

**Ezra 7-10**  
**Ezra Restores the Relationship**  
**Lesson 8**

**Key Verse**

... behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out.

—Numbers 23:23

**Key Verse Thought:** Read the Key Verse for this lesson. Have you ever sinned? Did you get in trouble? Do you think you have ever gotten away with something? It is important to understand that though one may not have gotten in trouble at that time, keep in mind that God sees and knows all. Be careful when you sin against God – for your sin will find you out!

**Emphasis:** Christians are to prepare our hearts to serve God – no matter what task God may have for us to do. Remember: when the people of Israel sinned against God, their sin was made known. It was difficult to make it right.

**Lesson Summary:** In our last lesson, we learned about Esther and the salvation of the Jews from certain death. If you think about it, without godly people like Daniel, Mordecai, and Esther about whom we have learned, the recognition of God by the people, and especially the kings, may not have been. Even in our more recent history, there are people who have made sure that future generations know of God and learn to trust in Him.

This week we will learn of Ezra. He led the second remnant back to Jerusalem from the land of Babylon. Before he left, he prepared his heart. He determined to go back to Israel to make sure God's people not only had the written Word of God (for he was a scribe), but he wanted to be sure the people knew the Word of the Lord and lived it. He had no idea the challenge that lay ahead of him!

King Artaxerxes (King Ahasuerus' son, and possibly Esther's son as well), issued a decree that any and all who wanted to return to Israel could go. Not only that, but he sent much silver, gold, and vessels for the house of the Lord. Ezra recognized the hand of God and the blessing of the king.

Ezra made sure they had priests and Levites to return with them. Many of these he placed in charge of the great riches they were carrying into Jerusalem.

As soon as they arrived in Jerusalem, they found out that many of the men had married wives of the heathen nations around. Some even had children by them. Ezra was astonished and devastated at the condition of the people. He rent his garment and prayed. Ezra was ashamed of the great sin in which the people were living. As the people gathered, they acknowledged their great sin and were willing to do something about it. Ezra challenged the people to correct their ways.

The men who had married foreign women had to send them away – and the children born by them.

**Suggested Bible Reading to Prepare for This Lesson**

- |                     |                         |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| • Monday: Ezra 7    | • Thursday: Ezra 10     |
| • Tuesday: Ezra 8   | • Friday: Proverbs 23   |
| • Wednesday: Ezra 9 | • Saturday: Proverbs 24 |

## **Ezra 7-10**

### **Ezra Restores the Relationship**

1. Ezra, a Priest and Scribe (Ezra 7)
  - Ezra prepared his heart
  - Artaxerxes decree
2. Ezra Led the People Home (Ezra 8)
  - Ezra sent for ministers for the house of God
  - Ezra leads them into Jerusalem
3. Ezra's Prayer (Ezra 9)
  - Repentance for sin
  - Promise for obedience
4. Ezra's Challenge (Ezra 10)
  - The conviction for their sin
  - The correction of their sin

**Note:** In our last lesson, we learned of Esther. Remember that we discovered how her prayers and bravery saved the Jewish people, (those who had not returned to Jerusalem) from certain death. In the lesson before that one, we read Zechariah's encouraging words from God given to Zerubbabel and the first group of Israelites that had returned to Jerusalem. He encouraged them to finish building the house of the Lord – and they did. Although any who would have had permission to return to Jerusalem, we found that many had remained in their land of captivity (remember the book of Esther from last week). This week we will learn of more about the people who had decided to go home to Jerusalem.

In Ezra chapter seven, we find an introduction to Ezra, a kind of summary of what Ezra planned to do, and the journey back to Jerusalem. In chapters eight through ten, we actually take the journey with Ezra and the people – ending in Jerusalem. We will then read of the hardships Ezra faced once they reached Jerusalem.

### 1. Ezra, a Priest and Scribe (Ezra 7)

We begin in Ezra chapter seven with the mentioning of the reigning king. “**Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia ...**” (Ezra 7:1a). One of the fun parts of our study is learning how everything fits together in God's Word. Artaxerxes was the son of King Ahasuerus (remember him from our last lesson in Esther?). Therefore, he was also probably the son of Queen Esther. This fact will also be interesting as we continue our study next week. Knowing this will help us understand the help King Artaxerxes gave to the returning Jews.

We are also introduced to Ezra.

