

A TIME TO BUILD

Let us rise up and build ... Nehemiah 2:18

The Book of

EZRA

Restoring The Heart of The Nation



The Hand of the Lord

Ezra 7

Lesson 5

Background Information

How does God change the world? - Answer: One man at a time. Ezra was such a man. Dedicated to learn the law, keep it and teach it, he heard the call to return to Jerusalem and responded. Ezra was a descendant of Aaron the High Priest whose whole heart was dedicated to concentrate fully on the study, practice and communication of the Law.

The temple was completed in the reign of Darius (the events of chapter 6, specifically 515 B.C.). If the events of chapter 7 occur during the reign of Artaxerxes I, then the seventh year of that king would be 458 B.C.. Thus there is a gap of nearly sixty years between chapters 6 and 7, during which the events of the Book of Esther took place. The departure date given is the first day of Nisan (April 8) and the date of their arrival in Jerusalem is the first of Ab, the fifth month (August 4). This time of year, spring through midsummer is dry and hot. It would have required a northern route, avoiding the desert and careful planning to insure adequate water resources were available. Persian kings showed a consistent interest in insuring that their subject peoples maintained the favor of their gods. Restoring temples was one way of accomplishing the goal of insuring the blessings of the foreign captives' gods. If the God of Israel was pleased by the people's obedience to his instructions then certainly He would bless the king. Persian kings would also make public sacrifices to local deities as a way of showing respect, as well as gaining the political advantage it would give them in placating the newly conquered people.

The second wave of returnees follows Ezra on a four month long, hot, dry journey back to their homeland. Making the commitment to begin the journey meant accepting the cost of the travel, along with the conditions they would meet when they arrived. Because of Ezra's wholehearted dedication to study, practice and teach the Word of God, *the gracious hand of the Lord* was on all he did.

Treasures of the Heart

... The gracious hand of his God was on him, because he had determined to study and obey the Law of the Lord and to do it and to teach those decrees and regulations to the people of Israel.

Ezra 7: 9-10

What does it say?

The first step is getting the lay of the land. Carefully observe the text looking to see where you might dig to find hidden treasure. Studying a narrative requires following the key characters and paying special attention to what God says and does. Mark your text looking for repeated words, contrasts or similarities. **Does a key verse stand out in each section?** Look for answers to: Who? What? When? Where? Why or How?

Ezra 7:1-10

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 Zerahiah, 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 came up from Babylon; and he was a skilled scribe in the Law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given. The king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him. 7 Some of the children of Israel, the priests, the Levites, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the Nethinim came up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes. 8 And Ezra came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. 9 On the first day of the first month he began his journey from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month he came 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 statutes and ordinances in Israel.

Digging Deeper

Dig deeper using other resources such as a dictionary, concordance, maps and cross-references. **Notate** where you found it to share with the group. Look for commands to obey or questions to be answered. **What does God want you to know about Himself?**

Something to think about when looking up a word or topic: *The principle of first mention teaches that the first time a word or phrase appears in Scripture often establishes a precedent, pattern, or biblical concept that occurs throughout the rest of the Bible. Be careful not to ignore the context.*

Ezra 7:11-26

11 Now this is a copy of the letter that King Artaxerxes gave Ezra the priest, the scribe, expert in the words of the commandments of the Lord, and of His statutes to Israel:

12 Artaxerxes, king of kings,

To Ezra the priest, a scribe of the Law of the God of heaven:

Perfect peace, and so forth.

13 I issue a decree that all those of the people of Israel and the priests and Levites in my realm, who volunteer to go up to Jerusalem, may go with you. 14 And whereas you are being sent by the king and his seven counselors to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, with regard to the Law of your God which is in your hand; 15 and whereas you are to carry the silver and gold which the king and his counselors have freely offered to the God of Israel, whose dwelling is in Jerusalem; 16 and whereas all the silver and gold that you may find in all the province of Babylon, along with the freewill offering of the people and the priests, are to be freely offered for the house of their God in Jerusalem — 17 now therefore, be careful to buy with this money bulls, rams, and lambs, with their grain offerings and their drink offerings, and offer them on the altar of the house of your God in Jerusalem.

18 And whatever seems good to you and your brethren to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, do it according to the will of your God. 19 Also the articles that are given to you for the service of the house of your God, deliver in full before the God of Jerusalem. 20 And whatever more may be needed for the house of your God, which you may have occasion to provide, pay for it from the king's treasury.

21 And I, even I, Artaxerxes the king, issue a decree to all the treasurers who are in the region beyond the River, that whatever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven, may require of you, let it be done diligently, 22 up to one hundred talents of silver, one hundred kors of wheat, one hundred baths of wine, one hundred baths of oil, and salt without prescribed limit. 23 Whatever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it diligently be 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 inform you that it shall not be lawful to impose tax, tribute, or custom on any of the priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, Nethinim, or servants of this house of God. 25 And you, Ezra, according to your God-given wisdom, set magistrates and judges who may judge all the people who are in the region beyond the River, all such as know the laws of your God;

What does it mean?

What lesson can I draw from my observations? Ask yourself, "What was the intended meaning of the original author?" Is there a command to obey, a warning to heed, or an example to follow or avoid? State each lesson in a simple sentence that you could share with someone else.

(aim for 10 words or less)

Ezra 7:1-10 _____

Ezra 7:11-26 _____

Ezra 7:27-28 _____

How can I apply it?

Ask yourself, "What course of action do I need to take to apply each lesson?" How should it change me? What does it challenge me to do? Does it point out error in my attitude or actions?

(aim for 10 words or less)

Ezra 7:1-10 _____

Ezra 7:11-26 _____

Ezra 7:27-28 _____

What did God say?

See if you can discover what God wants us to understand about His character and His ways? Which of His attributes is He displaying? When we are questioning the circumstances that surround us, understanding Who God is helps us trust Him when we don't see Him working. Simply state what God is trying to communicate about Himself **and how it affects your thinking**.

What words or phrases are repeated? Repeated words help us discover the main point.

Getting the point!

Discover the "Big Idea" of each section. The main point of the passage is like a topic sentence in a paragraph. See if you can boil down the meaning of each section into one or two words. This helps you fully understand what the author is trying to convey. (It's fun to alliterate if you want to try) Did you find the "Big Idea"

Ezra 7:1-10 _____

Ezra 7:11-26 _____

Ezra 7:27-28 _____

Title

State the main point of the entire passage in the form of a title.

Flex Your Muscles

From your title Can you discover a N.T. example of this O.T. truth?

Time to build

Take note of how each challenge is met. Ask yourself: How was it responded to? How did it affect those who interacted? What building materials were used? (prayer, confrontation, standing firm, waiting etc.)
What did you learn that can help you next time you meet a similar challenge?

Radiating His Truth

Finding the key to God's blessings, is seeking the heart of God.

Unknown



