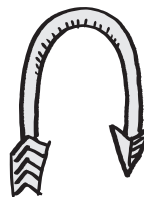


# RETURN



God's people could now return to Israel, but they could never go back to who they were before the exile. The Israelites knew that the only way forward required them to trust God to help them rebuild and move to the future.

It took about sixty years, but God's people made a **U-turn** in Babylon and returned home to Jerusalem. God encouraged the people to return to faithfulness by repenting of, or turning around from, past sins.

## Ezra 1:1-4

The Persian military, led by King Cyrus, took control of Babylon. As a result, God's people were allowed to return home to Jerusalem. Many were excited to be back in the land God had given them. Others were horrified to see what was left of the city.

Check out these other Bible passages that connect with the theme of Return!

- > **Ezra 3:10-13** Why did the people shout (and cry) when they started rebuilding the temple?
- > **2 Chronicles 36:22-23** What did King Cyrus tell the people to do?
- > **Ezekiel 36:24-28** What will happen when God gathers people into their own land?

## Talk about it!

Use these questions to connect with each other.

- > How does it feel to return to a place you haven't been in a while?
- > When have you had to repair something that was ruined?
- > What are some cool things about your church that you would hope to find in other churches?

## What are preteens thinking?

Some kids long to return to a simpler time before homework, drama with friends, and puberty. This lesson can help them realize that dwelling in the past can make it difficult to live in the present.

## Try this!

Things change, whether we want them to or not! Find a photo of a place your family went together a few years ago. If possible, return to that place and see how it has changed.

## Prayer

God, we thank you for your grace that allows us to always return to you. Amen.