

THE HOME-COMING OF THE JEWS

II Chronicles 36:11-21; Ezra 1:1-11; Ezra 3:10-13; Ezra 4:1-6; Ezra 6:14-16.

LESSON 90 -- Primary Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory"
(I Corinthians 15:57).

BIBLE TEXTS

II Chronicles 36:11-21;

11 Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned eleven years in Jerusalem.

12 And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD his God, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the LORD.

13 And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the LORD God of Israel.

14 Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem.

15 And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place:

16 But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy.

17 Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand.

18 And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all these he brought to Babylon.

19 And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof.

20 And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia:

21 To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.

Ezra 1:1-11;

1 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

2 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

3 Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem.

4 And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.

5 Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem.

6 And all they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered.

7 Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods;

8 Even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and

Ezra 3:10-13;

10 And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the LORD, after the ordinance of David king of Israel.

11 And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

Ezra 4:1-6;

1 Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the LORD God of Israel;

2 Then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither.

3 But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto

numbered them unto Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah.

9 And this is the number of them: thirty chargers of gold, a thousand chargers of silver, nine and twenty knives,

10 Thirty basons of gold, silver basons of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand.

11 All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Sheshbazzar bring up with them of the captivity that were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem.

12 But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy:

13 So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.

the LORD God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us.

4 Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building,

5 And hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

6 And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they unto him an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

Ezra 6:14-16.

14 And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.

15 And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.

16 And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy,

NOTES

Obedience and Disobedience

Many, many years had passed since the day that Moses came down from the mountain with the Ten Commandments written on tables of stone. God promised the people many good things if they obeyed these commandments. But He also said he would punish the people if they did not obey. For many years the people did not keep the commandments. They disobeyed the very first one: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3).

Sometimes a father will say to his child, “If you do not obey me, I will punish you.” A faithful parent – one who loves the Lord – will not let his children “get by” with disobedience, but will punish them for it. God treats His children just as a good father treats his children – punishes them when they disobey. Let us never forget that God keeps His promises: whether He promises to send good things to the obedient, or punishment to the disobedient, He keeps His promises.

The Jews Taken Away

In the lesson last Sunday we learned that a forgotten book was found in the Temple. In this book – their Bible – the people read that God was going to send punishment upon them because they had not kept the commandments. But the good king, Josiah, had prayed to God, and God had promised not to send this punishment during his lifetime. God kept that promise, too.

God gave the people one more chance: He sent messengers to try to help the people love and worship Him. But they mocked the messengers and even killed some of them. Jeremiah, a prophet of God, warned the Jewish people that they would get into trouble because of their sins. He told them that they would be carried to a country far away and would have to stay there a long time – seventy years. Now the time had come when the words of this faithful prophet of God were coming to pass.

A wicked man, the king of Chaldees, came into their land and carried them far away from home, to the land of Babylon. This king also took all the gold and silver things, the vessels used in the worship of God, and many valuables out of the House of the Lord and brought them to Babylon – the city where he lived. But those things were to be used only in the House of God. It was wrong to take them away.

Temple Destroyed

The people from Babylon burned the beautiful Temple that Solomon had built – the House of the Lord. It had cost much money because many parts of it were made of gold. They tore down the walls around the city of Jerusalem and then the wicked kings with their armies could easily come in. They burned the homes of the kings and princes and great men and took their children away. All these terrible things happened to the Jews because they had turned away from the Lord and disobeyed Him.

Learning to Obey

At last they learned their lesson – they were taken far away from home and were kept in a strange land for seventy years. Now they learned that they must turn to God with all their hearts and give up idol worship, once and for all. They never again worshiped idols.

When God wants to teach us His will and wants us to obey Him, we may not learn our lesson the first time, or the second or the third time. Then God must punish us very hard. How often parents, also, must punish their children for disobedience. That causes the children to remember not to do the naughty things again.

Home-coming

When the seventy years were ended the Lord caused a king named Cyrus, who was ruling Babylon, to want to build a house for God in Jerusalem. He told the Jews that all who wanted to go back to their homeland could now go. Those who did not wish to go back were to give gold, silver, goods, and beasts, for the House of God. King Cyrus also brought the vessels, which had been taken out of the house of God in Jerusalem, and gave them to the Jews to take back home with them; there were 5,400 vessels. These were used when the people worshiped God, and were not to be used for any other purpose. It was a wicked thing to take them out of God's House, and those who did it were sure to be punished.

A great many prepared to start back to Jerusalem to build the House of God. What a happy company – almost 50,000 Jews returning to Jerusalem! While they were in Babylon they were not happy. When the people there asked them to sing, they answered that they could not sing the song of the lord while so far away from their homeland. They did not play upon their harps, but hung them on the willow trees (Psalm 137). But all was changed now; they were once more a happy group of people, travelling toward home.

