Building Your Life for God

Studies in Ezra, Nehemiah, Ezra, Daniel, Ezekiel, Haggai, & Malachi

[Shaping Hearts for God Curriculum]

**Lesson 8 – God Brings His People Home**

**Theme: Obedience: Faithfully Following God’s Word**

**Memory Verse - Daniel 6:10**

“Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house…[with] windows open toward Jerusalem...and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously.”

**Daily Bible Readings**

**Thursday** – Ezra 1:1-7; 2:1 - **Friday** – Ezra 3:1-3, 10-11 - **Saturday** – Ezra 4:4-5, 11-13. 21-24 **Monday** – Ezra 5:1-2, 6:1-7, 12 - **Tuesday** – Ezra 6:13-22

**Questions**

1. **Why Did King Cyrus allow the people to return to Jerusalem?**
2. **What was their first job when they got home?**
3. **Who led the first group of people back to Jerusalem?**
4. **What did the leaders build first after they returned to Jerusalem?**
5. **During the second year after the return, what part of the temple was built?**
6. **True or False. The people who already lived in the land wanted to help with the rebuilding.**
7. **What command did King Artaxerxes make about rebuilding the house of God?**
8. **What prophets encouraged the people to start building again?**
9. **How did God’s people feel when the temple was finally completed?**
10. **What special feast did God’s people celebrate in their own land for the first time in many years?**

**Teacher Notes:**

**Cyrus came to rule in Persia around 547 BC. He allowed the Jews to return to their homeland in 539 BC to rebuild their cities and homes. God used Cyrus to take care of His people. Seventy years before, God allowed Babylon to take His people captive because they had forgotten Him. Now, He is bringing them back home and helping them rebuild their lives in Judah.**

**Zerrubbabel led the first group back to Jerusalem around 520 BC. Some people stayed behind in Persia but supported those returning by giving them gold, silver, cattle, and other things to help them get started again. King Cyrus gave the people items that had been taken from the temple. About 50,000 courageous people went home to Canaan.**

**Seventy years earlier, the Babylonina army had invaded and destroyed much of Israel’s land. The Jews who returned would have to clear the rubble of war, repair what they could, and start rebuilding everything. It took about 7 months for the first group to return to Jerusalem and build houses to live in.**

**After this, the people met in Jerusalem to make plans for rebuilding the temple. The leaders built an altar to offer sacrifices to God and ask for His help. They did not want to disobey and be punished again. People gave money to support the project. Materials were brought into Jerusalem from all around to accomplish the rebuilding. Finally, in the second year after their return, work on the temple began!**

**Having a temple would allow the people to worship God. It would mean they were settling into the land to live again. When the temple foundation was laid, people had different feelings. Some were happy to see the temple being built again. Some were sad when they thought of why it had been destroyed. News about the temple foundation spread throughout the land.**

**People who lived in Canaan and were not Jews thought the Jews might try to take their land, or might become strong and attack them. They tried to stop the rebuilding work by discouraging the workers. They wrote a letter to the Persian king saying that the Jews would not serve Persia if they were allowed to rebuild. So, the king ordered the work stopped, and the Jews stopped working. People did not work the temple again for eighteen years.**

**God sent two prophets - Haggai and Zechariah - to speak to the people. They reminded them that God would be with them as they built the temple. Once again, enemies tried to stop the work, but God was watching over His people, and the rebuilding work began again. It took a long time to rebuild the temple, but in about four years the project was finished.**

**The people had a special celebration to dedicate the temple. They also observed the Passover for the first time again in their homeland. This feast reminded them of the way God delivered His people from Egypt many years before. Now, He had delivered them again from captivity. The people thanked God for helping them return and rebuild. God will also help us live for Him. We should be strong and have courage!**