

never thirst." Jesus was speaking of quenching the thirst of parched souls. How could that be done?

Ezekiel had lived in that country long, long before. [At the point of our lesson story:] Ezekiel is not there now. Where is he? Ezekiel knew all about the waste and desert places in his old home, and that they could be made to blossom like a rose if.... He knew about thirsty men and camels who would perish if their water supply gave out. He also knew about thirsty souls which would perish if shut away from the life-giving Father of all men.

To make his fellow-captives listen to his note of warning he spoke in poetry to them. All people of Bible lands love poetry. God made them that way. Instead of "speaking out," and naming the blessings that were promised to those who are faithful to God, as our preachers would do, Ezekiel talks in poetry about a river whose soft-flowing waters flow from under the east gate of the church [quote].

To a people who have known the sufferings of a "dry season," who travel through desert wastes where water is more precious than gold, the most beautiful home on earth, or in heaven, would be to them a place flowing with rivers of water. Ezekiel's poetry shows them a picture of their whole land made over new; the wide desert, even to its very borders, is made to bring forth fruits and flowers. Parallel thought to develop: The whole earth to be filled, made over new, with knowledge and life from the Lord. God the Father sends showers of mercy and goodness, promises of new life to souls wasting themselves by making a desert around them. When we think of Ezekiel's poetry about a river of salvation we are to think of Jesus who came "to make waste places glad."

#### LESSON IX. (August 27.)

#### RETURNING FROM CAPTIVITY. Ezra 1. 1-11.

GOLDEN TEXT: "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad." Psa. 126. 3.

#### Primary Notes.



*Approach to the lesson.*  
Did you ever go on a journey? Perhaps you went with father or mother. You had your things packed into a trunk, and a carriage took you to the station. Perhaps you traveled in a sleeper or a palace car, and what a beautiful time you had, to be sure.

And before you tired of all the wonderful sights you came back to your own home, as happy as could be.

But suppose some dark, sad night some one should come to your house and carry you away to a strange country, burning your home behind you, and taking from you all you cared most about. Would not that be a different sort of a journey? You would be called a captive, or a prisoner, if you were taken against your will. And if, while you lived in a strange land, you knew that it was for something wrong you had done that you had been taken away, O how sad and hard to bear it would be!

If you had been at Jerusalem about twenty-five hundred years ago, you might have seen a sad procession of captives leave their city and their home. For two years the soldiers from Babylon had camped against the city, and there was sore famine there, so that there was no bread for the people of the land. At last there came a night when the king and his servants went secretly out of a gate by the garden of the palace and tried to get safely away. But they were caught, and taken to Babylon. Soon after came the captain of the king of Babylon and broke down the walls of the beautiful city and burned the holy temple, and carried away the gold and silver vessels, and took captive a multitude of people. All the long way the people walked on that sad journey, and while they lived in the strange land they knew it was because of their sins that all this sorrow came. "By the rivers of Babylon they sat down and wept." But there was hope for them even then. God had not forgotten. He still cared. He said they should stay seventy years, and now the time had nearly rolled around.

*The king's proclamation.* You remember the lesson about the handwriting on the wall. In that night was Belshazzar killed, and Darius, of the conquering kingdom of Media and Persia, took the throne. It was he who put Daniel in a den of lions. After two years he died, and left the kingdom to his nephew, Cyrus of Persia. About one hundred and twenty years before this Cyrus was born God told the prophet Isaiah to speak and to write about him as the one who should set free the captive Jews after they had been taken to Babylon. God called him by name. Now the time had come. Perhaps Daniel told him about his being called by name, and that the seventy years were almost past. In some way God stirred up the king to proclaim that all the Jews who wished to go home might return to Jerusalem and build the temple again. He commanded that those who did not go should help those who went, with gold and silver and goods. He brought out the precious gold and silver ves-