

## Restoring Law and Order

General Topic: Justice and Adversity

Sunday, February 13, 2022

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### Lesson Text: Ezra 7:1-10, 23-26

*Background Scripture: Ezra 7:1-26*

*Ezra 7:1 Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra the son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah,*

*2 The son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub,*

*3 The son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth,*

*4 The son of Zerariah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki,*

*5 The son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest:*

*6 This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him.*

*7 And there went up some of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, unto Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king.*

*8 And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king.*

*9 For upon the first day of the first month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him.*

*10 For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.*

*Ezra 7:23 Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven: for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons?*

*24 Also we certify you, that touching any of the priests and Levites, singers, porters, Nethinims, or ministers of this house of God, it shall not be lawful to impose toll, tribute, or custom, upon them.*

*25 And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that is in thine hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know them not.*

*26 And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment.*

### Lesson Objective(s):

This week we will find out what happens when God's people position themselves to deploy His will.

Additionally, we will be enlightened on how God's plan could be executed through unexpected sources.

### Teaching Tools:

Word puzzles may be developed from the following site: [www.puzzlemaker.com](http://www.puzzlemaker.com). Also, [www.dtlk.com](http://www.dtlk.com) has several visual aids that may be beneficial, as well as [www.kidssundayschool.com](http://www.kidssundayschool.com) which provide other helps for teaching.

Bible Journaling may be an interesting way to involve older teens in self-expression of the lessons they are taught. Visit [www.lifeway.com/Articles/how-to-start-bible-journaling-in-six-easy-steps](http://www.lifeway.com/Articles/how-to-start-bible-journaling-in-six-easy-steps) to find ways to use this valuable tool to learn and reinforce Scripture.

### The Lesson:

This week's lesson takes place about 458 B.C. when the second group of Israelites returned to Jerusalem after their forefathers had been in Babylonian Captivity for 70 years. Now that the Persians were the dominant world power, this second group of Jews led by Ezra, were returning to Jerusalem. The hope of more of God's people returning to Jerusalem was now being realized. The temple had been rebuilt and the returning exiles could worship God properly there.

### Background

The Babylonian captivity of the people of Israel ended with the defeat of the Babylonian Empire by King Cyrus of Persia in 539 BC. Cyrus allowed many conquered people to return to their homelands and to their forms of worship. This was a strategic move by the Persian Empire meant to gain loyalty from formerly exiled peoples, and it established imperial outposts that

buffered the empire's capital from invaders. In 538 BC, a group of exiles, led by Zerubbabel, returned to Jerusalem.

They entered a demolished city and started to put the pieces of their city and their heritage back together. This group rebuilt the Temple. A second major group arrived from Babylon in 458 BC, led by Ezra. With the backing of the next Persian king, Artaxerxes, Ezra set out to return the people to the laws found in the Torah, the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures. Ezra was a contemporary of Nehemiah who led the rebuilding of the walls around Jerusalem. Ezra's focus was on establishing the Torah as the governing laws that would inform how this re-emerging city would conduct their daily lives.

### Priestly Pedigree (Ezra 7:1–5)

Ezra had a priestly pedigree. He could fill in the names on his family tree all the way down to its roots in Aaron, the first high priest. Handed down to him would have been the history, religious instructions, and cultural practices of his people. He learned of the Promised Land and of God's promise to return the exiled to that land. His heritage inspired him, and his occupation as a scribe educated him. He could reproduce texts, those of the Babylonians as well as the narratives of his own people.

Being a scribe called for more than merely copying words. A scribe also had to have a profound understanding of the words he copied and become qualified to interpret and teach what was written. Ezra was just such a scribe and became an important link in the long line of individuals who preserved the history and religious life of a people and the works and ways of their God. What are the benefits and responsibilities of having a godly heritage?

### Passionate Pursuit (Ezra 7:6–10)

Though Ezra came from an impressive lineage and had a noteworthy occupation, he possessed something that was far more significant. Ezra had an abiding love for God's Word. He was an ardent student of the Torah and wanted to bring to his people a greater understanding of and obedience to the teachings of God's Law. It wasn't enough that the Temple had been rebuilt. From his studies, Ezra realized that the hearts of his people needed to return to God's Word.

Ezra's passion for God's Word rallied the support of others to join him in the journey. These individuals would be part of the leadership team that would conduct worship and praise to God. The risks inherent in the four-month journey did not deter the travelers, especially Ezra. Ezra desired that the Word of God would once again flow from the Temple and into the lives of God's people so they would love, know, and follow the ways of God. In what ways could your occupation be used to spread God's Word?

### **Perfect Plan (Ezra 7:23–26)**

God honored the desire of Ezra's heart, giving him favor with Artaxerxes, the king. A royal decree helped to secure safe passage. It also ordered the leaders of the provinces that Ezra would travel through to supply all of Ezra's material needs. The king exhibited a holy reverence for the laws of God and the person who taught them, Ezra.

The king also noticed that God's laws gave Ezra wisdom, making him a person of integrity. Such a leader would govern well and make just laws. Ezra's devotion to studying, obeying, and teaching God's Word made him a person with godly influence.

### **Final Thoughts**

Because he was committed to the law of God and the wisdom of God, Ezra was a successful leader in Israel. He gave himself to the study of the Word of God and His

law so that he could teach others to do the same. Ezra's habits should be copied by all Christians for he committed himself to studying, doing and teaching God's Word to His people. As we continue to place ourselves on the path of righteousness we will be pleasantly surprised on where God's blessings come from.

***Be Salt! Be Light! Be Blessed!***