

Questions / Answers

1. What promise did God give the people before they were taken captive?
That after 70 years they would return to their own land.
2. Who took the Jews captive? Who allowed them to return?
Nebuchadnezzar took them captive. Cyrus let them return.
3. Who led 42,000 Jews back to the land of Israel?
Zerubabel and Jeshua.
4. What did the Jews start to build at Jerusalem?
They started to build the Temple.
5. Who encouraged the Jews to finish building the Temple?
Haggai and Zechariah encouraged the people to finish the Temple.
6. Who was the priest who led more Jews back to the land?
Ezra.
7. Why was Ezra very upset? What did he do?
Ezra was upset because the Jews were disobeying God and marrying foreign women. He turned the people back to God.
8. Why was Nehemiah very upset?
He heard that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down.
9. What did Nehemiah do?
He asked the king for permission to go to Jerusalem. He led the people to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.
10. How long did it take to rebuild the walls. Who helped to build them?
It took 52 days to rebuild the walls. Everyone helped to build.

Memory verses

Ezra 1:2—3 Nehemiah 4:21 1 Corinthians 15:58

Discussion

The Jews worked together to rebuild the walls although their enemies tried to discourage them. Discuss what can make us discouraged. How can we help each other to work together for God?

Writing

Who were these people? What did they do? Zerubbabel and Jeshua; Haggai and Zechariah; Ezra; Nehemiah.

CBM Senior Lessons

Lesson 28 Ezra and Nehemiah



READING Ezra 1:1—8; 3:8—13; 4:1—5 & 24; 5:1—2; 7:1—10; 10:1—5
Nehemiah 1:2-4; 2:1—9 & 11—13; 4:13—23; 6:15—16

LESSON

In the last lesson we learned that God gave His people in the Kingdom of Judah a promise of hope. Before the people were taken away as captives to Babylon, God promised that He would bring them back to their own land again. God said that they would be captives for 70 years. Then He would bring them back to their own land again. When they returned to their own land, Jerusalem and the Temple would be rebuilt. While they were in captivity the people longed for this time when they could go back to their own land.

King Nebuchadnezzar took the people of Judah captive to Babylon in 606 BC. In 536 BC, exactly 70 years later, King Cyrus conquered Babylon and made a law saying that the Jews could go back to their own land and rebuild the Temple. God's promise was fulfilled exactly.

More than 42,000 Jews (people of Judah) wanted to go and live in the land of Israel. Some of the Jews did not want to go. They wanted to stay in Babylon. The Jews who stayed in Babylon gave gifts of gold and silver to help rebuild the temple. King Cyrus gave back all the gold and silver cups and bowls that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Temple.

Zerubbabel and Jeshua led about 42,000 Jews to the land of Israel. They took all the gold and silver for the temple. Many of the Jews had been born in Babylon. They had never seen the land God had given them. Everyone was very excited to be going to live in the land of Israel.

The people settled near Jerusalem and began to rebuild the Temple. Cyrus had given them money to help with the work. When the foundation of the Temple was finished, the people held a special thanksgiving service and rejoiced because a Temple was being built in Jerusalem again.

Some of the pagan people living in the area wanted to join the Jews and help to build the Temple. The Jews remembered God's commands that they must be a special separate nation to worship Him. They could not join with the pagan people. These pagan people were angry and discouraged the Jews. No more building work was done on the Temple for 16 years.

God sent two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah to encourage the people to finish building the Temple. Work on the Temple began again. Finally the Temple was finished and the people held a great thanksgiving feast in the Temple.

The Temple of God was rebuilt. But the pagan people continued to discourage the Jews. Gradually the Jews forgot about God and did not obey His commands.

Ezra was a very faithful priest. He lived in Babylon. It was about 60 years after the Jews had finished rebuilding the Temple. Ezra decided that he would like to go to worship God in the Temple at Jerusalem. Ezra asked Artaxerxes, King of Persia if he could go to live in the land of Israel. The King said that Ezra could go to live in Israel. He also said that Ezra could take with him any Jews who wanted to go and live in Israel.

There were many Jews still living in Babylon who wanted to go back and live in their own land. The king gave Ezra gifts of gold and silver for the Temple worship. He made Ezra Governor of Jerusalem. Ezra and the Jews set out from Babylon and arrived safely in Jerusalem. They thanked God and took the gold and silver to the Temple and worshipped God there.

Ezra soon found that many of the people had forgotten about God and were disobeying His commands. They were mixing with the pagan peoples, who did not know God. They had married foreign wives. Ezra was very upset. God's people had been taken into captivity for 70 years because they disobeyed Him. God had kept His promise to let the Jews come back to their land - and now they were disobeying Him again!

Ezra gathered all the Jews to Jerusalem and taught them about God. All the people promised to serve God again. Ezra stayed in Jerusalem. He did a great work in turning the people back to God. Ezra kept the people separate from the pagan peoples. He turned them back to the true worship. He taught them to live as God's special people again.

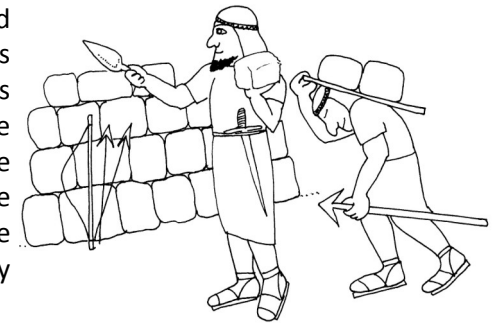


Nehemiah was cup bearer to King Artaxerxes, King of Persia. One day he had a letter from Jerusalem. He heard that the walls of Jerusalem were still broken down. They had not been rebuilt. Piles of stones blocked the roads and the gates of Jerusalem were burnt down. The Jews had many enemies and the city of Jerusalem had no protection. The Jews were in danger because they had no protection from their

enemies. Nehemiah was very upset. He asked the king for permission to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls. The king gave his permission and he gave Nehemiah money to rebuild the walls. Nehemiah went to Jerusalem with many other Jews who wanted to go back to live in their own land.

When Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem he went all round the city walls on a donkey to inspect the work that needed to be done. He spoke to the rulers of the Jews. They agreed to rebuild the walls. All the people in Jerusalem helped to rebuild the walls. They worked in small groups. They all worked very hard and everyone helped. The men and women worked together. The rich and the poor all helped. Some people built a lot. Some people built a little. But they all helped. They had faith that God would be with them in their work and keep them safe from their enemies.

The enemies of the Jews were angry and tried to stop the building. But the Jews would not stop building. They set guards with trumpets to watch out for the enemies attacking them. Some of the people worked with their sword in one hand in case they were attacked. The people trusted God and worked very hard to build the walls.



God helped the Jews. After only 52 days the walls were finished. The walls of Jerusalem stood strong again. The people praised God that they could live safely in Jerusalem.

Nehemiah was a great leader. He prayed to God for help when things were difficult. Nehemiah always trusted God. He was not afraid of his enemies. He knew God would help. Nehemiah helped the Jews to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem so that the Jews lived safely there.