



Mustard Seed Lesson for November 26, 2006
Released on November 22, 2006

"God's People Returned Home"

Printed Text: Ezra 1:1-7

Background Scripture: 2 Chronicles 26:22, 23; Ezra 1:5-7

Ezra 1:1-7

1 Now in the first year of Cy'rus king of Per'sia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jer-emi'ah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cy'rus king of Per'sia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and *put it* also in writing, saying,

2 Thus saith **Cyrus king of Per'sia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Je-ru'salem, which *is* in Ju'dah.**

3 Who *is there* among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Je-ru'sa-lem, which *is* in Ju'dah, and build the house of the LORD God of Is'ra-el, (he *is* the God,) which *is* in Je-ru'sa-lem.

4 And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that *is* in Je-ru'sa-lem.

5 Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Ju'dah and Ben'ja-min, and the priests, and the Le'vites, with all *them* whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the LORD which *is* in Je-ru'sa-lem.

6 And all they that *were* about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all *that* was willingly offered.

7 Also Cy'rus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the LORD, which Neb-u-chad-nez'zar had brought forth out of Je-ru'salem, and had put them in the house of his gods.

TEACHER'S NOTES ON THE LESSON

The Israelites' captivity in Babylon lasted seventy years. The prophets had foretold the Exile many years earlier.

The captivity was God's judgment on the sin of disobedience. The people's return to Jerusalem following their repentance showed God's love and faithfulness.

Cyrus of Persia gave credit for his success to God. He did not serve God, but God used him to carry out His plan for deliverance and the rebuilding of the temple.

In God's time, evil is punished. While we experience hardships, God gives us time to seek Him. Repentance, forgiveness, and promised obedience renew God's covenant.

THE OBJECT IN VIEW:

Teach that the believer's promised home is heaven.

TRUTHS TO STRESS:

1. Jesus promised to prepare a home in heaven for His followers.
2. Believers do not feel at home in the world because their real home is in heaven.
3. All believers have a longing for their heavenly home.

PLANNING VISUAL AIDS

For **Telling the Lesson**, you will need a Bible.

For **Telling How to Live**, you will need a picture of a traffic signal.

For **Helping to Remember**, each child will need two 3-by-5-inch cards and pencils. Each child will also need his promise box (can be a decorated tissue or shoe box).

BEGINNING THE LESSON

(Gather the children on the floor around you. Ask these questions and allow time for answers.)

Have you ever gone somewhere and then really wanted to go home? Did you watch the signs along the road? Which ones? How does watching signs keep you safe on your way home?

Today we will learn what happened to the Israelites who wanted to go home.

TELLING THE LESSON

(With the children on the floor, open your Bible to Ezra 1:1. If available, see if the children can find this book in their Bibles.)

The Israelites were taken away from their homes and taken to a place called Babylon because they had disobeyed God. They did not follow the covenant. In Babylon they were called "Jews" because they came from Judah, a part of Israel.

After many years in Babylon, the Jews repented. They were sorry for their sin. They had disobeyed God. They had worshiped false gods. This was disobeying Him. They asked Him to forgive them. They planned to obey God's covenant. Now God would help them.

A new king became ruler of Babylon. His name was Cyrus. He was not a follower of God, but he knew God had helped him become king. God put it in his heart to help the Jews. Cyrus treated them kindly. He told them that they could go back home. He ordered the people of his land to give the Jews whatever they needed for their long journey.

They gave money and material to help rebuild the temple. They gave cattle and everything else the Jews needed to get settled at home in Israel.

Cyrus gave them everything that was taken from the temple. He asked them to pray for him and his family. He wrote letters to the countries around Jerusalem. Cyrus told them to help the people when they arrived in Israel.

The trip back home was long and dangerous, but the people must have been sure of God's protection.

They walked and walked many days. At night they slept under the stars. They did not have roads like ours. There were no paved streets.

Finally the Jews arrived back home. They were tired, but they were happy to be home in rebuild.

TELLING HOW TO LIVE

All who repent of their sins and ask Jesus to be their Saviour have a home in heaven. The more you learn about God, the more you want to go to heaven. The longer you live in the sinful world, the more you want to go to heaven.

This lesson tells us that when we are in difficult situations or feel discouraged and unhappy, we should remember that God loves us. God is with us. God has a home in heaven for us.

The Bible is like a traffic signal. It helps us as we go through life. There are dangers everywhere. This world tries to stop us from following God.

(Hold up the traffic signal. Point to the red circle.) Stop! Think before doing or saying something displeasing to God.

