

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

God's chosen people were now living in a foreign land, Babylon. God will call them out of this foreign country and bring them back to their own land. God loves His people. 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!

Remember our lesson last week. God had warned His people through His prophets that judgment would surely come if they refused to repent from their idolatry and sin. Yet the people’s hearts were hard. They refused to turn back to God. Judgment did come. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, conquered Judah and Jerusalem, and the people were carried away as captives—slaves to a foreign nation, living in a foreign land. Jerusalem had been left in ruins. Even the temple was destroyed and the articles used in the worship of God were carried away to Babylon.

For a total of 70 years, God’s people were in captivity serving the Babylonians. Though the people were suffering the consequences of their refusal to turn away from their sin, God had not forgotten them. God still loved His people. He promised that He would bring a group of His people back out of Babylon after the 70 years. **God will never leave or forsake His people!**

EZRA 1:1-4

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,

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, King of Persia, was now the ruler of the entire world. The first year of his reign, he made a proclamation throughout his kingdom and put it in writing. He told the people of his kingdom that God had appointed him as ruler over all the kingdoms and appointed him to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.

The people of God had his permission and blessing to go home to build the temple of the Lord God. He told their neighbors to provide them with money, goods and livestock, and freewill offerings to support the rebuilding of God's temple. How amazing! Only God could do this!

God was faithful to keep His Word to His people. God had prophesied through His prophet Jeremiah that those who would be taken into captivity would return after 70 years (Jeremiah 29:10-14). It was now that time!

God used Cyrus as His instrument to fulfill His promise and plan. One-hundred and fifty years earlier, Cyrus is actually named by the prophet Isaiah as the one who would “perform His will” in the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple (Isaiah 44:28). Note: *The Lord stirred the heart of Cyrus*, the king of Persia, to make the proclamation to allow the people to return back to their land. God will even use pagan kings and rulers to fulfill His promise and plans. **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 Lord moved upon the hearts of His people to return to their land and to return to worshipping Him. This was revival! For, revival means to bring back to life what was once dead.

Fishing for God’s People

In the New Testament, Jesus said that He would make us fishers of men. When the time came for God’s people to return to their land, God just reached in and “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 as the king commanded. Not only did the neighbors support them, they gave the people valuable gifts.

The people obeyed God’s call to return to their land and God provided their every need. It is a true saying, “Where God guides, He provides.” God will equip and enable us to do what He has called us to do.

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 all that was needed for the restoration of the temple.

The 70 years of captivity must have been difficult. Yet, the people learned valuable lessons; for when they returned from their captivity, they had been cured from the worship of idols.

How amazing it must have been to witness the fulfillment of God's promise. About *Fifty thousand* of God's people returned to their own land. God has given us who believe rich promises. In Hebrews 13:5 we read, "...I will never leave you nor forsake you." His promises are sure! **God will never leave or forsake His people.**

God's People Return Home

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

To begin with, use a blue or white piece of construction paper to serve as a background. (Blue can represent the sky.) Make copies of the template and cut out the mountains and people for the children to glue on the background. (You may want to use desert color construction paper to make the mountain background.) Color the people. Draw in plants, sun, clouds, etc.

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

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord for His faithfulness, for He will never leave us nor forsake us. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.