It was a long journey – hundreds of miles – and no doubt many of the people walked. We know that some of the priests carried the precious vessels for the Temple on their shoulders as they journeyed. They probably had covered wagons in those days, but there were all the camp things, their musical instruments, and many other things to bring. The horses, camels, mules and asses, numbering over 8,000, must have been heavily loaded. The joy in the hearts of the people at the thought of returning home made the way seem less hard. The young people who had made this same journey 70 years before, when they were driven away from home, were now returning – old men and women – bringing their children and grandchildren with them.

At last the long, hard journey was ended. One of the first things they did upon reaching Jerusalem was to build an altar unto the Lord and thank Him for bringing them home again. They offered sacrifices for their sins and perhaps asked God's blessings on the new Temple.

Temple Built

When the builders laid the foundation for the church, there were the priests all dressed in their robes with trumpets in their hands, and others had cymbals to praise the Lord. They played and sang together, praising and giving thanks unto the Lord. All the people shouted with a great shout when they sang praises to the Lord, because the foundation of the House of the Lord was laid, and they were going to have a beautiful place in which to worship God. They wanted no more idol worship.

But many of the old men, who had seen the Temple that Solomon built, wept, and the young men shouted aloud for joy. This must have been a very touching scene. But no doubt both old and young were happy to be back in their own homeland where they could worship their God in the City of Jerusalem. A prophet, named Haggai, told them these beautiful words: "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former," which probably meant that God would bless them even more in the new Temple than He had in the old one.

When God is pleased with people who build a church in which to worship Him, often His presence is especially felt at the opening service. We are thankful that God still dwells among His people – those who believe and teach the whole Word of God. People can feel and know that God is there with them even if they cannot see Him. God has promised to be where two or three people are gathered to worship Him.

QUESTIONS

1. What prophet warned the people of God's punishment for their sins? II Chronicles 36:21.
2. What happened to the Temple that Solomon built? II Chronicles 36:19.
3. Who wanted to build a house for the Lord? Ezra 1:2.
4. How long were the Jews in captivity? II Chronicles 36:21.
5. To what country were they taken? II Chronicles 36:20.

