

## K-1<sup>st</sup> Lesson

### Introduction

Refer to Lesson 112 Flip Chart. In our last lesson, we learned how God gave a promise through the prophet Jeremiah that would bring hope to his people as they lived as captives in Babylon. The Israelites had always lived under an old covenant, trying to obey God's laws. But they were not able to keep all the laws because of their sin. Jeremiah wrote about a new covenant that would take the place of the old one and bring forgiveness of sin and eternal life through Jesus Christ, not just for the Jews, but also for us today!

- ? How many of you have ever had to move to a new home? Raise your hand. Show of hands.

Bring in a suitcase or a box with several items that a child might take with him if he were moving, such as a favorite toy/stuffed animal; photo of himself with a friend; a rock he found in the yard; a favorite shirt; a favorite book; etc. Show each item then put them all back into the suitcase. Then pull all items out except for one and ask students, "Which one is still in the suitcase?" Play several times allowing students to guess the missing object.

If you were really moving, you might want to remember your old home, and you might be a little sad to leave it. But you would also be excited to go to your new home. This is a little like what happened to some of the Jews living in Babylon. Seventy years had gone by since they first went there, and now they were allowed to move back to Jerusalem. They might have felt a little sad to leave Babylon after living there for so

many years, but they were probably very excited about going back to their homeland.

God had promised that the Jews would only be in Babylon for 70 years. Now it was time for them to start going home to Jerusalem. Let's find out how it all happened.

### The Jews Return to Jerusalem

Refer to the Books of the Bible Poster. We're going to read from the book of Ezra in the Old Testament.

#### Ezra 1:2

Listen as I read so you can tell me who told the Jews they could go home. Have the student with the Bible bring it up and turn to the sticky note. Read Ezra 1:2.

- ? Who was the king of Persia? King Cyrus.

What does Persia have to do with the Jews in Babylon? After the Jews were taken to Babylon and had lived there many years, the Persians came and took over Babylon, and it became part of the kingdom of Persia, which was ruled by King Cyrus.

- ? But do you think it would matter who was king? Who is always in control over everything—even kings and rulers? God.

Show the Lesson Flip Chart. Right. God is sovereign. That means he is in control over everything—even over a king. God caused King Cyrus to make an important announcement to everyone in his kingdom. Let's read his announcement again. Reread verse 2.

- ? What did God charge, or command, Cyrus to build for him? A house for God; the temple.
- ? Where was this house for God, the temple, supposed to be built? At Jerusalem.

Jerusalem was a city back home in Judah. This was wonderful news! God caused King Cyrus to give the Jews permission to leave Persia—to go back to Judah and rebuild the temple. God was taking care of his people. They could go home now, just as he had promised.

But that's not all. The king also told everyone to give gifts of silver and gold and animals to

the Jews who were leaving. These things would help them pay for the supplies they needed to rebuild the temple. King Cyrus also gave back the beautiful things that had been stolen from the temple.

Refer to the Lesson Flip Chart. Not everyone left all at once. The Bible says God stirred up the spirits of certain Jews, making them understand that they should go and help. Soon there was a group of almost 50,000 people packed up and ready to head back to Jerusalem. This was a big group, and they needed a leader. God chose a man named Zerubbabel to lead them home.

### The Rebuilding of the Temple

After the people got settled in their homes, Zerubbabel took charge and got them started on the building project. First, they rebuilt the altar to the Lord where they offered sacrifices and worshipped God the way he had commanded them to do.

But the temple was still in shambles. They knew they needed to get busy and start rebuilding. It took some time to gather supplies and workers, but they finally were ready to lay the temple foundation.

- ? Refer to the Flip Chart. What is a foundation? The part of a building laid down first to keep it straight, stable, and strong.

#### Ezra 3:11

Let's read about what the people did when the foundation was ready. Listen to Ezra 3:11. Read the verse.

- ? The Jews were excited to see the foundation for the temple. What kinds of things did the people do? Sang, praised the Lord, gave thanks, shouted.

The priests and Levites played instruments and led the people in worshipping the Lord as they sang a song of praise and thanksgiving.

But there were some in Jerusalem who did not want the temple to be built. When the Babylonians took the Jews away to Babylon, they sent people from other lands to live in Judah. These people were not happy that the Jews had

come back now and were rebuilding the temple of God. They tried to scare the Jews and keep them from building the temple—and it worked! The building project stopped for many years until God caused another king, Darius, to give them permission to finish building the temple.

