Better Days Are Coming

May 10, 2020—Lesson 11

Background Scripture: Zechariah 8:1-8, 11-17 • Lesson Scripture: Zechariah 8:1-8, 11-17

Key Verses: [God said,] "I will save my people I will bring them back to live in Jerusalem; they will be my people, and I will be . . . their God." (Zechariah 8:7, 8a)

Lesson Objective: The students will hear about God's promise to the people that He would deliver them to a land of peace and prosperity.

Materials Needed: *Middle Elementary* student books, Bibles (NIV), index cards, scissors, copier paper, an instrumental praise music CD and CD player, markers, crayons or coloring pencils, age-appropriate magazines. (**Optional:** whiteboard and dry-erase markers; Older Children's Resource Kit [attendance chart and lesson 11 materials].)

BEGINNING THE JOURNEY



If you purchased the Older Children's Resource Kit, post the attendance chart and purchase stickers (such as stars) to place on the chart. Also, gather any materials that may be needed for any of the activities for this lesson prior to class (found in the Teacher's Guide of the Resource Kit).

Prior to class, gather all the supplies needed for today's opening activity.

Welcome and Worship

Welcome the students and their parents or guardians to the classroom. Acknowledge any visiting students. Open the class with a weekly check-in, letting students who desire to do so give a praise report or prayer request. Then pray or ask a volunteer to lead the class in prayer. Complete the roll call and then collect any offerings the students or any others may have brought.

Opening Activity

Distribute paper and the craft and coloring supplies to the students. Instruct them to draw the basic shape of a world. Have them color it in and decorate it how they see fit to do so. Then have them draw symbols or items or utilize their craft supplies and items from magazines to add symbols and items to the planet. These additions will represent what their perfect promise and new world would look like.

The students will create their own new world and then compare them to one another's and to what God promised His people. (Some ideas for what students can add include endless food to feed the hungry; a country filled with a specific thing they enjoy; and so forth.) Allow them to think freely and creatively during this process.

Say: Today's lesson is about how God showed mercy on the people and brought them back to Jerusalem. This lesson teaches that although there are times when situations seem difficult, there is nothing too hard for God to deal with.

Prepare the students for the Bible story.

BIBLE VOYAGE



The Bible Story

Always encourage your students to bring Bibles (New International Version) to class. Have extra Bibles available for classroom use.

You may choose to read today's Scripture passage to the students from the Bible first. Then, using the student books, let volunteers take turns alternating reading different paragraphs of the Bible story aloud.

Better Days Are Coming

In today's lesson, the Lord God told Zechariah about His great love for Jerusalem.

God talked about returning to Jerusalem and living there. While there, Jerusalem would be called the Faithful City, and the mountain would be called the Holy Mountain.

God said that old people would once again sit along the streets, which would be filled with children playing and having fun. The Israelites may think that this was too good to be true, but nothing is too *difficult* (hard) for God to do. God would save His people and return them to Jerusalem. They would be His people and He would be their God.

The Lord God promised not to treat these people like He had treated the ones in the past. Their seeds would *sprout* (grow) and their grapevines would bear fruit. They would have good crops and the rain would fall from the sky. Judah and Israel would be saved.

The people had made God angry and He punished them without mercy. God was blessing them, but they should be fair

to one another. They should not hurt each other or lie to one another. These things were hated by God.

After reading the Bible story, discuss the following:

- 1. To what did God say the name of the city would change? (It would be known as the Faithful City.)
- **2.** What would the old people do in the city? (*They would* be walking, talking, and sitting in the streets.)
- **3.** How did God want the people to treat one another? (He wanted them to treat one another fairly.)

FUN EXPEDITIONS 🕉



Imagine and Draw

Give the students pencils and provide time for them to complete the activity in their student books. Help any students who need assistance. After they complete the activity, allow any students who wish to do so to share their work with the class. Drawings will vary.

The Contemporary Story

Read the story to the class, or let the students take turns alternating reading different paragraphs/sentences of the story aloud.

You Have to Do Better!

"But why don't I get to go with my friends?" Jaz asked. While all the other kids in his class got to sit with each other and share food, having a great time, he had to sit with the teacher and principal.

