gold and silver were five thousand four hundred. All these Sheshbazzar took with the captives who were brought from Babylon to Jerusalem.

King Cyrus brought out the articles for worship that King Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple and gave them back to be used in temple worship. God provided everything that was needed. He desired to restore His temple, and also cared for the needs of His people. **God will never leave or forsake His people!**

The Lord does discipline his people when they sin, but He still loves them. The Bible tells us that our loving Father will discipline us when we need it. This is how we learn to be obedient to Him. How much better it is just to choose to be obedient to Him because of our love for Him. Let us always follow Him.

We need to build our lives on a true foundation, which is Jesus and on His Word, the Bible. The Bible says our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. If we build our lives on the Word of God, He has promised to lead us and to take care of us. If we sin and do not repent, we will be disciplined; but if we repent and ask for forgiveness, we will be restored like in our lesson today. God always keeps His word and His promises (1 Corinthians 3:16).

God's People Return Home

In this craft the children will be making a mural to remind them how that God brought His people out of captivity and brought them home. You will need construction paper (various desert and landscape colors), scissors, glue, crayons and markers and a template (enclosed with curriculum).

Use a blue or white piece of construction paper to start with. This will serve as the background, blue is good because it can represent the sky. Next cut out the people and mountain from the template to help cut out mountain shapes mountain shapes from desert color construction paper and paste onto the blue paper as

background mountains. Next cut out and glue the mountains and the people to the background sheet. Color the people and draw in plants, sun, clouds, etc.

During the craft ask the children how they might feel as they were given a chance to return home after living in a foreign land for 70 years. Do they suppose the people were excited?

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord that He is so faithful that He would never leave nor forsake us. Also, a commitment to learn from God's people in the Old Testament that we need to always keep our eyes on Him and never turn away. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.



