8

Journey to Jerusalem

Key References: Ezra 1-3; Nehemiah 8:14-18; *Prophets and Kings*, chap. 45, pp. 557-566; *The Bible Story* (1994), vol. 6, pp. 66-70, 77-88; Our Beliefs, nos. 11, 22, 14.















power**text**

"With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the LORD: 'He is good; his love toward Israel endures forever.' And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid" (Ezra 3:11, NIV).

How would you feel if your family planned to move to a place where you had never been before? Scared, excited, or both? This week we'll learn about some people who made a big move during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.

As the 70 years of the Babylonian captivity were coming to a close, Cyrus the Great rose to the throne and ruled the Persian Empire. Daniel, who had been living in Babylon during the captivity, had left a positive impression on Cyrus. As a noble statesman who had survived the lions' den, Daniel had earned the utmost respect of the Persian emperor. Now, as God told the people that it was time to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem, He moved upon Cyrus's heart to decree the rebuilding of the Temple as it was prophesied by Isaiah:

"Thus says the LORD to His anointed,
To Cyrus, whose right hand I have held—
To subdue nations before him
And loose the armor of kings,
To open before him the double doors,
So that the gates will not be shut: . . .
'I have raised him up in righteousness,
And I will direct all his ways;
He shall build My city
And let My exiles go free,
Not for price nor reward,'
Says the LORD of hosts" (Isaiah 45:1, 13).

power**point**

One way that we worship God is by working together to build up His church.

Sabbath

DO Do the activity on page 61.

8

Sunday

READ Read Ezra 1 and this week's story, "Journey to Jerusalem."

STUDY Read the power text several times. Then write it out in your own words in your Bible study journal.

PRAY Pray that God will guide you and give you wisdom today.

Monday

READ Read Ezra 1:2-4 again.

THINK How do you think you would have felt if you had heard Cyrus say this? Would you have wanted to help rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem?

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Ask God to keep your mind alert so you'll know His plans for you.