"Because you've been sent to the principal's office so many times," Mr. Franklin began, "you are sitting with us today to keep you out of trouble.'

"How long do I have to sit with you?" Jaz asked.

"Just for field day and when the class takes its trip to the zoo at the end of the school year," Mr. Franklin replied.

Jaz did not want to have to sit away from his friends when they went to the zoo to see the animals! He needed to try to make things right with his teacher.

"I promise I won't act up in class," Jaz said. "I won't get sent to the principal's office for anything. Can I sit with the class at the zoo on the last day of school?"

"You have to keep your promise to me, Jaz," Mr. Franklin answered.

"I promise!" Jaz responded.

Then, discuss the following questions:

- 1. Why was Jaz in trouble? (He had been sent to the principal's office for disobeying.)
- 2. What was his consequence for this? (He had to sit with the principal and his teacher during field day instead of with his class/friends.)

- 3. What did Jaz promise? (He promised to improve his behavior so that he could be with his class on the class trip to the zoo.)
- 4. Why is it important to always obey God, your teachers, and your parents? (Responses will vary.)

Exploring the Story in Ruby's Lab

Say: It is now time to explore today's lesson with Ruby. After we read this section, we will go back and discuss Ruby's statements, questions, and observations.

Let one or two students read Ruby's words aloud. Discuss Ruby's words with the students. Encourage the students to commit to doing what is right and treating others fairly. Discuss with the students the importance of facing their punishment as the consequence for their actions that are displeasing to God and authority figures.

A "Better Days" Crossword Puzzle

Give the students pencils and provide time for them to complete the activity in their student books. Help any students who struggle with figuring out the answers. After they complete the activity, review the answers aloud.

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ENDING THE JOURNEY

Bring the lesson to a close by reviewing the Key Verses and the lesson.

Ask: How can we treat others fairly? What does it mean to say that "nothing is too difficult for God"? Why is it important that the people have good crops and sufficient (enough) rainfall? (Pause for responses and discussion.)

Take the time to answer any remaining questions that the students might have. Ask for a volunteer to end the class session with prayer.

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Key Verses: [God said,] "I will save my people I will bring them back to live in Jerusalem; they will be my people, and I will be . . . their God." (Zechariah 8:7, 8a)

Lesson Objective: The students will begin to feel hopeful that God will create a world of peace and prosperity for His people.

Materials Needed: Upper Elementary student books, Bibles, star stickers, index cards, pens, markers, pencils, chart paper, a biblical map depicting Babylon and Jerusalem. (Optional: Older Children's Resource Kit [lesson 11 materials].)

BEGINNING THE JOURNEY



XIf you purchased the Older Children's Resource Kit, post the attendance chart and purchase stickers (such as stars) to place on the chart. Also, gather any materials that may be needed for any of the activities for this lesson prior to class (found in the Teacher's Guide of the Resource Kit).

Welcome and Worship

Arrive 15-20 minutes prior to class in order to lay out materials and supplies needed. Greet the students by name as they enter the classroom. Introduce yourself as the teacher and your assistant (if applicable). Make each student feel welcome and comfortable. When guests are in attendance, have the class say, "We're glad you're here with us today." Ask for a volunteer to open the class session with a prayer. Collect any offerings the students may have brought and take attendance. (Optional: The attendance chart found in the Leadership Resource Kit for Older Children may be posted to keep attendance, placing a star sticker on the chart for each student every day of his or her presence in class.)

Opening Activity

Pass out a sheet of chart paper and a pencil or pen to each student. Then ask the students to complete this sentence: "I hope for "

Provide the students with an opportunity to write on their sheet of chart paper what they hope for in life and from God. When they have finished, provide an opportunity and time for discussion.

Say: In today's lesson, the Israelites were hoping for a better future. They were hopeful that God would create a

world of peace and prosperity for them. Let's listen to the story to find out more.

Prepare the students for the Bible story.

BIBLE VOYAGE The Bible Story

Have extra classroom Bibles (New International Version) if possible. For those who may not have a personal Bible, try to provide a checkout loan procedure whereby the students return the Bibles every so often so that they can then be rotated out to other students.

