

Bible Story 26: EZRA AND NEHEMIAH RETURNING TO JERUSALEM

SCRIPTURE: EZRA 1:1-4; 2:1,64; 3:1-2; 4:4; 6:1,6-7,14-16; 7:6-11; 9:8-9
NEHEMIAH 1:1; 2:1-8,17; 4:12-13,17; 16:15; 8:1-12,18; 12:27

MEMORY VERSE: "I LIFT UP MY EYES TO THE HILLS - WHERE DOES MY HELP COME FROM? MY HELP COMES FROM THE LORD, THE MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH." PSALM 121:1-2 NIV

BIBLE STORY:

Much time passed since the Jews from Judah were taken prisoners to Babylon. When King Cyrus of Persia conquered Babylon, he felt compassion and let the Jews return to Jerusalem.

The first group of Jews returned to the city of Jerusalem. They saw that the walls around the city were fallen and the Temple was burned. The first thing they did was to build an altar and gave thanks to God for their safe return. Then they worked together and rebuilt the Temple.

Many years passed and the religious leader, Ezra, brought a second group of Jewish people from Babylon back to the city of Jerusalem. After they arrived, Ezra and the people in the city prayed, asking God to forgive them of their sins, things they were doing wrong. They promised to be faithful in serving God.

Several more years passed. The Jew Nehemiah was the cupbearer to King Artaxerxes in Babylon. One day Nehemiah was very sad when he served the king. The king asked, "*Nehemiah, why are you so sad?*" He told the king about the many difficulties in Jerusalem, the fallen wall around the city and the burned gates. Then he asked the king for permission to rebuild the city walls. The king agreed. So Nehemiah led the third group back to Jerusalem. When they arrived, they saw that the people in the city had very little money, food, water and clothing. They began rebuilding the walls. Even though enemies fought against them, the people helped one another as they worked. God helped them. Finally the reconstruction of the walls of the city was finished!

The Jews in Jerusalem joined Ezra as he read the Word of God. All the Jews dedicated themselves to faithfully obey, serve and worship God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What do you like about the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main people in the story?
4. What problems did the people face?
5. How did the people face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

RETELL THE STORY:

Ask volunteers from the group to retell the story.