(Point to yellow circle.) Caution! Be careful where you go. Be careful what you say. Be careful when you are tempted to do something wrong.

(Point to green circle.) Go! Wherever you go, obey God. Memorize God's Word. It will help you please God.

HELPING TO REMEMBER

Give each child two cards and a pencil. Write "Heaven" and "Choose" on the chalkboard for the children to copy on the cards.

We must trust in Jesus as Saviour to get to heaven. Jesus made a new covenant with us. We cannot change God's new covenant. We can only accept it or not accept it.

(Distribute the promise boxes.)

Your promise box reminds you of the covenant God makes with you. God has made a way for you to have eternal life in heaven. Jesus paid the price for God to accept sinners. That payment is a gift. You can accept what Jesus did for you, or you can not accept it.

(Have the children put their cards in their box. Review all the cards if there is time. Send the boxes home with the children.)

EXPLAINING THE GOLDEN TEXT

"Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, ... and build the house of the Lord God of Israel" (Ezra 1:3).

King Cyrus asked who wanted to go home.

Many Jews wanted to go. Some stayed in Babylon. Some were too old to make the long trip. Some had never seen Jerusalem. They had been born in Babylon, but they wanted to go.

The Jews were ready to please God. They were ready to go home. They made plans. to rebuild the temple. They were thankful for God's covenant with them.

Lesson Activities:

TRUE OR FALSE:

1. "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD spoken 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." **EZRA 1:1**

TRUE OR FALSE

CIRCLE THE CORRECT WORD:

2. "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, MOUSE**) at Jerusalem which is in Judah." **EZRA 1:2**

TRUE OR FALSE:

3. But the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, and all those whose spirits God moved, would not arise to go up and build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem. **EZRA 1:5**

TRUE OR FALSE

4. "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." **EZRA 1:6**

TRUE OR FALSE

CIRCLE THE CORRECT WORDS:

5. "King Cyrus also brought out the articles of the house of the LORD, which (**HEROD, NEBUCHADNEZZAR**) had taken from Jerusalem and put in the temple of his gods." **EZRA 1:7**

God's People Returned Home

G H D C C J X P G M C S I B D
Y O I B L S H O Y O G Q C Q L
D M S R K N D C V P S H U U I
R E O H E I J E W S P E L B U
N U B Z N P N O L Y B A B D B
I L E F B A E G N I S V H W E
F B Y J N S S N S V M E E N R
G P E T I D O H T E R N I R U
Z R D M S Q K S U R Y C D K Y
W E O U X U Y K V E Q P H W I
P R S J T W I S R A E L P A N
P E Q A S G J I Y G X J H A J
J M K E U R B Z Z E S R I F H
U E J T R W K E X X V J A R Q
N Q F J T X G Q O K X H W R N

BABYLON
DISOBEYED
HEAVEN
JESUS
PROMISE
SIN
UNHAPPY

COVENANT
GOD
HOME
JEWS
REBUILD
TAKEN

CYRUS
HAPPY
ISRAEL
KING
REPENT
TRUST

19 of 19 words were placed into the puzzle.

God's People Returned Home Solution

+ H D + + + + G + C + + + D
+ O I + + + + O Y O + + + + L
+ M S R K + D + V P + H + + I
+ E O + E I J E W S P E + + U
+ + B + + P N O L Y B A B + B
+ + E + + A E G N I S V H + E
+ + Y + N S + N + + + E + N R
+ + E T I + + + T + + N + + U
+ + D M S + + S U R Y C + + +
+ + O U + + + + + + + P + + +
+ R S + T + I S R A E L P + +
P E + A S + + + + + + + A +
J + K + U + + + + + + + + H
+ E + + R + + + + + + + + +
N + + + T + + + + + + + + +

(Over,Down,Direction)

BABYLON(13,5,W)
COVENANT(11,1,SW)
CYRUS(12,9,W)
DISOBEYED(3,1,S)
GOD(9,1,SW)
HAPPY(15,13,NW)
HEAVEN(12,3,S)
HOME(2,1,S)
ISRAEL(7,11,E)
JESUS(1,13,NE)
JEWS(7,4,E)
KING(5,3,SE)
PROMISE(1,12,NE)
REBUILD(15,7,N)
REPENT(4,3,SE)
SIN(11,6,W)
TAKEN(5,11,SW)
TRUST(5,15,N)
UNHAPPY(15,8,NW)

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Have a blessed Thanksgiving!