

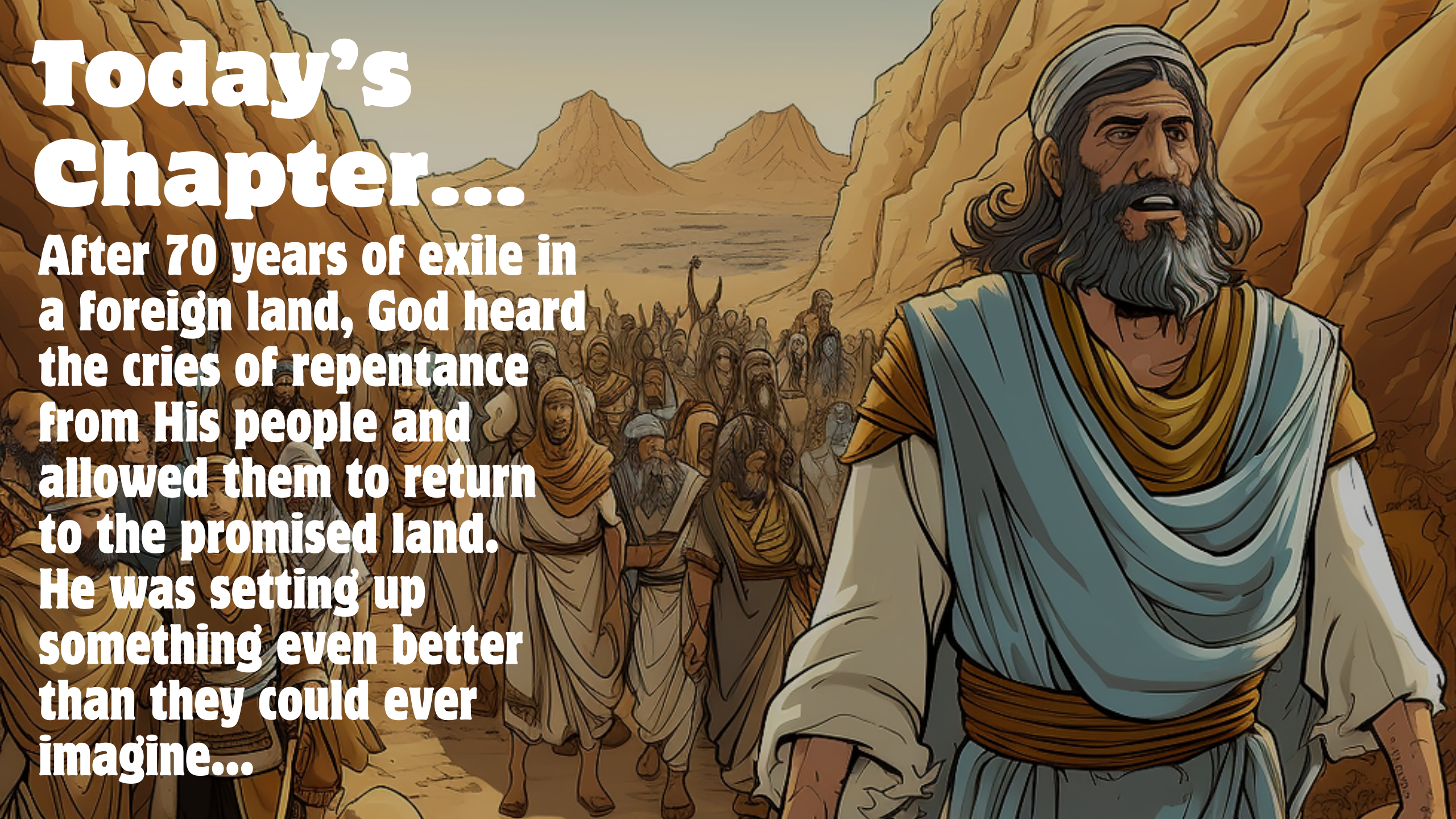


THE BIG STORY CHAPTER 17/25

The Return:
God Isn't Finished

Today's Chapter...

After 70 years of exile in a foreign land, God heard the cries of repentance from His people and allowed them to return to the promised land. He was setting up something even better than they could ever imagine...



Today's Scripture:

Ezra 1:1-5

In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever 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 rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem. And let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings for the house of God that is in Jerusalem." Then rose up the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up to rebuild the house of the LORD that is in Jerusalem.



The Story: The Return

- The Israelites spent 70 years living in foreign lands far away from the promised land God had given them.**
- During this time, it was impossible for them to follow the Law of the Lord, for they could not offer sacrifices in a temple that did not exist anymore.**
- However, God loved His people so much that He moved the heart of a pagan – which means nonbeliever - king to allow the people to return to Jerusalem and rebuild His temple.**
- He had a bigger purpose, however. It was prophesied that the Messiah, Jesus, would be born in the promised land! God had not forgotten His promised Messiah, and so moved the hearts of kings to prepare the world for it.**

Why it Matters in the Big Story

- God isn't just the God of people who believe in Him – He's the God over all creation.**
- Sometimes, God works in the hearts and lives of people who don't believe in Him to accomplish a great purpose.**
- Ultimately, God's desire is for all people to know and love Him! However, that does not stop Him from being king of all creation.**



GOD IS...

**God is Sovereign.
That means that God
has a plan beyond
anything we could
possibly imagine. Even
though He allows things
He hates to happens,
nothing is fully out of
His power or control.**

Reflection Questions

1. **How did God let His people return?**
He softened the heart of a king.
2. **Why did God let His people return?**
To prepare the world for Jesus.
3. **What does it mean that God is sovereign?**
It means that God is completely in control.

Challenge Question: How will you ask God to forgive your sins this week?