

God's invitation for all men to leave the captivity of sin and be free. He does not compel men to do so; the way is the roadway of free will. Why do not all go? Have you started?

### Primary and Intermediate.

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#### LESSON THOUGHT. *God Keeps His Promises.*

The new year opens with a song of gladness. Captives set free, hearts rejoicing, God's promises coming true!

Let the joy bells ring on through all the year. God is true! He has promised to water the seed we sow, and he will do it. We may go to our work many times in pain and weariness; we may see so little fruit of our labors that we may often be tempted to question if the results will justify the outlay.

Send the dark thought back whence it came! God is true, and our labor of love he will reward for his own love's sake!

*The Captivity.* [Make on the board a little outline of the Jews' country, with a square marked "Jerusalem." Make another outline of Persia, with "Babylon" in the midst. Connect Jerusalem and Babylon with a chain, and tell the story of the carrying away of the Jews into captivity. Make "Sin" in very large letters along the route, and impress the thought that the captivity was the outcome of sin—the choosing of self before God. Read a part of Psalm 137 to show the sorrow of the captives.]

*Set Free.* The King of Persia was named Cyrus. Many, many years before Cyrus was born God talked about him to his prophet. He knew what Cyrus would do. He knows each one of us just as he knew this great king. Before we were born God thought of us. He sent us here to do his will, just as he sent Cyrus. Some people want to know his will, and others do not. Auntie was trying to tell Charley what mamma said about his going skating. But he did not want to hear. He said, "She didn't tell me not to, and I don't want to hear what she said." This was because he wanted to do the thing that pleased Charley! But Cyrus listened when God told him what to do with the Jews who had been slaves seventy long years. He said, "Send my people back to Jerusalem, and let them build a house there in which to worship me." And Cyrus obeyed without asking any questions. This is what we must learn to do—be glad to know what God wants us to do, and then do it right away.

*Preparing to Go Home.* Not all the Jews in Babylon went back to Jerusalem. But those who could not go sent gold and silver and goods and cattle, besides a freewill offering for the house of God.

A great many Jews were soon ready to go. How glad they were to start for the dear old home! The king gave them the beautiful vessels of gold and silver which Nebuchadnezzar had taken away from the Lord's house.

Do you want to know how the Jews felt when they went back to Jerusalem? [Read five verses of the 126th Psalm.]



*The Captivity of Sin.* Do you think that some of the captives in Babylon were children? O, yes. And do you know that there are many little captives now in this very place? They have not been carried away to a

strange city, to be sure; but they have a hard master, and they are poor, miserable captives. See, I will make a chain, and we will name some of the links that bind them. [On links of the chain print "Temper," "Idleness," "Self-will," etc., etc.] Who is their master? I see you know. Yes, it is Satan, and he is a very hard master. He tries to make us think we are free, and all the time he is drawing his chains tighter and tighter about us.

*The One who Sets Free.* Cyrus was a great king who set many captives free. But there is a greater King who can set all captives free! You all know his name. It is Jesus. Let us sing about him. [Sing a verse of "All hail the power of Jesus' name."] Do you know any little captives? Will you tell them about Jesus, who can "break every chain?" And if you are bound even by a very little chain, will you let Jesus break it?

### OPTIONAL HYMNS.

#### No. 1.

Come, ye that love the Lord.  
Work, for the night is coming.  
Give me some work to do.  
I love thy kingdom, Lord.  
The Church's one foundation.

#### No. 2.

A mighty fortress is our God,  
Art thou weary, art thou languid?  
Whenever trials press my soul.  
The Lord is my strength and stay.  
Fear not, O troubled soul, nor yield.

### The Lesson-Catechism.

[For the entire school.]

1. Who restored the Jews to their native land? **Cyrus, King of Persia.**
2. Who stirred up his spirit to do this? **The Lord.**
3. Who gladly returned to build the house of