



Mustard Seed Children's Summary for March 15, 2009
Released on Wednesday, March 11, 2009

"God Gives a New Start"

DEVOTIONAL READING: Psalm 25:11-22

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Ezekiel 36:22-32

LESSON TEXT: Ezekiel 36:22-32

MEMORY VERSE: "I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes" (Ezekiel 36:27).

Ezekiel 36:22-32

²² Therefore say unto the house of Israel, thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went.

²³ And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.

²⁴ For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.

²⁵ Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

²⁶ A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

²⁷ And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

²⁸ And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

²⁹ I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you.

³⁰ And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen.

³¹ Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.

³² Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord GOD, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.

THE OBJECT IN VIEW:

Teach that the Lord starts us on a new way of living when we trust Jesus to be our Saviour, giving us the desire to please Him not because we have to but because we want to.

TRUTHS TO STRESS:

1. God wants to start people on a new life of obedience to Him.

2. In order for us to please Jesus, God Himself must change us.
3. When we have new life from God within, we want to please Jesus.

PLANNING LESSON AIDS:

For Telling the Lesson, find flannelgraph figures or pictures of Ezekiel, a crowd of Israelites, a shepherd with his sheep, and Ezekiel before a crowd. You will also need a large sign that says "change."

For Helping to Remember, for each student draw as large a heart as will fit on a sheet of red construction paper. Provide for each child safety scissors (blunt tip), crayons, glue, and two 1-by-4-inch pieces of white construction paper.

For Lesson Activity, provide a copy of the word for each student to find key words from the lesson.

LESSON BACKGROUND:

Time: probably 585 B.C.

Place: Babylon

After years of exile in Babylon, God began the process of restoring His people to their homeland. Israel's hope for a new start included restoration to the Land of Promise, a new national existence with new leadership, and an abundance of material blessings. But the renewal did not stop there! This week's lesson centers on Israel's spiritual renewal through the regenerating power of the Spirit of God. A new heart and God's Spirit within would change them so that they would want to do what pleased Him!

TEACHER'S NOTES:

Some years ago church groups often sang a chorus that said, "Things are different now, something happened to me, when I gave my heart to Jesus." The message of that old chorus is the message of this week's lesson from Ezekiel 36.

God's stony-hearted people had been deliberately ignoring His explicit commands. Incredibly, they seemed to have forgotten His past protection, direction, and miraculous provision. Building and accumulating, they were concerned only about themselves. Israel carried on most of life as though God did not even exist, and they showed no sign of changing.

After giving His people both time and many warnings, the Lord finally brought the discipline that was needed. Israel was invaded by more than one enemy, and thousands were deported to distant places. The very fact that they had been carried away from their land caused many onlookers to think ill of Israel's God. He had given them Canaan, the nations said, but He had been unable to take care of them there.

The Lord was concerned about this dishonor brought upon His name, and He entrusted His prophet Ezekiel with a message for both the dispersed people and those who had given them such poor leadership.

God declared that He had determined to do certain things for Israel that would make the nations change their minds about Him. He promised He would seek out His people and gather them from wherever they had been scattered. He would return them to their homeland, and that land would once again be beautiful and fruitful. There they would dwell in safety.

The Lord said that when all those changes took place, the nations watching would know that He was indeed with His people and that they were the flock of His pasture. Things would be different. God would do it.

He promised to bring about change in His people. He would cause them to hate those things they had once done in self-will. Instead, they would want to please Him. They would have different desires because He had made them to be changed people within.

Remind the boys and girls of what they learned the week before last (March 1, 2009).

The lesson from Ezekiel 11:14-21 told them that new life within results in changed behavior on the outside. When life is new, even our desires are new.

A twelve-year-old girl's first public testimony went something like this: "I know Jesus has saved me. Now I want to do the things He wants me to do." Now, where did a desire like that come from? It was a desire that sprang from her new life. The desire to please Jesus is one of the good things that happen to anyone who decides to trust in Him.

Take advantage of the opportunity for evangelism this lesson offers. Let the children know the first step is to embrace the fact that Jesus died for them and that He alone can make them acceptable in God's presence. At the point when they exercise faith, God not only gives them life forever but also remarkably and wonderfully changes their desires in life now. He sets them on a new path, a new way of living that has pleasing Him as its chief goal. And this is life-transforming truth.

BEGINNING THE LESSON:

Betsy came home one afternoon excited about all the new things that had happened at school that day. She hardly said hello to her mother before telling her, "Miss Johnson was sick today, and we had a new teacher. She was nice. She had us doing a lot of new things. She taught us a new song and a new game at recess. And she showed us a new way to learn our spelling words. Our new numbers books came. And —" Betsy could not get the words out fast enough.

Our Bible lesson today is about - guess what? *New things*. You may be surprised when you find out what some of those new things are.