#### Ezra 6:16–17

So, what did the people do when the whole temple was finally done 21 years later? Let's read that in Ezra 6:16–17. Read the verses.

- ? All the people celebrated with what? Joy.
- ? And what did they offer to God in the new temple? They offered sacrifices. Bulls, rams, lambs, goats.

The Jews had been captives in the country of Babylon for 70 years. They finally returned to Jerusalem but ended up waiting another 21 years until the temple was finished. But when it was completed, there was a great celebration! The people gathered together with the priests. They made sacrifices, sang songs, and prayed to God. The people were so happy!

God was in control of everything that happened. He knew the right time to send Zerubbabel and his group back to Judah. And he stirred people up to help them understand what they needed to do—even King Cyrus!

- ? What is the word that means God is in control? Sovereign.

We also saw how God showed that he is faithful to do what he promises. God had told the Jews that they would only be in Babylon for 70 years and that they would be able to come back home to Judah.

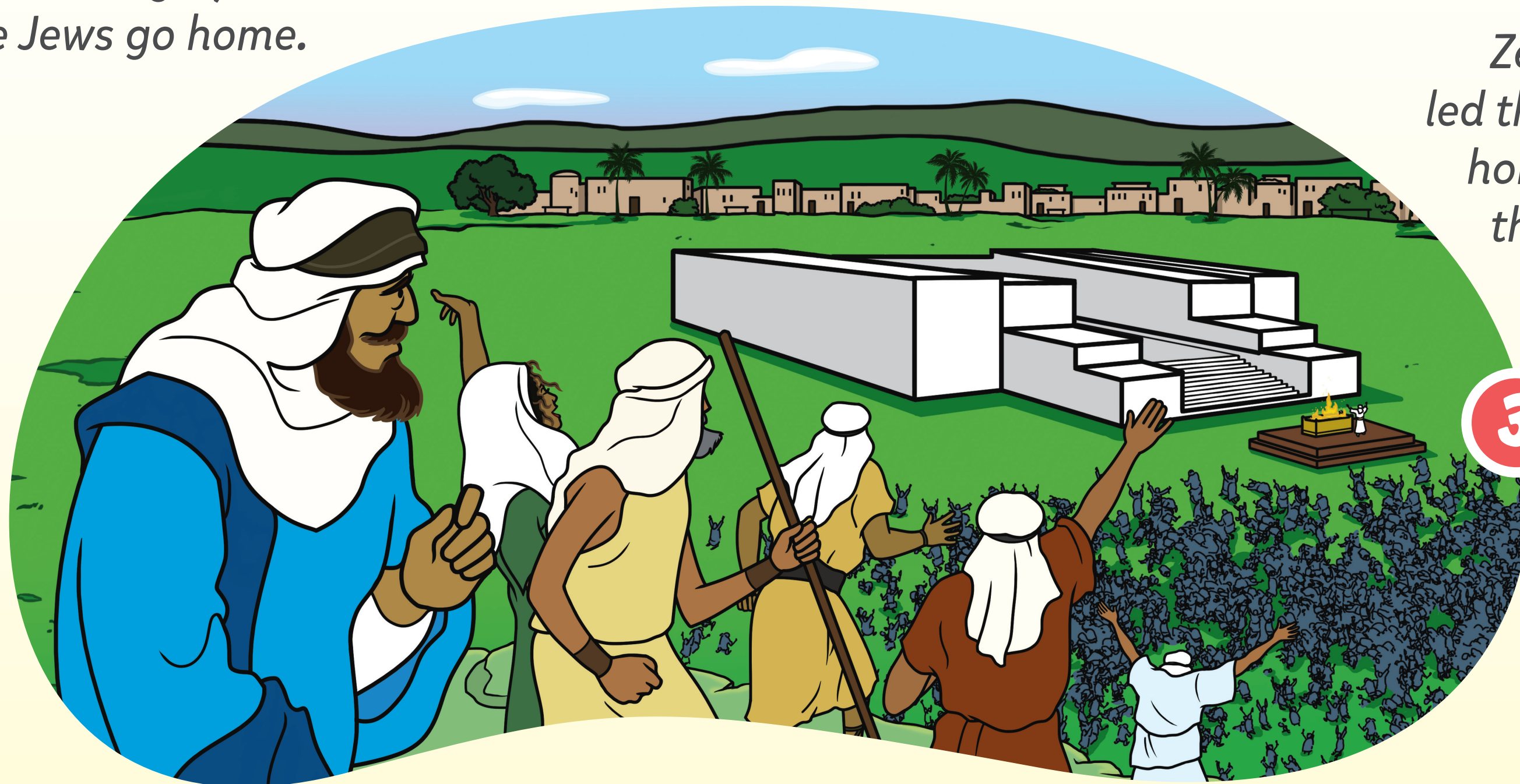
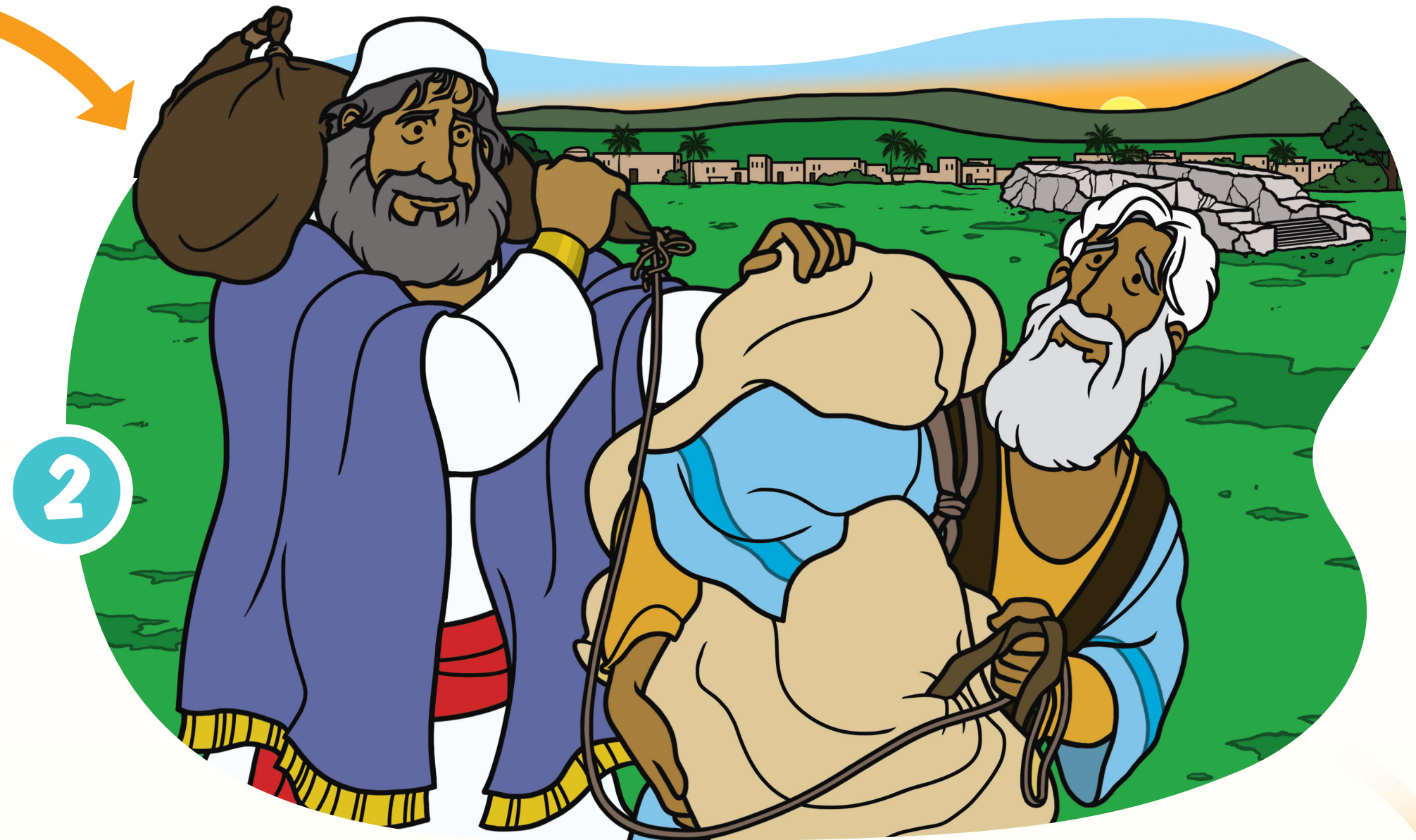
- ? Was God faithful to keep his promise? Yes.

God did bring his people back to the land of Judah and the city of Jerusalem just as he had promised. And he helped them rebuild the temple. But this was only the beginning. These people were the first group to come home. We'll find out later how the second group of Jews came back to Jerusalem.





God caused King Cyrus to let the Jews go home.



Zerubbabel led the first group home to build the temple.