

## Bible Story 26:

# EZRA AND NEHEMIAH RETURNING TO JERUSALEM

**SCRIPTURE:** First Return: Ezra 1:1-4; 2:64; 3:1-11; 4:4,24; 6:6-7,13-16  
Second Return: Ezra 7:6-10,27-28; 8:31-32; 9:6-9  
Third Return: Nehemiah 1:1-11; 2:1-8,17; 4:12-17; 6:15; 8:1-12,18

**MEMORY VERSE:** 1 John 1:9

### BIBLE STORY:

About seventy years 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.

#### FIRST RETURN: TEMPLE REBUILT

The first group of 42,360 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.

#### SECOND RETURN: EZRA

Around eighty years passed since the first group returned to Jerusalem.

Ezra was captive in Babylon. He was trained as a scribe, a skilled Jewish student and teacher of the Law (*the first five books of the Old Testament*). Ezra was given permission to lead 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. God heard their prayers and forgave them. Also, the people promised to be faithful in serving God.

#### THIRD RETURN: NEHEMIAH

Fourteen 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?***"

Nehemiah 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.

### PART 1: PERSONAL QUESTIONS

1. What did you learn from the story?
2. How can you apply this story to your life?

## **PART 2: GENERIC QUESTIONS**

1. What do you like about the story?
2. What is there in the story that you do not 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?

## **PART 3: SPECIFIC QUESTIONS**

1. **FIRST RETURN:** How many years passed since the people from Judah were taken prisoners to Babylon and the first group returned to Jerusalem?  
--- What did they find when they returned to Babylon?  
--- Why did they first construct an altar to God?  
--- What did they reconstruct?
2. **SECOND RETURN:** How many years passed since the first group's arrival?  
--- Who led the second group's return to Jerusalem?  
--- What did Ezra and the people pray?  
--- Who did the Jews ask for forgiveness of their sins?
3. What is sin? Do people still sin today? What are some of the sins we do today? How can we receive forgiveness for the sins we have done? (Read 1 John 1:9.) What does it mean to confess our sins?
4. **THIRD RETURN:** How did Nehemiah serve King Artaxerxes in Babylon?  
--- Why was Nehemiah sad?  
--- When they returned to Jerusalem, what did the people rebuild?
5. What are some things we can do to help our neighborhood? Our community? Our church? Why is it important to help one another?
6. What did Ezra read to the people in Jerusalem?
7. Is it important for you to personally read the Bible? Why?
8. Who were the two main leaders who led the Jewish people in this story? How did they serve God? How can you and I serve God with our lives?