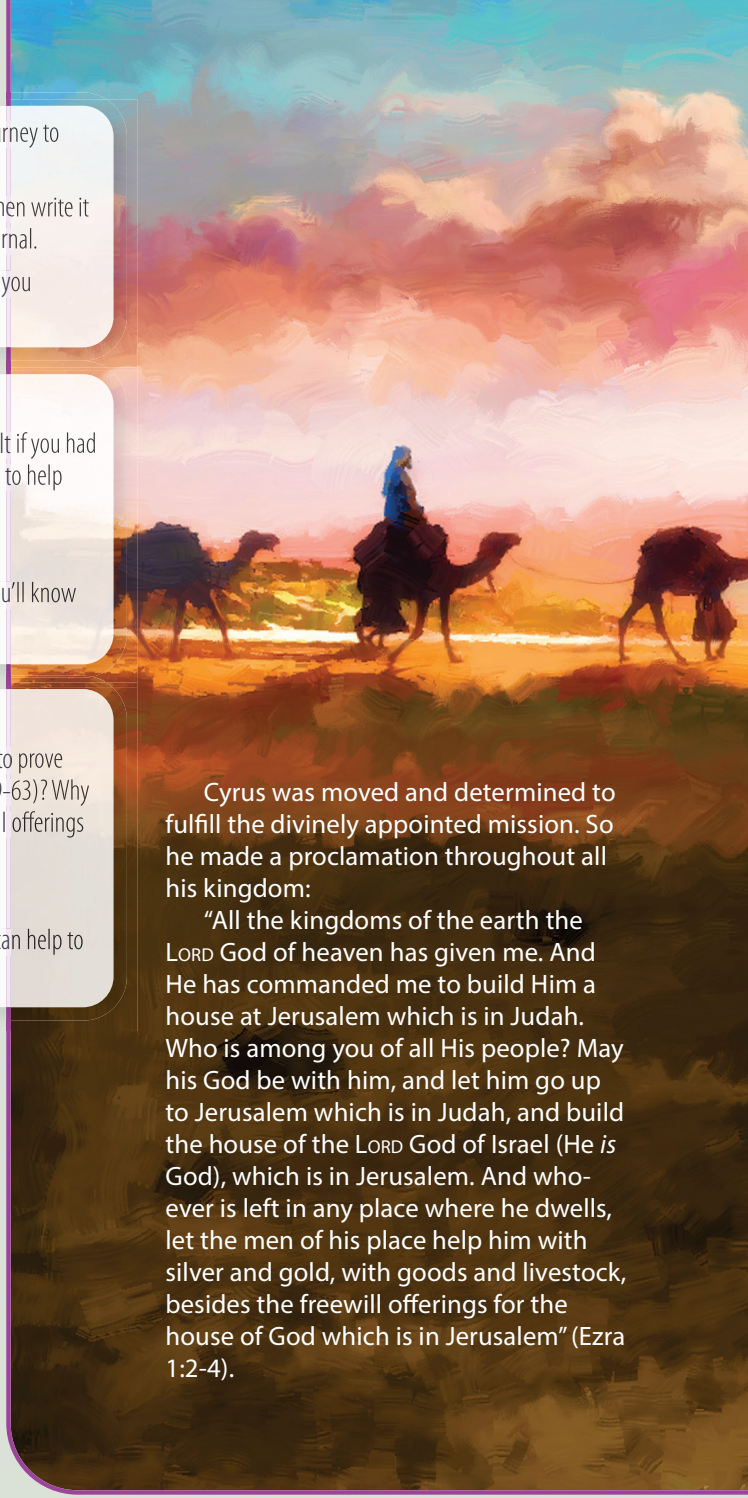
Tuesday

READ Read Ezra 2:1-70.

THINK Why do you think some were trying to prove that their families came from Israel (verses 59-63)? Why were the people so generous in giving freewill offerings for the rebuilding of the Temple?

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Ask God to show you a way that you can help to build up His church.



Cyrus was moved and determined to fulfill the divinely appointed mission. So he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom:

"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" (Ezra 1:2-4).



People from the tribe of Judah and Benjamin, including the priests and Levites, and others who were impressed by God, prepared to return to Jerusalem. Those who chose to remain in Babylon encouraged them by giving the travelers their articles of silver, gold, livestock, and other useful goods for their trip and for the Temple (see verses 5, 6).

Then King Cyrus brought out the Temple utensils that Nebuchadnezzar had taken:

30 gold platters
1,000 silver platters
29 knives
30 gold basins
410 silver basins
1,000 other articles
5,400 articles of gold and silver

All these items were brought from Babylon and were being returned again to Jerusalem (see verses 7-11).

The number of those who left Babylon were nearly 50,000 people, along with 736 horses, 245 mules, 435 camels, and 6,720 donkeys. Those staying behind gladly supported those who were leaving. They were happy for the families that were returning to their homeland.

After several hot days of traveling across the desert, the travelers finally came to the top of a hill, and beneath them lay the city of Jerusalem. Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, who led them, called everyone together. They prayed together, thanking God for the safe passage back to their home country.

Wednesday

READ Read Ezra 2:68-3:3.

THINK Where did the people live when they returned to Israel? Have you ever returned to a previous home? Why?

DRAW Draw a picture of a place that you love but haven't visited in a while.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Pray that wherever you are you will serve God.

Thursday

READ Read Ezra 3:4-6 and Nehemiah 8:14-18.

MAKE Construct or draw a model of a booth. It may be life-size or to scale.

THINK What was the purpose of the Feast of Tabernacles?

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Pray that you will feel welcome in God's house.