TELLING THE LESSON:

The lesson starts with God saying one day, "Ezekiel, go tell My people something for Me." (Show Ezekiel.)

Many of God's people were still living in a faraway place. They had to be there. They were not allowed to go home, no matter how much they wanted to. And you know why. Who can tell us? (Accept answers. Draw out that the people had not been paying attention to the Lord and His good rules and did not have good leaders to help them obey.)

God was not trying to be mean to His people. (Show crowd of Israelites.) He loved them. He just knew that if He let them be taken away from home, they would start thinking about Him again after a while. And that was just what they needed to do.

Now God was sending Ezekiel to tell the people something for Him again. (Show Ezekiel.) What was it this time?

First, He had Ezekiel remind the people of why they were so far from home. It was their own fault. It was also their fault that some of the other people where they were living were thinking wrong thoughts about God. Some were saying, "These are the Lord's people. He was not strong enough to take care of them in their own land."

The Lord wanted to do something about all that wrong thinking. He wanted to do some things that would change their minds about Him. (Show "change.")

"I shall hunt for My people," the Lord said. "I shall gather them from all the places where they have been taken, and I shall take them home to their own land." That sounds to me like the things a good shepherd does for his sheep. What do you think? (Show shepherd and sheep.)

"Tell them," the Lord said, "that I will make gardens grow for them so that they will have much good food. I will make their land beautiful again."

God said that when the people's enemies saw all that happening, they would think right thoughts about Him. They would say, "The Lord did this. He is the one who took His people back. He is the one who has done all these good things for them."

Ezekiel certainly had good news to take to God's people. (Show Ezekiel.) But there was more. The Lord promised He would do something else, and this was really the best of all. God said He would forgive them for not caring about His rules, and then He would make

them new people inside. He would change them so that they would want to do what pleased Him. What a big change that would be! (Show "change.")

All that was the news Ezekiel was to tell God's people. (Show Ezekiel and crowd.) Yes, it was good news, especially the part about God changing the people. They would be starting a new way of living. Now they would want to make *Him* happy instead of just pleasing themselves as they had been doing for such a long time.

God still changes people. When people today let Jesus take away their sins, God makes them new inside. Then they want to do what makes Him happy instead of wanting to please themselves. Now they want to obey His rules. It is actually starting over with new wants.

TELLING HOW TO LIVE:

God wants you to desire the kind of behavior that is pleasing to Him. He changes you when you ask Jesus to take your sins away. And if you want Him to do that for you, come talk to me after class.

Some of you already belong to the Lord Jesus. Then you do want to please Him. You do try to keep away from doing things that could make Him unhappy. And remember, when other people know you belong to Jesus and then see you doing what is right, that helps them think good thoughts about Him.

HELPING TO REMEMBER:

Have the students print "THEN" and "NOW" on their white papers, cut out the hearts, and glue one word on the top of one side of the heart and the other word on the reverse side.

On the "THEN" side, let the children draw a bad thing they might do before God made them new (give the children a not so vivid example). On the "NOW" side, let them draw a good thing they might do after Jesus changed them.

EXPLAINING THE MEMORY VERSE:

"I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes" (Ezekiel 36:27).

This is a promise God made to His people a long time ago. They had not been paying attention to Him. They had not paid attention to His rules. "Statutes" means rules.

Instead, they had been doing whatever they felt like doing. But the Lord said a day was coming when He would change them. He would put His own life in them, and then they would want to do what His good rules told them to do.

CONCLUSION:

God's people had to rediscover who He is, and form a new relationship with Him. Ezekiel reminded them that this would begin when God Himself would give them a new heart and put His Spirit within them. The people of God began a new life, a new start, with God's Spirit within them.

When God's Spirit controls us, we, like God's people in the Old Testament, will have new desires, along with the power to be obedient and follow His laws. Our hard hearts, like theirs, will be replaced with soft hearts that God can mold for Himself.

PRAYER:

Father God, we thank You for forgiving us. Thank You for renewing us and giving us a new start, in Jesus' name, amen.

ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEK'S LESSON:

Next week's lesson is "God Gives New Hope," and assures us that we can depend on God for He will do exactly whatever He says He will do. Study Ezekiel 37:1-14.

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The Pulpit Commentary, Spence-Jones, H. D. M. (Hrsg.), Bellingham, WA : Logos Research Systems, Inc.

The KJV Parallel Bible Commentary, by Nelson Books.

LESSON ACTIVITY:

"God Gives a New Start" (Ezekiel 36:22-32)

Find these keywords from the lesson:

WALK
PEOPLE
HEART

CLEANSE
SPRINKLE
FRUIT

HOMELAND
SPIRIT
NEW START

SANCTIFY
STATUTES
GATHER

M A R S F R U I T E A S S P I R I T N T A A A
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SOLUTION TO LESSON ACTIVITY:

"God Gives a New Start" (Ezekiel 36:22-32)

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