

April 7, 2024

Ezra 7:1-10 NIV

1 After these things, during the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra 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. He was a teacher well versed in the Law of Moses, which the LORD, the God of Israel, had given. The king had granted him everything he asked, for the hand of the LORD his God was on him. *7* Some of the Israelites, including priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers and temple servants, also came up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes. *8* Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in the fifth month of the seventh year of the king. *9* He had begun his journey from Babylon on the first day of the first month, and he arrived in Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month, for the gracious hand of his God was on him. *10* For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the LORD, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.

Scriptures for further study:

2 Timothy 3:14-17

Deuteronomy 4:2

2 Peter 1:3

1 Timothy 4:13

Revelation 1:3

Acts 17:11

Psalms 119:11

Proverbs 22:17-19

Psalms 1:1

Joshua 1:8

James 1:22-25

John 13:17

Matthew 7:24ff

John 20:31



The Hand of God and the Word of God Ezra 7:1-10

BIG IDEA: We experience the hand of God when we devote ourselves to the studying, doing, and teaching of the word of God.

OUTLINE

1. Introduction: Ezra the Scribe

- Ezra's Lineage
- Ezra's Return
- Ezra's Character

2. The Bible is God's Word

3. The Bible is Sufficient :

- Because the Bible is Sufficient _____
- Because the Bible is Sufficient _____
- Because the Bible is Sufficient _____

The Bible in Practice :

- Reading
- Studying
- Memorizing
- Meditating
- Applying
- Teaching

4. Conclusion

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These “Sermon Discussion Questions” are designed for study during the week for believers in a wide variety of ages & stages in their walk with Christ.

1. Read Ezra 7:1-28. While reading, pay attention to the references to God. What connections can you make between God's actions and his plans for Israel?
2. Refer to Ezra 7:1-28. Why was God's law so crucial to Ezra and the Israelites?
3. What benefits would the restoration of God's law provide for the people?
4. Focus on Ezra 7:1-10. What do you observe about Ezra's habits?
5. What might your plan be if you used Ezra 7:10 as the model for personal devotion?
6. What fruit from Ezra's devotional strategy would you hope to see in your life?

Praise to Jesus. Praise the Lord for His good hand (Ezra 7:6, 9, 28), which is how He leads you, for His grace (Ezra 7:27) in transforming hearts, for His faithfulness to His people and to you (Ezra 7:6), for His desire to be with His people through the restoration of the Temple and His desire to be with you through His Holy Spirit's presence in your life, for His Word, which establishes order in your life and ensures His blessings.

Repentance through Jesus. The hand of the Lord was on Ezra (Ezra 7:6). Ezra lived with confidence in the Lord's purpose for him and the Israelites. Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart and show you the reality that the Lord's hand is on you and in you. (John 14:7, John 15:4 & 7, Romans 8:9-11). Confess when you have forgotten His presence and relied on yourself to live. Think about the various roles you have. Because your work is from God, it is as vital as Ezra's. Confess the times you have forgotten and have yet to approach your work with the same conviction as Ezra.

Consecration for Jesus. In light of who God is and how He lives in you, be determined to set your heart to study and meditate on the Scriptures, to teach them to yourself so that you can live and work with the conviction of Ezra to do the great things that God has given you for His glory, your flourishing, and the benefit of all the folks in the part of God's Kingdom that He has given you to steward.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

After the Israelites rebuilt the Temple, the Book of Ezra moved ahead 57 years later to focus on a second returning group led by Ezra. There's a new Persian king (Artaxerxes), and there is the same pattern of God's sovereign direction of the king to bless and prosper the returning remnant. Chapters 7–8 mirror the process of preparation we saw in Ezra 1–2. Here it is Ezra who is sent by the king, this time not to rebuild but to teach the "laws of your God" (7:25–26.) Ezra 7–8 initiates a second wave of God's sovereign blessing on the returning exiles, this time not through physical but spiritual rebuilding according to his Word.

-Crossway ESV Expository Commentary

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

1. How is Ezra described in our passage? (Verses 1-5 point out that he is a descendant of Aaron, who was the first high priest during the time of the Exodus. In Verse 6, he is described as “a scribe skilled in the Law of Moses.” In Verse 10, we read that he “had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.”)

2. What is the crucial truth about the relationship between God and Ezra from verses 6 and 9? (Both verses state that the “hand of God” is on Ezra. This is another reminder that God led all these actions in the book of Ezra and He does so in our lives too through our faith in Jesus.)

3. What is the “Law of the LORD” in which Ezra was skilled and to which he set his heart to study? (Verse 6 tells us that the Law of the LORD was given by God. It has also been called the Torah or the Pentateuch. It is the first five books of the Bible. It was the Word of God for the Israelites. Therefore, for us, the connection point is the Bible that we have. This is God’s Word, and God has given His Word to us to teach us about who He is, to teach us what He has done to save us through Jesus, and to strengthen us.)

