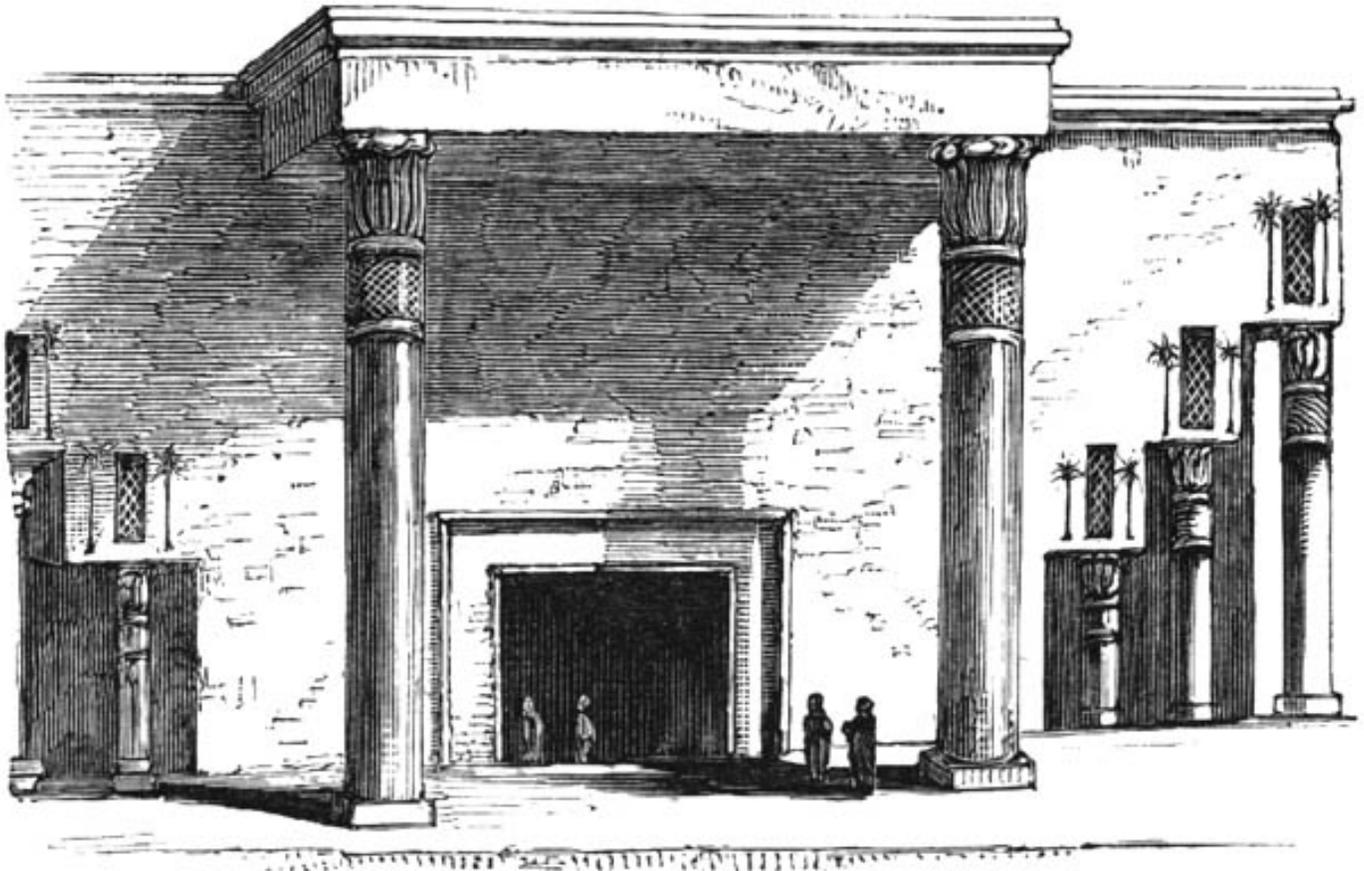


Return from Captivity & Rebuilding the Temple

Ezra 1 - 6



The Story

The children of Israel were God's people. God blessed them and gave them a beautiful land in which to live. The land was called Canaan or sometimes, the Land of Israel. God took care of the children of Israel and gave them everything they needed. But even though God gave the children of Israel everything they needed, they did not always obey God's commandments. To punish them, God let their enemies take the children of Israel to a far-off land as prisoners. The land was called Babylon, and the children of Israel had to stay there for 70 years as captives.

Today we will hear the account of Ezra the prophet, who lived back in the time when the children of Israel were captive in Babylon. God caused Ezra to write a perfect account of what happened to the children of Israel.