1b. ... 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: (Ezra 7:1b-5)

Notice that Ezra's genealogy is traced all the way back to the first high priest, Aaron. Not only was he a priest, but, “**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 ...**” (Ezra 7:6a). He was also a skilful scribe (**ready** means “*skilful*”), and he went up from Babylon. A scribe's job was to copy the Word of God accurately – so there would always be a copy for the people to read.

As we continue, read what King Artaxerxes did for Ezra. “**... And the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him**” (Ezra 7:6b). Also, see a listing of some of the people that went to Jerusalem with him. “**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**” (Ezra 7:7). (**Nethinims** means “*Temple servants; one who is given up to serve in the Temple.*”) Ezra led the second group of Israelites back to Jerusalem – many years after the completion of the Temple. Read how God was with him, and “**... came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him**” (Ezra 7:9b).

What was his plan once he returned to Jerusalem? “**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 7:10). The word **prepared** means “*to be established; to stand firm; to be faithful; to be reliable; to be*

*ready and prepared; to be determined; especially to be sure to bring something into an indisputable existence.”* Ezra was on a mission. Not only was he going to know the law of the Lord, and do it in his life, but also he would teach that Law in Israel to God’s people – making sure they lived according to God’s Words.

The king sent a letter with Ezra that he read to the people once they made it to Jerusalem. Read the entire letter found in Ezra 7:11-26. Notice some key things mentioned:

- anyone could return of their own freewill
- they could carry all of the silver and gold to Jerusalem that the people gave them (for the Temple)
- vessels were given for the house of the Lord
- whatever they needed, they would receive it from the king’s treasure house
- whatever God required them to have, they would receive “*for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons?*” (Ezra 7:23)
- none of the servants in the house of the Lord could be taxed
- Ezra was to appoint judges who knew the law of the Lord

Next, read the response this drew from Ezra. “27. *Blessed be the LORD God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem:* 28. *And hath extended mercy unto me before the king, and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes. And I was strengthened as the hand of the LORD my God was upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me*” (Ezra 7:27-28). He recognized that the blessing of the king was upon them, as well as the hand of God. This was encouragement enough to get up, taking chief men with him, to Jerusalem.

**A Deeper Path:** Ezra was prepared to go to Jerusalem to teach the people God’s Words. When Jesus was teaching, first to His disciples, he wanted them to be encouraged to teach what was right. The Pharisees, the “religious” leaders of the day, were against Jesus. The disciples were not to be afraid of them, but to teach the truths of God’s Word to the people. But how would they know just what to say? “11. *And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say:* 12. *For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say*” (Luke 12:11-12). Jesus prepared His disciples to go and teach. He gave them, and all Christians today, the Holy Spirit – our teacher.

After Jesus had ascended back into heaven, the disciples continued to preach – even though they were ordered by the leaders not to teach Jesus, they were beaten, and imprisoned. “*And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ*” (Acts 5:42). Today, we are to have the same mindset. Even though sometimes, it may be difficult.

## **2. Ezra Led the People Home (Ezra 8)**

Ezra and the chief men prepared for the return to Jerusalem. “*These are now the chief of their fathers, and this is the genealogy of them that went up with me from Babylon, in the reign of Artaxerxes the king*” (Ezra 8:1). Next, we read a listing of the genealogy of those that left Babylon heading toward Jerusalem (see Ezra 8:2-14). While Ezra was taking the accounting, see what he discovered. “*And I gathered them together to the river that runneth to Ahava; and there abode we in tents three days: and I viewed the people, and the priests, and found there none of*

the sons of Levi” (Ezra 8:15). We have learned the important job of the priests and Levites. When Ezra realized they had none with them, he sent a message, “... that they should bring unto us ministers for the house of our God” (Ezra 8:17b). See what God did for them. “18. And by the good hand of our God upon us they brought us a man of understanding, of the sons of Mahli, the son of Levi, the son of Israel; and Sherebiah, with his sons and his brethren, eighteen; 19. And Hashabiah, and with him Jeshaiiah of the sons of Merari, his brethren and their sons, twenty; 20. Also of the Nethinims, whom David and the princes had appointed for the service of the Levites, two hundred and twenty Nethinims: all of them were expressed by name” (Ezra 8:18-20).

Once they were prepared to leave Babylon to go Jerusalem, see what they did.

21. Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. 22. For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God *is* upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath *is* against all them that forsake him. 23. So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us. (Ezra 8:21-23)

We have learned that Ezra knew God’s Word, and that he was going to teach it to the people in Jerusalem. What better way to teach than to lead by example? “5. Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:5-6). Ezra led the people to fast and pray to seek the right, safe way into the land of Israel (remember that they were carrying great wealth from Babylon into Israel).

Ezra had a plan. He separated twelve of the chief of the priests and ten of their brethren with them. He then weighed the silver, gold, and the vessels telling these men to watch over it all and keep it until they reached the house of the Lord (see Ezra 8:24-29). And they did. Notice that Ezra acknowledged God for their safe travel. “... And the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way” (Ezra 8:31b).

“And we came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days” (Ezra 8:32). Once they arrived, they took the silver, gold, and the vessels into the house of the Lord. “... And they furthered the people, and the house of God” (Ezra 8:36b).

**A Deeper Path:** Ezra led the people to fast and pray – to seek God. To find out how God wanted the people to travel safely back into the land of promise, read what David had written many years earlier. “2. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. 3. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted *with* all my ways. 4. For *there is* not a word in my tongue, *but*, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether” (Psalm 139:2-4). Ezra understood that God knew where they were and the hardships they faced, yet he took those thoughts to God in prayer. Moreover, he led the people to do the same.

Jesus too, led His disciples in how to pray. It was not in fancy words, great repetitions, or even recitations. “7. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. 8. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him” (Matthew 6:7-8). God knows our needs – even before we do.

### 3. Ezra's Prayer (Ezra 9)

Once Ezra and the second group of people arrived in Jerusalem, read what they discovered.

1. Now when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, *doing* according to their abominations, *even* of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. 2. For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of *those* lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass. (Ezra 9:1-2)

It was a good thing that Ezra had “prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do *it*, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments” (remember Ezra 7:10). He was up against his first great obstacle. The people that had previously returned were breaking God’s Law. Read Ezra’s initial reaction to the sin in the land. “And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down *astonied*” (Ezra 9:3). Remember that to rent a garment shows great sorrow. **Astonied** means “*astonished; devastated; to be appalled.*” Not only did Ezra feel this way, but also he was not the only one. “Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat *astonied* until the evening sacrifice” (Ezra 9:4). All those that feared God and recognized the great sin, sat with Ezra. What do you do when you are faced with a people who claim to be serving God yet are living a life of sin? Follow Ezra’s example. “... I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the LORD my God” (Ezra 9:5b). After he fell upon his knees, he began to pray. Read Ezra’s prayer in Ezra 9:6-15.

Ezra was ashamed. He recognized God had delivered them into the enemies’ hands for their sin, but He is a forgiving God and had allowed them to return to the Promised Land. He had allowed them to rebuild the Temple, and begin to repair the land, but the people had forsaken God’s commandments – again. God had warned them that the land was filthy because of the abominations of the people who had initially lived in that land. They had been commanded to cast those people out, and not marry them, so that they would be a strong people for the Lord. It would be then that they would be able to leave it for an inheritance for their children. Yet they had done it again. The people had intermarried with the heathen in the land. Read how Ezra ended his prayer.

14. Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldst not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed *us*, so that *there should be* no remnant nor escaping? 15. O LORD God of Israel, thou *art* righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as *it is* this day: behold, we *are* before thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before thee because of this. (Ezra 9:14-15)

He recognized that this remnant, who had just returned, could not join in with the ones who had previously returned – because of their sin. What were they to do?

**A Deeper Path:** Do you remember how Job's friends reacted when they saw him covered in boils? "11. Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place ... for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him. 12. And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice, and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven. 13. So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that *his* grief was very great" (Job 2:11-13). Notice that Ezra reacted in much the same way when he recognized the sin of God's people.

It was a good thing that Ezra had prepared his heart before he left to teach the people God's Word, and how to live according to God's Word. Now that Ezra had arrived and witnessed the condition of the people, Ezra had a very difficult task before him.

What are we to do when we find it difficult to show others the truths of God's Word? After preparing our hearts, as Ezra did, remember the following Scripture. "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2).