4. What role should the Bible have in our family? Take time to pray that our family will have a heart to study the Bible to know God, worship Him, and live for Him through our faith in Jesus.

Scriptures for further study:

Matthew 28:20

Joshua 1:8-9

Psalms 119:72; 103, 105

2 Timothy 3:14-16

FOR STUDENTS

1. Since the completion of the rebuilding of the temple in Ezra 6, 60 years have elapsed. In Ezra 7, we finally meet the author of this book. What phrases or ideas from this text particularly strike you and why?
2. What kind of person and leader was Ezra?
3. One of the most well-known verses in Ezra is 7:10, which says, “For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to do it and to teach the statutes and rules in Israel.” Given Ezra’s contagious dedication to the Scripture, God’s people started to become known as “people of the book.” Just as studying Scripture was so vital in Ezra’s day, why is it so essential for our day and age as well?
4. The three key components of Ezra 7:10 are studying, obeying, and teaching Scripture. Let’s focus on each of these key practices in Ezra’s life. First, from the sermon you heard and your own experience, how might you go about studying God’s word? What might be God’s invitation to you to study Scripture in this season of your life and faith?
5. Second, Ezra focused on obeying God’s Word. How might you grow in putting into practice everything the Bible says?
6. Lastly, Ezra taught the Word of God. What have been opportunities you’ve been given to teach Scripture? What have you found effective in teaching and sharing God’s Word? How might God be stirring you to teach his Word in this season of your life?

FOR SEEKERS AND NEW BELIEVERS

1. Although Ezra's lineage is important here in some respects, we must keep in mind that God does not value us or measure us according to our background or lineage, nor according to our past experiences, education, accomplishments, etc. And you are not a "success" or "failure" because of your ancestors. Even if we think we have a "weak" background, know that you are incredibly valued and that God chooses to do his greatest work through the things that appear "weak" or "lowly" to the world.

(1 Corinthians 1:26-31)

QUESTION: How does reflecting on this encourage your soul?

2. "The Bible is God's Word"

QUESTION: Do you have a settled conviction that the Bible is the word of God? Do you believe God's word is trustworthy and true? Even if you are still deciding your own opinion on these matters, I encourage you to read the Bible regularly anyway, and be open-minded. Even better, read and study the Bible with the help of those who can teach and instruct you to understand it.

3. "The Bible is Sufficient"

QUESTION: What does it mean to say that the Bible is sufficient? (2 Timothy 3:17)

How can confidence in the sufficiency of God's word help you navigate your own life circumstances and situations right now?

4. "The Bible in Practice"

QUESTION: If you do desire to become more intentional in your Scripture intake, in which of the following practices could you be more disciplined: Reading, Studying, Memorizing, Meditating, Applying, Teaching?

The Hand of Our God and His Divine Sovereignty in the Return and Renewal of God's People



The Ancient of Days, William Blake, 1794.

About the artwork:

The Ancient of Days, found in prophecies of Daniel, is the subject of William Blake's engraving in which he shows us the Hand of Our God and His Divine Sovereignty in the Return and Renewal of God's People, the sermon series title for Ezra.

The Ancient of Days is the cover art for Blake's Poem Europe: a Prophecy (1794). The Ancient of Days is a name for God the Father, whom the prophet Daniel spoke of in Daniel 7, where he saw Jesus, the Son of Man, "given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed." This artistic rendering by Blake serves to encourage God's people to know that He is still active and on the move with His plan of redemption despite their surroundings and circumstances.

William Blake (1757-1827) was committed to bringing prophecies and visions of the God of the Bible to life; the poet, printmaker, and painter was unrecognized and died impoverished. Despite their circumstances, William and his devoted wife Catherine, whom he taught to read and write, enjoyed a happy marriage and life together.

As a child, he came home one day and told his parents he saw "a tree filled with angels, bright angelic wings bespangling every bough like stars." His middle-class mom and dad greatly loved him and all their seven children but didn't appreciate their son's story. Only the pleas of his mom saved him from the "beating" his dad said he deserved! Blake's visions continued throughout his fifty years. Among his many visions, Blake saw Christ with his Apostles and a great procession of monks and priests and heard their chant." He saw "God's face pressed against his window, seeing angels among the haystacks, and being visited by the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel." Blake believed the Bible was the most significant work of poetry ever written. It was the basis for the art. His love for the Bible and his visions were the stuff of a vast collection of visual and literary art through which Blake attempted to describe "the body of God.

Barker, (2004) (Barker, William Blake 1757-1827, 2004)

Today, William Blake is considered one of the greatest poets in the English language and one of the most original visual artists of his day.