Friday

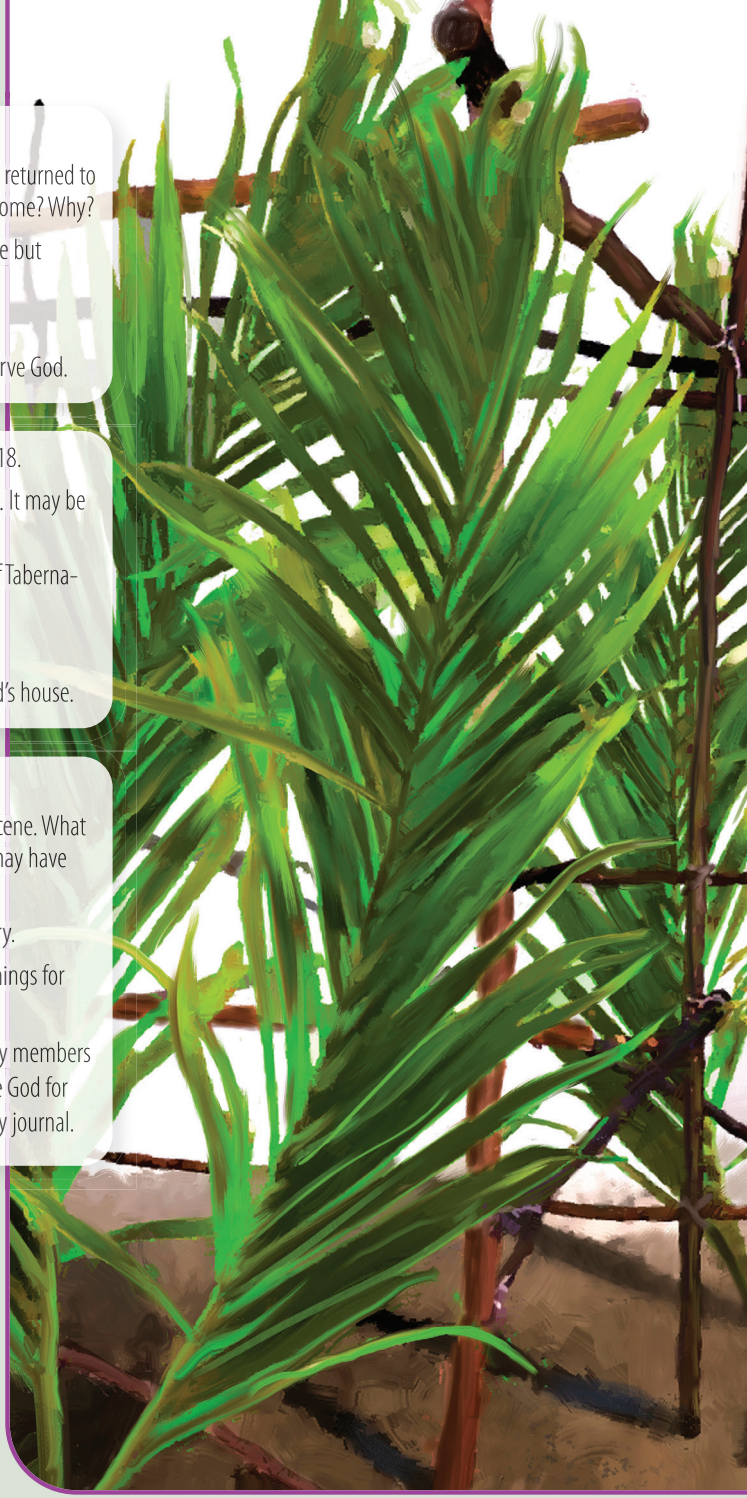
READ Read Ezra 3:7-12.

IMAGINE Close your eyes and imagine the scene. What sounds may have been heard? What scenes may have been seen?

REPEAT Say the power text aloud by memory.

WRITE In your Bible study journal, list five things for which you can praise God.

PRAY At worship, take turns with your family members to say prayers of thanksgiving. You may praise God for the things you wrote about in your Bible study journal.



The people praised God joyfully for His care, protection, and guidance. After the prayer, Zerubbabel began to give instructions. Excitement ran high as the group separated into smaller clusters of people.

At first everyone returned to the village where their ancestors had lived before they had been taken into captivity. In a few months, however, everyone returned to Jerusalem. Zerubbabel and Joshua decided to rebuild the altar of God. Soon everyone was called together, and sacrifices were made. Then the priests and leaders gathered the people and celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles according to what was written in the book of the law. They gathered tree branches and built their shelters on rooftops, in courtyards, in squares, and in the Temple's courts. The people rejoiced greatly as they celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles once again in Jerusalem after so many years of Babylonian captivity.



A WELL-BUILT HOUSE

Instructions: Form words by filling in the squares in the bottom four rows with letters from the squares directly above them. The letters go in the order that they are given. Black boxes are used as the spaces between the words. When you are finished, read across the filled-in squares to get a quote from Hebrews 3:4 (NIV).