#### 4. Ezra's Challenge (Ezra 10)

After Ezra prayed and confessed weeping, a very great congregation of men, women, and children assembled. "1b. ... for the people wept very sore. 2. And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, *one* of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing" (Ezra 10:1b-2). (Notice: Ezra did not even have to confront the people with their sin – God had already convicted them.) The people recognized their sin and the consequences deserved because of that sin. Recognize that they were repentant. "Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law" (Ezra 10:3). The people were willing not only to repent of that sin, but also to eliminate that sin – according to the law. They were going to send all of the wives and children who were not true Jews, away – to another land. This would be a very difficult thing to do. Once the people said they would do this, Ezra had all, "to swear that they should do according to this word. And they swear" (Ezra 10:5b).

Ezra called for all of the people of the land to come together. If they did not show up, "And that whosoever would not come within three days, according to the counsel of the princes and the elders, all his substance should be forfeited, and himself separated from the congregation of those that had been carried away" (Ezra 10:8).

Read Ezra's challenge to the people.

10. And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives, to increase the trespass of Israel. 11. Now therefore make confession unto the LORD God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives. (Ezra 10:10-11)



What was the people's response? "Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, As thou hast said, so must we do" (Ezra 10:12). The people were willing to change their lives to follow God's commands. Because this was such a daunting task, rulers of the congregation were appointed to make sure all of the strange wives were removed. "... Until the fierce wrath of our God for this matter be turned from us" (Ezra 10:14b).

"16. And the children of the captivity did so. And Ezra the priest, with certain chief of the fathers, after the house of their fathers, and all of them by *their* names, were separated, and sat down in the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter. 17. And they made an end with all the men that had taken strange wives by the first day of the first month" (Ezra 10:16-17). All of the people came. All of the wives and children who were not Jews were sent away.

**A Deeper Path:** God had told his people not to marry people from the other nations around because those people did not believe in God but worshiped idols. Because they had not obeyed God's command, choosing to marry those of their land, they had to send away those wives and children. There would have been much less heartache if they had obeyed God in the first place. Today, we still have a commandment from God to not intermarry with the lost world (those who do not have Jesus in their hearts: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" 2 Corinthians 6:14). If we choose to disobey God's command, we too, will suffer much heartache. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh *them* shall have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13). However, because we live in the days of grace, read what God has done for those who married unbelievers (see First Corinthians chapter seven to help in the understanding of this). It will still be difficult; however, we have some hope.

#### **Ezra 7-10 at a Glance:**

Chapter 7: Ezra came from Babylon, with his heart prepared, to teach the law of the Lord in Israel; Artaxerxes sent any who would go

Chapter 8: A listing of who returned from Babylon with Ezra; no Levites found, so he sent for some to minister in the house of the Lord; fasted and prayed; carried silver, gold, and vessels to the house of the Lord in Jerusalem

Chapter 9: Ezra recognized great sin before God of the people intermarrying with heathens and began to pray

Chapter 10: Ezra's prayer of repentance convicted the people; they made a covenant, and put away foreign wives and children

**Reinforcement:** Ezra was not only prepared for the task of teaching the Jews God's Word, but he was faithful to help them when there was sin in Jerusalem. Because the people were repentant and receptive to obeying God's commands, they were able to eliminate the sin – even though it was a difficult thing to do.

We should learn from the example of Ezra's life. First, he prepared his heart. He knew God's Word, and he understood the importance of living according to God's Word. He also recognized he needed other men of God to help him with his task, so he sent for the priests and Levites to go to Jerusalem with him. When they had a question of safety of travel because of the wealth in the camp for the Temple, instead of relying upon the king or his guards, they took the issue to God in prayer. God led them safely to Jerusalem with the great treasures. Moreover, once



they arrived, recognizing the sin of the people, Ezra was brave enough to help the people eliminate that sin in their lives.

Christians today, are to be as faithful. Sometimes it is difficult. However, before we can serve God, we must prepare our hearts. Then we can do it. “**And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also**” (2 Timothy 2:2). Just as Ezra had the help of the priests and Levites, we must have others we can entrust – those who can help us share God’s Word with others.

**Closing:** It would be good to close with a short prayer reinforcing today’s lesson. Always include any prayer requests you may have. *Today, pray that we will be prepared (determined) as Ezra was, to do the work God has for us. Also, that we will remember that God sees all of our sin, so we are to try not to sin against God, remembering that it will be difficult to make it right.*