LESSON RESOURCES

TITLE

THE HOMECOMING OF THE JEWS

Lesson 90

2 Chronicles 36:11-21; Ezra 1:1-11; 3:10-13; 4:1-6; 6:14-16

He Cannot Fail

WATCH AND PRAY 77

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He Cannot Fail

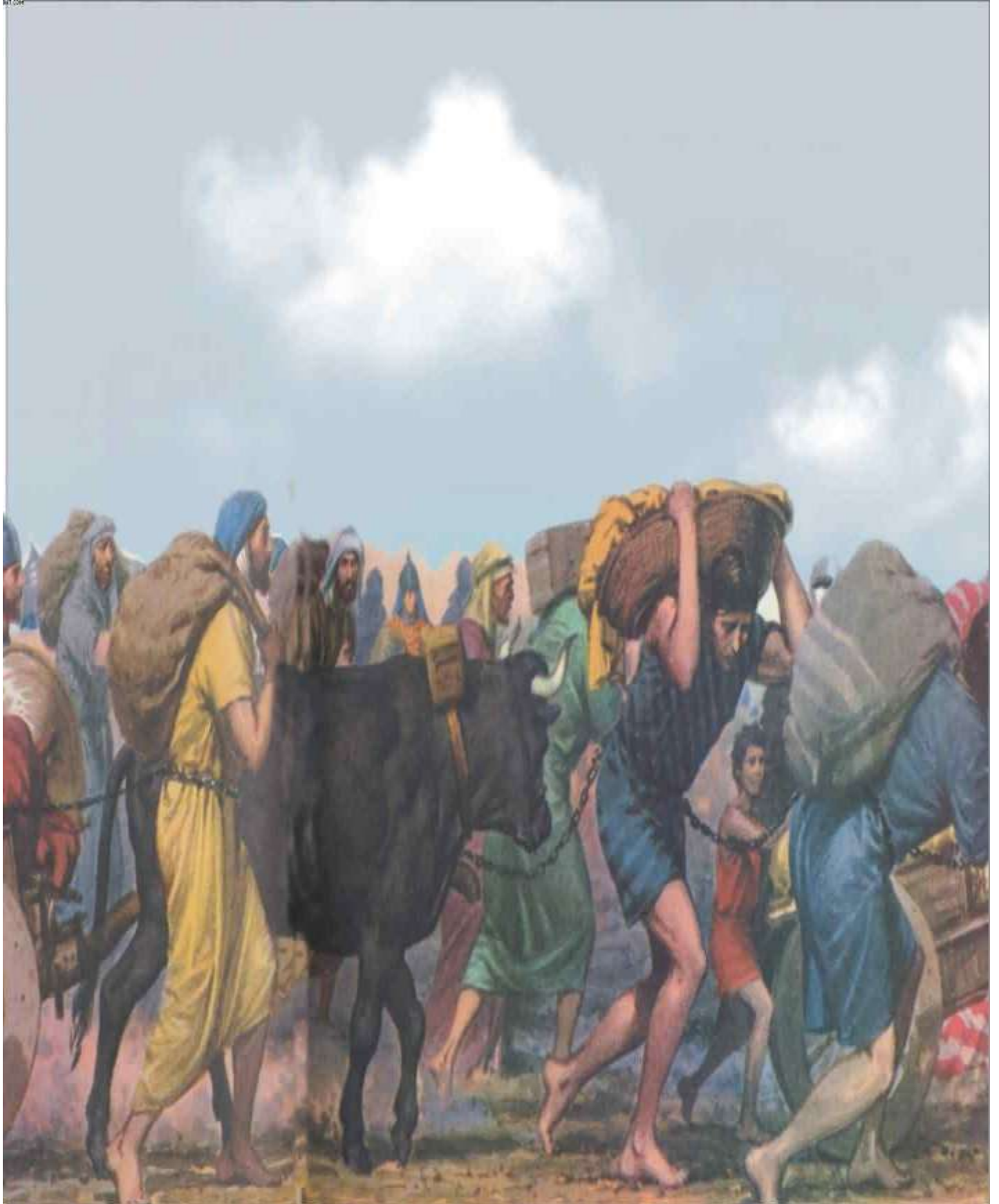
