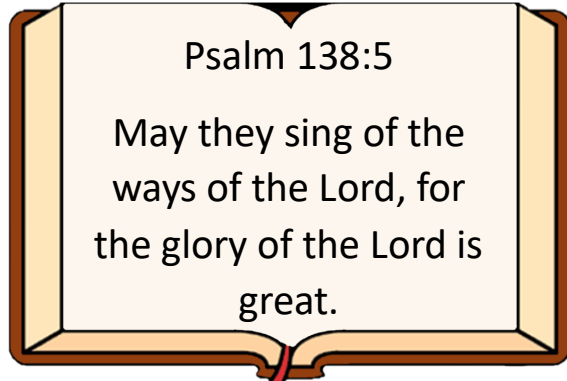


Weekly Memory Verse



According to the verse, what should we sing about?

According to the verse, why should we sing? _____

God Frees His People from Captivity



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Lesson Link

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Many years after the people were taken captive King Cyrus became the king of Persia. The prophet Isaiah wrote about him over seventy years earlier. Isaiah wrote that King Cyrus would allow the Jewish people to return to the land of Israel. How could Isaiah know this? God told him.

One day, King Cyrus had one of his scribes write out an announcement and send it throughout his kingdom. It was for all the Jewish captives still living there and said that any of the Jews could return to their homeland. God was working in the king's heart.

There was much to do—packing all the food, supplies, tents, and water for the long trip and their arrival in Jerusalem. King Cyrus gave them all the gold and silver items King Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem. Soon everyone was ready to leave. A man named Zerrubabel led almost 50,000 Jewish people back to Judah.

It took four months for the people to make the 900-mile journey back to Judah.

When the people arrived in Jerusalem they found the city walls were broken down, and the beautiful temple built by Solomon was in ruins! Most of the homes were also gone. There was much work ahead of them, but the people were very thankful to be back in the land God had given them.

They rebuilt their own homes and then they rebuilt the alter to the Lord so they could worship Him.

Now the next job was to rebuild the temple, which had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. Large quantities of gold and wood were needed. King Cyrus gave them permission to get logs from Lebanon in the north. After the foundation was laid, the people celebrated. They sang and praised God together.

As God's people tried to build the temple, their enemies made many strong attacks and threats to stop them. They became discouraged and stopped building. God sent two of His prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, to encourage them to finish the work. It took them fifteen years to finally complete it. Once again there was great joy and celebration as they dedicated it to God!

Sometime later King Artaxerxes, the next King of Persia, gave Ezra, a priest and teacher of God's Word, permission to take another group of people back to Jerusalem. So, Ezra led a group of Israelites to Jerusalem, taking with him the scrolls of God's Word that had been preserved all the years the people were in captivity.

The people were to B _____ the temple in Jerusalem.

When Ezra arrived in Jerusalem, he was disturbed to see that the people who had returned from captivity were not obeying God. As Ezra began to pray and explain God's Word to them, the people began to confess their sins and started to live according to God's Word.

With God's help, the people worked hard and rebuilt their homes and the temple. But there was still one more important task to be completed. The walls and gates surrounding the city of Jerusalem still needed to be rebuilt.

When Nehemiah, the cupbearer for King Artaxerxes, received a letter telling him about the broken-down walls in Jerusalem, it made him sad. He wanted to do something about it. He fasted and prayed to God. Nehemiah prayed, "O God please hear my prayer. Please give me success today. Allow the king to show kindness to me." God answered his prayer, and the king gave him permission to return to Jerusalem. Not only did he grant permission but also the king sent some of the army to protect him on his trip.

When Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem, he gathered all the leaders together and told them why he had come and how God had answered prayer to get him there. Then he said, "Let's all work together and rebuild the walls."

The people were excited. Everyone helped to do the work. Each family group who lived in the city worked on the part of the wall closest to their homes. Their enemies tried to stop them by laughing and making fun of them and by spreading rumors and threatening their lives. They even tried to burn and destroy the wall that was already completed. Nehemiah asked God to help them.

Then Nehemiah called the leaders together and said to them, "Don't be afraid of the enemy. Remember that the Lord, who is great and mighty, is with us. So, fight for your families and homes!" Then he told the men to carry their weapons as they worked. So, they did just that. Also, half of the men guarded the wall while the other half worked on building it.

It wasn't easy. But the people prayed and worked, and God helped them finish the walls and gates around the entire city in fifty-two days! Once again, the people sang, celebrated, and praised God for helping them to rebuild their city and the temple to God.

Circle the correct answer.

The enemies realized this work had been done with the help of *(sharp tools, God, hard work)*.