Nebuchadnessar, the old king of Babylon, was dead. The new king in Babylon was named Cyrus. He believed in the true God. God caused Cyrus to let the children of Israel go home! Cyrus told the people to go home and rebuild the city of Jerusalem. More importantly, Cyrus also said that he would give them all the money they would



need to rebuild Solomon's Temple. The Temple was the church in which the children of Israel worshiped. The Temple had been destroyed when the people were taken captive. Finally, Cyrus made a law that everyone in the land should give the children of Israel something to help them rebuild the Temple and Jerusalem. Cyrus put all this in writing so that no one would forget his commands or argue about them.

Zerubbabel was chosen as the new leader of the children of Israel. He led 42,360 people back to Canaan. The people were very happy to come back to the Promised Land. God had told the children of Israel that they would live in this Promised Land. God also told them that the Savior Jesus would be born here in Canaan. When the people got back to Canaan, they started to build the Temple in the same spot that Solomon's temple had stood. The people wanted to worship God and thank Him for bringing them back to the Promised Land. They began offering burnt offerings and sang happy songs of praise and worship.

There were many people who did not want the children of Israel to live in the land of Canaan. One of these groups was called the Samaritans. They tried to stop the children of Israel from building the Temple. They would fight against them with soldiers and spies. King Cyrus had died, so they tricked the new king named Artaxerxes. He told the children of Israel to stop building the Temple. So the children of Israel had to wait for sixteen years before they could continue building the Temple. Then God caused another new king to come to power. His name was Darius and he believed in the true God. When Darius checked the records, he found that Cyrus had given the Children of Israel permission to rebuild the city and the Temple. So, Darius told the children of Israel that they should continue

their work on the Temple. Finally, after twenty years, the Temple was rebuilt. Now the children of Israel could worship God again.

In those days, cities needed to have high walls around them to protect the people from invaders. The walls of Jerusalem had also been destroyed seventy years before. So the people needed to rebuild the walls. This was a big job. The enemies of the children of Israel didn't want the walls built either, so they tried to stop them again. Once again, God helped the children of Israel. The leaders, Zerubbabel and Jeshua, told the people to take turns working and guarding so that they would always have protection. Darius, the king, also made a law that said that everyone should support the work on the walls by giving money and materials. After only fifty-two days, the walls were completely finished.

Now you might think all the troubles of the children of Israel were over, but they weren't. The Temple was built, the walls were standing and the people had a safe place to live and worship, but some of the people ignored God's commandments again. The children of Israel had been marrying unbelievers and then they started to forget to worship God in the right way. God again had to solve their problem. He sent the prophet Ezra to go to the people and tell them about their sins. When Ezra reminded them of God's words, the people repented and started to do what God wanted them to do. They moved away from the heathen people they had been marrying and started to obey God again.

Finally, the children of Israel were back in the Promised Land of Canaan, worshiping God in the Temple and waiting for God's next promise. That promise was that the Savior of the world, Jesus, would be born to the children of Israel in the land of Canaan.

God delivered His people from their captivity and brought them back to the Promised Land of Canaan.

Activity One - Answer the following questions together in class. You do not need to write the answers.

1. Why were the children of Israel captives in Babylon?
2. Who said that the children of Israel could return home?
3. Who was the one who really made it possible for the children of Israel to go back to Canaan?
4. What was the first thing the children of Israel rebuilt in Jerusalem?
5. Why did they rebuild the Temple first?
6. Who tried to stop them from rebuilding?
7. How did God help the children of Israel to finish building the Temple?
8. What else did God have to help the children of Israel rebuild?
9. Who told the people that they should listen to what God told them?
10. What did the people do when they heard God's words about their sins?

Activity Two - Talk about these questions.

What are some problems that you often have?

What do you do when you have a problem that you can't solve?

Who is the only one who can solve all problems?



God delivers us from every trial.

Activity Three - Arrange the numbered words in order and write them in the blocks of the city walls of Jerusalem. When you have finished, you will find a passage that all people should follow in their families

8. Joshua 24:15b	4. house,	3. and my	6. serve
5. we will	1. But as	7. the LORD.	2. for me

Passages

Psalm 136:1 - Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. Which people in today's story could have said the words of this passage? Why?

Matthew 7:15 - Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

Who, in today's story could be called "ravenous wolves?" Do we have this kind of ravenous wolves around today? Where?

Hymn - TLH #636 v. 1, 3

Great is the Lord, our God,
And let His praise be great;
He makes His churches His abode,
His most delightful seat.

In Zion God is known,
A Refuge in distress;
How bright has His salvation shone,
How fair His heav'nly grace!

Prayer

Dear Jesus, Please help us to learn that, even though bad things happen in this life, You are always in control. As we studied the children of Israel today, we saw how God took care of their troubles and made things work out for the best in their lives. You have always promised to take care of us and You always will. Teach us to trust that always. In Your name we pray. Amen.