

Unit 17, Session 2: The Captives Come Home

Dear Parents,

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 your 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.

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.

Big Picture Question:

How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.

Tell the Bible story

Open your Bible to Ezra 1–3. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “The Captives Came Home.”

Leader • 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. Why do you think they cried? [*Allow kids to respond.*]. I’m sure it was 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. Sin has consequences. The Israelites had endured 70 years of consequences for their sin. **God kept His promise to bring His people home.**

Christ Connection

Leader • 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.

Questions from Kids video

Show the “Unit 17, Session 2” questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about ways to worship God. Guide them to discuss their favorite ways to worship.

Missions moment

Leader • **God kept His promise to bring His people home.** God always keeps His promises. Adoniram Judson was a missionary to a country called Burma (now known as Myanmar) more than 150 years ago. Adoniram isn’t alive anymore, but God is still faithful to the people who live in that country. [*Point to Myanmar on a map.*] Let’s learn more about the Karen (kah-REN) people who live in the place where Adoniram Judson told people about Jesus. Play the “Karen People of Myanmar” missions video. Close by praying for the Karen people and for the missionaries working in Myanmar.

Key Passage

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Jeremiah 29:11.

Leader • 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. God's plan doesn't always happen right

away, but God's plan always happens at just the right time.

Sing "A Future and a Hope (Jer. 29:11)."

Sing

Open your Bible and read aloud 1 Chronicles 16:34.

Leader • The God we serve today is the same faithful God His people worshiped after they returned home. He is good, He is

faithful, and He is worthy of all praise. Sing together "Great Is Thy Faithfulness."

Pray

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

Leader • God, You keep Your promises. Because You are faithful, we can trust You. God, we confess that we are often unfaithful. Thank You for sending Jesus to rescue us. We look forward to the day He comes back so we can live with You forever. You will make everything right again! We love You. Amen.

Apply

Option 1: Activity pages provided via email or at <http://firstofallon.com/ministries/kids/kids-life-homeresources>

Option 2: Building snack

Before the session, assemble snack bags for each kid that include pretzel sticks, 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 their name. Collect the cards. Guide kids to build a foundation (a strong square or rectangle structure) for a temple using pretzel sticks and marshmallows. As they work on their foundations, play music in the background. You may choose to allow kids to snack on their "building supplies" as they build.

Say • Your temple foundations look great. 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.

How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.

Thank you for sharing with me some ways I can pray for each of you. I promise I will pray for you this week. Always feel free to share with me how I can pray for you. God is faithful, and we can trust Him with any problem, fear, worry, or joy we have!

Midweek Follow-up

Distribute Bibles. Guide boys and girls to open their Bibles to Ezra 1–3. Explain that the Book of Ezra is in the Old Testament. No one knows for certain who wrote it, but some believe it was the scholar and scribe named Ezra. The events in this book happened between 450 and 500 years before Jesus was born. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Ezra 3:11.

SAY •After the people praised God, they gave a loud shout. Let’s hear you give a shout after I say “The Lord is good. His faithful love will last forever.” Ready? The Lord is good. His faithful love will last forever. [Encourage kids to shout and cheer.]

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.

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. 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.)
2. How do we know we can we 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.)
3. 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 tells us to trust Him and not lean on our own understanding. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Prov. 3:5-6.)