If your students do not know how to find the passage or verse they are looking for, teach and review Bible skills on a weekly basis through the use of interactive drills, games, and so forth.

Let the students read the Scripture passage from the Bible first. Then, have them take turns alternating reading different paragraphs of the Bible story printed in their student books aloud.

Better Days Are Coming

God gave Zechariah a message for the people: I am very jealous for Zion (also known as Jerusalem). I will return to her and dwell in the city. Then Jerusalem will be called "The Faithful City." God declared that Jerusalem will have peace and prosperity. Old men and women will sit in the streets of Jerusalem, and there will be boys and girls playing. God said, "This might seem unbelievable to you, because there are not many of you-but this is not a problem for Me. I will rescue My people from the east and west. I will bring them home again and they will live safely in Jerusalem. They will be My people and I will be their God."

Things would not be like they were before. The people's crops would prosper, the vines would yield plenty of fruit,

and there would be plenty of rain. All these blessings would be given to the people left in the land. Before, they were cursed among the nations—but now God would save them, and they would be a blessing. God promised that He would not change His mind. He said, "I did what I said I would do when your ancestors angered Me and I promised to punish them, and I won't change My decision to bless you. Here is what you need to do: tell the truth, be fair, live at peace with everyone, don't plot to harm others, and don't swear that something is true when it isn't. I hate all of those things."

Ask: What will Jerusalem be called? (The Faithful City.) What did God promise the Israelites? (They would prosper.) What did God ask the people to do? (To tell the truth, be fair, live at peace with everyone, not plot to harm others, and not swear that something is true when it is not.)

FUN EXPEDITIONS



The Contemporary Story (Part 1)

Let the students take turns alternating reading different paragraphs of the first part of the contemporary story aloud.

Looking Ahead (Part 1)

"Granny, it's been five days since the electricity went out. Do you think things will ever get back to normal?" Cary asked.

"The tornado that came through did a lot of damage. I'm sure the utility companies are working as fast as they can," Granny explained.

"I hope things get back to normal soon. I never thought I would say this . . . but I miss school!" Cary exclaimed.

"It's funny how we take things for granted until we don't have them anymore. What do you miss the most?" Granny inquired.

"At first, I missed my cellphone because I couldn't charge it. But after a few days, what I really miss is "

What do you think Cary misses?

Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (first section)

Let students volunteer to read the information in this section aloud. Allow time for the students to respond to and discuss any questions that are posed. Show the students the map and trace the route of the people's journey from Babylon to Jerusalem.

The Contemporary Story (Part 2)

Let the students take turns alternating reading different

paragraphs of the second part of the contemporary story

Looking Ahead (Part 2)

"Hot water! I really miss hot water!" Cary continued. "When the electricity comes on, I want to take the hottest shower ever!" Cary proclaimed.

"It will take some time for things to get back to how they were. I hope we remember how kind everyone has been during this tragedy. I hope our friendliness stays the same," Granny commented.

"I'm going to continue to help Mr. and Mrs. Stewart, even when we get our electricity back. They need help keeping their yard up," Cary proclaimed.

"The neighbors have been talking and they say we should have electricity tomorrow. That means better days are coming," Granny said.

"I can't wait!" Carey shouted for joy.

Ask: Why was the electricity out? How had the neighbors been treating each other since the tornado? (Pause for responses and discussion.)

Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (second section)

Let students volunteer to read the information in this section aloud. Allow time for the students to respond to any questions that are posed, offering insight as deemed necessary.

Unscramble and Use

Give the students pencils and provide time for them to complete the activity in their student books. Assist as needed. After they complete the activity, review the answers aloud.

Answers: (1) dwell; (2) ancestors; (3) remnant; (4) jealous; (5) inheritance; sentences will vary.

ENDING THE JOURNEY

Assemble the class to reflect on the main points of the lesson by focusing on the central characters, places, conflicts, etc. Take a few minutes to review the Key Verse from today's lesson by having the class read it together. Take the time to answer any questions that the students might have. Ask for a volunteer to end the class session with a prayer, encouraging him or her to include some aspect related to the lesson in the prayer.