He cannot fail, for He is God

He cannot fail, He pledge His Word

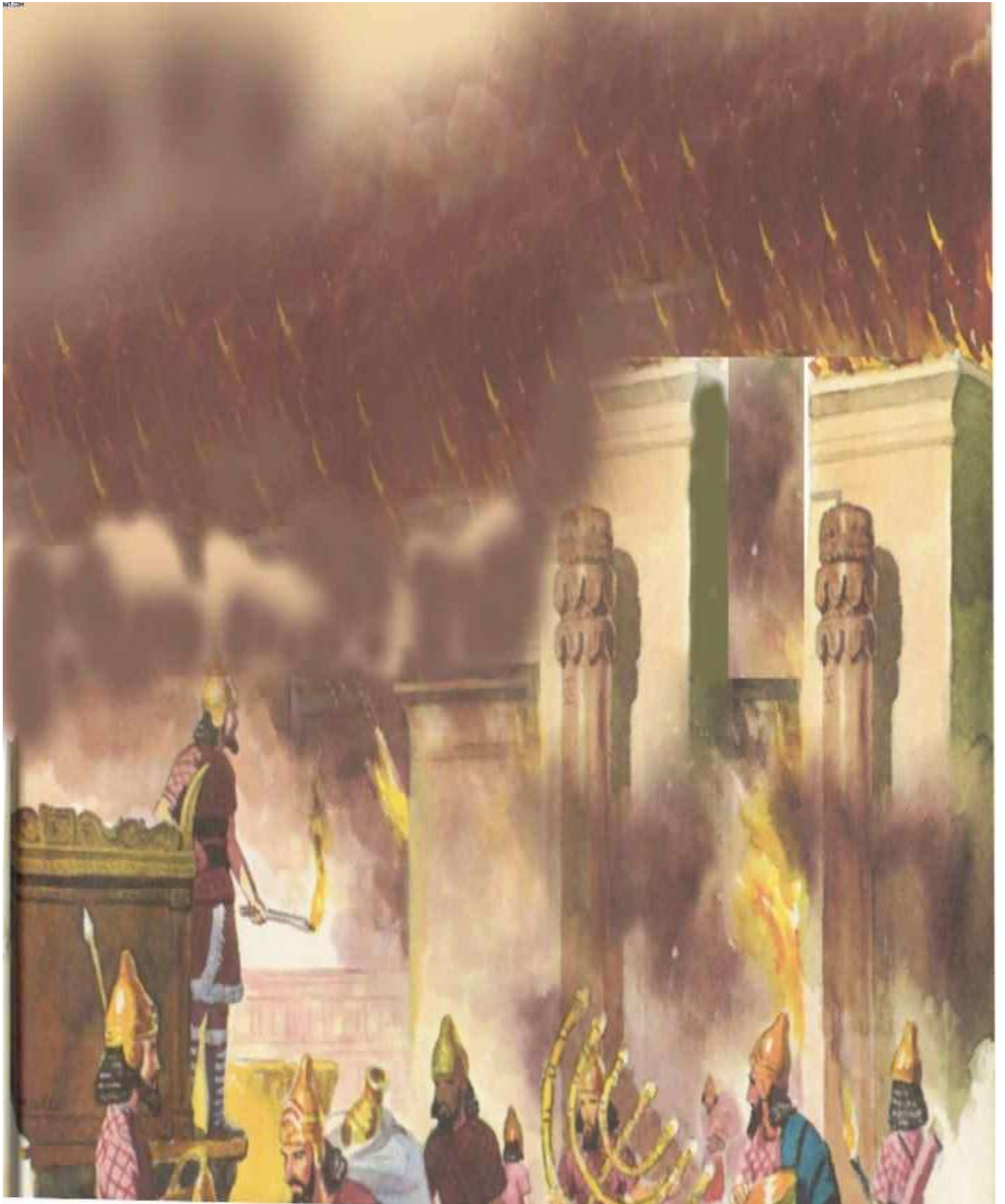
He cannot fail, He'll see you through

He cannot fail, He'll answer you.

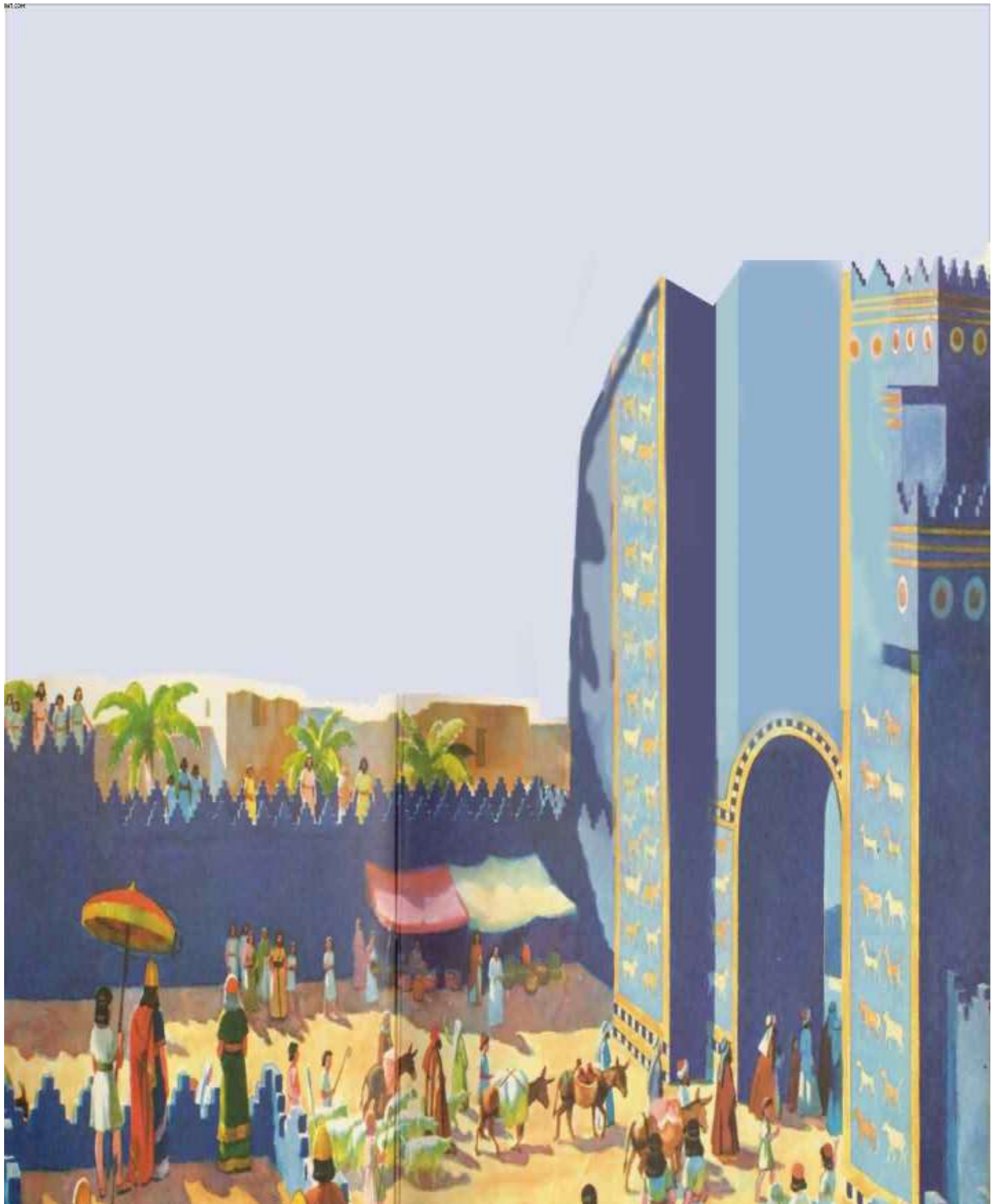
PICTURE 1



PICTURE 2



PICTURE 3



PICTURE 4

